

A framework of operating principles for managing invited reviews within healthcare

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Background

On 3 March 2015, Dr Bill Kirkup CBE published '*an independent investigation into the management, delivery and outcomes of care provided by the maternity and neonatal services at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust from January 2004 to June 2013.*'

Recommendation 41 of Dr Kirkup's report of the Morecambe Bay investigation stated:

'We were concerned by the ad hoc nature and variable quality of the numerous external reviews of services that were carried out at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust. We recommend that systematic guidance be drawn up setting out an appropriate framework for external reviews and professional responsibilities in undertaking them.'

It was also suggested that the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (the Academy), the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) should take forward this recommendation.

The Academy considered Dr Kirkup's report and the above recommendation at a meeting of its Council on 15 April 2015 and it was agreed that work would be undertaken to devise a framework of operating principles for Royal Colleges and other professional bodies when undertaking invited reviews on behalf of healthcare organisations.

This framework has been devised by Mr Ralph Tomlinson, Head of Invited Reviews at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, following a request from Mr Alastair Henderson, Chief Executive of the Academy. As part of creating this framework, the Academy has consulted with other medical Royal Colleges that provide an invited reviews service, as well as the RCN and RCM (as they contribute to invited reviews). The Care Quality Commission and the General Medical Council have also contributed to and commented on this framework.

Introduction

For some years, Royal Colleges and professional bodies involved in supporting the delivery of clinical care have offered a number of services to healthcare organisations to provide them with expert, independent, advice. These services are described as *invited reviews* and are offered as a way of assisting healthcare organisations across the UK to assure patient safety and improve clinical care. Invited reviews, as a form of peer review, provide a highly valuable resource to help healthcare organisations to deal with concerns about clinical practice before they develop into more serious problems.

The specific type and nature of the invited review services offered vary depending on the Royal College or professional body involved, their experience of offering invited reviews, and the resources and capacity they have available to undertake this work. These services have also developed to meet specific needs arising within particular areas of clinical care.

Although each service has generally developed separately and independently, the Royal Colleges and professional bodies offering these services have adopted a number of similar working practices. They also seek to work collaboratively wherever possible to disseminate best practice based on their experience of undertaking invited reviews which can often involve sensitive, demanding, and challenging circumstances.

While noting that none of the many reviews of clinical practice referred to within Dr Kirkup's Morecambe Bay Investigation Report were in fact formal Royal College invited reviews, the Royal Colleges and professional bodies involved in providing invited reviews fully support the objective of having a clear framework of operating principles to underpin this activity.

The following set of operating principles has been developed to achieve this aim.

The Academy believes that the framework provides the systematic guidance for external reviews that the Kirkup review was seeking to and, as such, recommends it to all professional organisations conducting external reviews of NHS organisations.

01 Purpose

Operating principle:

All Royal Colleges and professional bodies offering invited reviews are clear that the primary purpose of this work is to ensure patient safety and improve patient care.

Royal Colleges and professional bodies offering invited reviews make a range of different services available to healthcare organisations. These include invited service reviews, individual reviews and clinical record reviews. The nature and scope of services made available by individual Royal Colleges and other professional bodies will vary depending on what the organisation is able to offer.

Why is this important?

We recognise that invited review work can sometimes involve complex and sensitive circumstances and require difficult judgements to be made about the standard of patient care that has been – or is being – provided. We consider it important therefore to state clearly the primary purpose for this activity and the reasons why we offer to help to assure and improve patient care in this way.

02 Responsibility

Operating principle:

An invited review will only be undertaken when formally commissioned by a healthcare organisation (or organisations) that agree to be responsible for the invited review and meet the conditions set.

Requests for invited reviews will normally only be accepted from the Chief Executive, Medical or Nursing Director responsible for the healthcare organisation in which the review is taking place, or the commissioners of the healthcare service under review. The healthcare organisation commissioning the review is responsible and accountable for the circumstances under review at all times. This includes taking recommended action to address any patient safety risks identified to the healthcare organisation by the invited review team – although the review team reserve the right to refer to a regulator in the public interest any matter that they consider requires this.

Why is this important?

This ensures that all invited reviews are carried out under the delegated authority of a healthcare organisation's Board of Directors and Responsible Officer(s), and that there are clear lines of responsibility in relation to the circumstances reviewed, and organisational ownership of, and accountability for, the situation under review.

