

Strengthening our approach to risk

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Australian Government
Australian Aged Care Quality Agency

The way we manage quality and safety

The Australian Aged Care Quality Agency is responsible for assessing and monitoring the quality of care provided by government funded aged care services. This paper outlines how we are continuing to strengthen our approach to risk to ensure the sector meets standards for safety and quality care.

The Quality Agency monitors risk for the sector as a whole as well as for individual providers. When assessing providers, we are broadening our focus. As well as checking whether policies and procedures comply with the standards, we are now focusing more on the quality of consumer experience as well as on the prevention of harm. This involves listening more closely to consumers, giving them better information and enhancing our use of intelligence and assessment of risk.

We recognise that most providers deliver quality care and are committed to improving

consumer outcomes. Our risk-based approach means we will direct more of our activity to where providers are not meeting the standards so we can be confident they are improving their performance.

The Quality Agency is committed to being a model regulator. This requires clear expectations of service quality so we can hold providers to account. But it also means being accountable ourselves and listening to the sector. Effective communication will be vital to develop a shared understanding of the outcomes we all want to achieve.

Our approach will help to assure the sector, consumers and the community that the system is rigorous and that older Australians receiving care can live their lives safely and with dignity.

1. How we monitor risk

The Quality Agency monitors risk for the sector at two levels.

> Sector-wide risk

Sector-wide risks are those that the sector as a whole faces, or a group of providers within the sector faces. We identify sector-wide risks through our research, trend analysis and emerging evidence. Common examples of sector-wide risks include:

- human resource management
- clinical care
- medication management
- behavioural management.

Example of sector-wide risk

In 2017 there was a major influenza outbreak and infection control was identified as a sector-wide risk. The Quality Agency responded by:

- surveying all residential aged care providers about their practices
- running an information campaign
- focusing compliance activity on the relevant standards.

> Individual provider risk

All providers must build a service culture of quality, safety and risk management. This means more than just preventing harm. The Quality Agency wants to understand how well a provider identifies and manages its own risk, and how it applies risk management to improve consumer outcomes.

We assess an individual provider's risk through its history, characteristics and compliance performance.

Examples of provider risk

Information we consider when assessing a provider's risk may include:

- compliance history since accreditation began in 2000
- performance of the provider's range of aged care services
- information from the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner and the Department of Health
- information from other bodies, including the media, public, police, other regulators and from state, territory and local governments
- performance of the provider compared to similar services
- size of the service
- service's resident or consumer profile, especially if it changes
- number and proportion of high-needs and complex-needs residents or consumers

Where we identify provider risk, we do not automatically conclude that a service is not meeting the standards or is not managing risk. Rather, it means we consider a provider's risk profile when we are making decisions on assessment and monitoring.

2. How we are strengthening our approach

The following features are strengthening our assessment of risk.

✓ Listen more intently to consumers

Accreditation and review audits now start with standardised consumer interviews. The views expressed inform the issues we pursue during an audit and relate to the expected outcomes for consumers. We are exploring better ways to capture the consumer experience in home care during 2018.

✓ Give consumers better information

Providing better information to consumers about their care choices and the performance of aged care services is central to aged care reform. The Consumer Experience Report (CER) is now published for audits of residential services. We are also developing a broader range of consumer-focused reports and tools to inform, support and reassure consumers and families.

✓ Enhance collection and reporting tools

Our Computer Assisted Audit Tool (CAAT) will provide richer data on provider risk over time and helps us identify emerging performance trends in the sector. We look for risk-specific information when we contact services for compliance monitoring or audit.

✓ Share information

Improved information and intelligence sharing with the Department of Health and with the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner is strengthening our evidence base. This makes our compliance monitoring of services more proactive and targeted. We triage and act on complaints referred by the commissioner based on the level of possible non-compliance and risk to consumers.

✓ Align our actions to the risk of non-compliance and harm

We use a strengthened case management approach to monitor service-level risk and prioritise and manage regulatory activities and resources.

Our increased use of intelligence and focus on risk has increased the number of review audits we conduct and findings of non-compliance. Whenever we find evidence a service is not complying with the standards we:

- consider making a finding of serious risk where the health, safety and wellbeing of residents or consumers is impacted
- notify the provider of improvements required and the timetable for making them
- vary the period of accreditation where there is significant non-compliance
- revoke accreditation in extreme cases where we find evidence to support doing so.

In all cases where we find evidence that a service is not complying with the standards, we notify the Department of Health.

✓ Conduct unannounced re-accreditation audits

The Federal Government has introduced unannounced re-accreditation audits across residential aged care services from 1 July 2018. This will introduce two new elements when we assess a provider's performance:

- requiring a self-assessment of a provider's performance against the standards on application for re-accreditation
- conducting interviews with consumers before the site audit about their experience of a service.

The re-accreditation visit will then focus on confirming the information from these sources.

✓ Building our own capability

We are providing enhanced training and guidance to our quality surveyors and assessors on observing what is happening in a service. This way they can better use interviews, observations and evidence to assess performance against the standards and understand the consumer experience. We are also helping decision-makers to consider all relevant information, making the process fair for providers.

✓ Work closely with others

We are working across the sector and in related areas of health, community services and disability to understand risks and promote collaboration in solving problems. We are engaging with our key stakeholders and running Better Practice events and education programs to promote leading industry practice.

3. Our commitment to the sector

As part of our commitment to being a model regulator, we aim to be professional, ethical, transparent, efficient, effective and courteous.

We base our actions and functions on the appropriate legislation. We also respect that many of our actions and decisions are subject to administrative appeal and/or judicial review.

The value of feedback

We value feedback from providers. We do this by:

- providing site visit questionnaires about assessment visits
- using complaints about our services to improve our performance
- working with industry peak bodies, consumer groups and other key stakeholders and seeking feedback from them.

Our own accreditation

The Quality Agency is itself held to account under the government's Regulator Performance Framework and we publish our results under this framework.

We are also proud to be accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua), which identifies contemporary, internationally recognised best practice for accreditation schemes and gives us feedback on our practices. ISQua reaccredited the Quality Agency in 2017 for a further four years.

4. Our activities

Since 1 July 2017¹, the Quality Agency has:



2,794
compliance monitoring
visits conducted



36
decisions that failures to
comply put consumers at
serious risk made



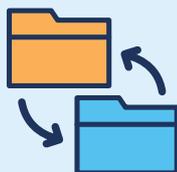
revoked the
accreditation of
6
residential facilities



47
review audits based on
intelligence and risk
assessment conducted



718
re-accreditation audits
conducted



626
referrals from the
Aged Care Complaints
Commissioner prioritised



conducted
information, education
and training for over
4,000
participants

The Quality Agency values the opportunity to work with and provide information to consumers, providers and other key members of the sector.

Visit www.aacqa.gov.au to find out more about our work.

¹ As at 31 March 2018