



Improving quality (IQ): a systems approach for the New Zealand health and disability sector

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In the foreword to the New Zealand Health Strategy I noted that people had been telling the Government that they wanted a system that put people at its heart.¹ I also noted that higher-quality care had been identified as a common goal for the health system. Quality is also reflected in a number of the objectives in the New Zealand Disability Strategy.²

Improving quality (IQ): a systems approach for the New Zealand health and disability sector³ gives further focus to the importance of quality. It is a commitment to supporting continuous quality improvement by each person who works within the system, by the people cared for and supported by the system, and by the system itself.

We want to put people at the heart of the system, particularly at the interface between those receiving health and disability services and those delivering them.

In this document the term 'people' is used in its broadest sense, because there should be both an individual and a population perspective to quality improvement within the health and disability system.

The approach in this document is my response to requirements in the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000, and to advice I have received from the National Health Committee (www.nhc.govt.nz). The Committee highlighted the importance of taking a systems approach to quality improvement. This is consistent with international developments, such as the work of Dr Don Berwick of the United States Institute for Healthcare Improvement,⁴ which have highlighted the importance of such an approach. A systems approach recognises that quality is the result of the complex interaction of people, individuals, teams, organisations and systems.

Quality can always be enhanced even though very good work is already happening. Improving Quality reflects this approach by including an ongoing review and updating process. I am confident that this document will help all health professionals to provide continually improving health services to all New Zealanders.

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