Through this an invited review will support, but not replace, existing local and national systems for managing performance within healthcare.

03 Scope

Operating principle:

Any invited review undertaken by a Royal College or professional body will have clear terms of reference.

These terms of reference will have been formally agreed with the healthcare organisation commissioning the review following discussion with the Royal College or professional body undertaking the review. They will have been shared with all those participating in the review.

The invited review team undertaking the review will work within the terms of reference agreed although will not be limited by them. If an issue arises that is outside these terms of reference that involves patient safety and/or the health, wellbeing, conduct or probity of staff involved in the review this will be highlighted to the Medical Director or Chief Executive of the healthcare organisation commissioning the review for further investigation and action.

If a review should be requested which covers cross specialties and therefore involves more than one College, it is important that there is one College taking a clear lead role and this should be reflected in the terms of reference and planning for how the review will work.

Why is this important?

To be successful it is crucial that the scope of the invited review is clearly defined through discussion between the Royal College or professional body undertaking the review and the healthcare organisation commissioning it. This ensures that a common understanding of what is being reviewed is shared between the healthcare organisation commissioning the review, the review team and those participating. It enables the review team to focus on key information relevant to the terms of reference and provide clear conclusions and to make realistic and achievable recommendations.

04 Indemnity

Operating principle:

An invited review will only take place if the healthcare organisation commissioning the review has confirmed that it will provide an indemnity to the Royal College or professional body involved.

This will indemnify all those involved for any claim made or action taken as a consequence of the invited review.

Why is this important?

This operating principle ensures that the position of any individual or organisation involved in the review are protected from a legal perspective in relation to any action that might arise from the circumstances of the review. It enables all parties to focus on the primary purposes of the invited review – protecting patient safety and improving patient care.

05 Advisory

Operating principle:

Invited reviews are offered to healthcare organisations as an advisory service.

Invited reviews have no formal statutory or regulatory role, status or function and the Royal College or professional body completing the invited review has no formal power to compel the healthcare organisation concerned to act on their advice.

Why is this important?

There are a number of regulators within healthcare with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. In offering invited reviews to healthcare organisations Royal Colleges and other professional bodies are not seeking to interfere with this important work. They are instead seeking to provide independent expert advice on the circumstances that they are asked to review and to work collaboratively with the healthcare organisations commissioning them to assure patient safety and improve patient care.

06 Voluntary

Operating principle:

Invited reviews are a voluntary process designed to assure patient safety and improve patient care.

While the Royal College or professional body undertaking the review would hope that all personnel involved would be happy to participate in this process that has been commissioned by the healthcare organisation they work for, participation is voluntary and individuals will not be compelled to take part. This is particularly the case where a Royal College or professional body offers an individual review service, where the engagement of the individual being reviewed is of particular importance to ensure any recommendations made can be addressed. In this situation the individual whose care is being reviewed will be asked to provide their formal agreement to participating in this process before it can commence. In the event that an individual is not willing to participate in an individual review, it would be for the healthcare organisation to resolve the situation and ensure any patient safety risks are addressed, taking advice from regulatory bodies as required.

In the event that an individual/individuals are not willing to participate in a service review, it would be for the healthcare body to agree with the Royal College(s) concerned as to whether an invited review was still feasible – if not, it would again be for the healthcare organisation concerned to resolve the situation and ensure that any patient safety risks are addressed, taking advice from regulatory bodies as required.

Why is this important?

Invited reviews are an advisory, non-regulatory, and non-statutory way for healthcare organisations to assure patient safety and improve patient care through the use of a collaborative, independent, objective, and expert review process.

We believe that the best improvements to patient care are achieved when clinicians and patients work together to lead change and that participating in a review of this nature on a voluntary basis provides a proactive and practical way for a clinician to achieve this aim.

07 Independent

Operating principle:

Invited reviews are designed to offer independent advice on the circumstances under review.

All Royal Colleges or professional bodies undertaking invited reviews will have in place safeguards for ensuring that their reviews are undertaken by a review team that are independent of the situation being reviewed. The Royal College or professional body will also have a clear process for managing any real or potential conflicts of interests arising during the course of the review.

The review team identified to conduct the invited review will be disclosed openly to the organisation commissioning the review in advance of any review visit. Any actual or potential conflicts of interest that might provide a reason to call into question the independence of those undertaking the review will be highlighted, and those participating in the review will also be able to identify any concerns of this nature to the healthcare organisation commissioning the review.

When working in areas of clinical practice where it is likely that there will only be a small number of clinical experts the reality of professional networks is that it is likely that individuals will have an awareness of one another. In this situation any actual or potential conflicts of interest will also be openly identified and disclosed to the healthcare organisation commissioning the review.

Where there are concerns raised about the personnel identified to undertake an invited review the Royal College or professional body undertaking the review will provide an explanation of the reasons they have identified this team, the actual or potential conflicts of interest that may exist, and the safeguards that are in place to ensure that the invited review will be independent and not subject to bias. The Medical Director or Chief Executive of the healthcare organisation responsible for the review – in consultation with their staff as appropriate – will then make the final decision about how the process will proceed.

Where discussion of these points leads to a delay in the timescales for a review taking place the healthcare organisation will also be responsible for addressing any immediate patient safety risks in relation to the situation being reviewed.

Why is this important?

For all parties to the review to have confidence in the process, it is crucial that an invited review is both independent, and seen to be independent. The best way to maintain confidence in an invited review process is through the open disclosure of any matter that may call the review's independence into question.

08 Expert

Operating principle:

Invited reviews are designed to offer expert advice on the circumstances under review.

All Royal Colleges and professional bodies will ensure that when identifying an invited review team, the clinical reviewers taking forward the review will be experienced and senior clinicians with expertise that is relevant to the situation under review. Royal Colleges and professional bodies will collaborate where appropriate to ensure that all relevant specialty areas are represented.

When advising a healthcare organisation of the review team that they have identified, the Royal College or professional body undertaking the review will specify the current role of the clinical reviewer so that the healthcare organisation commissioning the review is clear about this and has the opportunity to check that they are satisfied that this reviewer is suitable to undertake the review requested.

Why is this important?

For all parties to the review to have confidence in the process, it is crucial that an invited review is both expert, and seen to be expert. The best way to maintain confidence in the expertise of an invited review process is to be clear on the clinical role and profile of the reviewers identified to undertake this work.

09 Patients and the public

Operating principle:

Invited reviews are carried out by Royal Colleges and professional bodies in partnership with patients and the public.

The way that patients and the public are involved will vary between the Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews due to the diverse nature of the circumstances being reviewed, the differing opportunities that are presented for involvement, and the preferred approach of the Royal College or professional body.

Some ways that the perspectives of patients and the public can be incorporated into reviews are:

- Acting as a lay reviewer on an invited review team representing the patient and public interest
- Joining a review team to provide the perspective of a service user
- Being interviewed as a representative of a patient group within an invited review visit programme
- Providing formal patient feedback about a service. This should then be included in the information considered by an invited review team who will normally ask for this data as standard component of their review
- Quality assuring invited review reports as a lay-person on an oversight/quality assurance committee.

Why is this important?

For an invited review to be successful it is important that the patient voice is represented. Having opportunities for the views of patients and public to be represented ensures that an invited review can achieve its core purpose of protecting patient safety and improving patient care.

10

Supporting speaking up

Operating principle:

Invited reviews are carried out on a confidential basis to support those involved in providing patient care to speak up where they consider that improvements to patient care could be made.

When producing reports invited review team members will aim as far as possible to report the information provided to the review team in a way that does not identify individuals, but instead highlights the themes from the invited review against the terms of reference agreed.

This confidentiality is subject to limits – for example where an interviewee brings immediate and unresolved patient safety risks to the attention of the review team, or where an interviewee highlights concerns about the safety of individual staff. In these circumstances the situation raised will be highlighted to the Medical Director or Chief Executive of the healthcare organisation commissioning the review to investigate further and act upon. When requested to do so the invited review team will make efforts to do this anonymously but their ability to do this may be limited by the circumstances involved and the review team's responsibility to meet their responsibilities under their professional codes of conduct and practice.

Healthcare organisations commissioning invited reviews also have a responsibility to be open and transparent with patients and the public about the circumstances involved. Royal Colleges and professional bodies will work closely with those commissioning invited reviews to support them to meet these responsibilities.

Why is this important?

It can often be very challenging and demanding for those working in healthcare to raise concerns about patient care. Our approach supports those involved in providing patient care to speak openly about problems and enables concerns to be addressed.

11

Understanding individuals and the systems in which they work

Operating principle:

Invited reviews seek to understand the practice of individual clinicians within the wider organisational context of their practice.

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews understand that the delivery of healthcare can be complex and problems with this can occur for a number of reasons and in a variety of ways. These problems can relate to individual practice and clinical skills but most often require an understanding of both individuals and the organisational systems in which they work. When undertaking invited reviews Royal Colleges and professional bodies seek to have an understanding of the complexity of these systems and offer solutions that take account of them.

It is important that those undertaking an invited review and the organisation commissioning the review are sensitive to the potential impact of an external review on individuals. Commissioning organisations should ensure that individuals have access to the appropriate support and advice to help them participate constructively in, and respond effectively to, a review.

Why is this important?

It is apparent from both *human factors* research and organisational and behavioural psychology that individuals and systems need to be considered together when reviewing clinical practice. Through having an awareness of these principles, invited reviews can ensure that the actions of individual clinicians are understood within the context that they operate.

12

Reviewers

Operating principle:

Invited reviews use reviewers who are clear on the role that they are being asked to undertake and about what will be expected from them when undertaking this role.

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews will ensure that reviewers have clear role descriptions and have been fully briefed on the work that they will be undertaking.

Reviewers will also have access to good quality training resources so that they can prepare appropriately for their role, and will work within the limits of their competence when fulfilling this.

Reviewers will also be given guidance on conducting a process that is sensitive to the environment and people involved in a review.

Reviewers will need to be able to access to advice and support prior and during the review process.

Prior to undertaking an invited review reviewers – where registered – will also be asked to confirm that they are in *good standing* with their registering and/or regulatory body – and their employer.

Reviewers will also be asked to identify any conflicts of interest – real or perceived – that might impact on their role as a reviewer.

Reviewers will have expertise relevant to the circumstances under review.

Why is this important?

Following these operating principles will ensure the integrity of an invited review process and that those acting as reviewers have appropriate expertise to undertake this role, are clear on what they are being asked to do, and are appropriately prepared to undertake this work.

13

Review format

Operating principle:

When undertaking invited reviews Royal Colleges and professional bodies will follow a structured process that is set out in a published document.

This process will ensure that the approach taken to invited reviews carried out by the Royal College and professional association is consistent, while also allowing for this to be tailored for the specific circumstances of a review.

Each Royal College or professional body's approach to invited reviews will normally involve two components:

1. A documentation review carried out against a clear specification based on the review team's understanding of the service or individual under review. This information being provided by the healthcare organisation commissioning the review or being based on other publically available performance data
2. Interviews with key personnel working within the service and/or with the individual under review. These interviews being held in individual or group sessions, as agreed with the healthcare organisation commissioning the review. In advance of any interview the interviewee will be made aware of the terms of reference for the review and have access to the documentation provided to the review team.

Unlike the General Medical Council or National Clinical Assessment Services assessments invited reviews will not normally involve *tests of competence*, observations of practice, or simulations.

In some circumstances a clinical record review might also form part of the invited review visit. Where this is the case the clinical reviewers will follow a structured process that sets out a chronology of the key events that have taken place as recorded in the clinical record being reviewed, as well as the judgements of the clinical reviewer as to their view of the standard of care provided.

Where an individual review is being undertaken, this will only be completed where the individual concerned has agreed to participate and is clear on the documentation being reviewed and the interviews being held.

Why is this important?

For an invited review to have the confidence of all parties participating in it there needs to be clear information available on the process being followed and the approach that will be taken by the review team. This will ensure that the Royal College or professional body completes this work in a consistent way, and that all those taking part in this process are clear on the exercise that they are participating in and that there are safeguards in place to ensure that they are treated in a fair manner.

14

Review reports

Operating principle:

Invited review reports will follow a clear structure setting out the reasons for the review, its terms of reference, the information gathered by the reviewers, and their conclusions and recommendations.

An invited review report will clearly describe the sources of information that have been used to support the conclusions reached and the recommendations made.

Where the review team are making judgements about standards of clinical care, or behaviour, these will where possible be linked to published standards documents within the specialty concerned. Where these do not exist, or the issues being considered are more general, documents such as the GMC's Good Medical Practice will be referenced, and/or the reviewers will apply the test of what they consider would be the view of a reasonable body of clinical professionals in a similar situation.

Where possible the review team will seek to corroborate the information that they have gathered, and not rely on a single source, unless the issue raised is of such significance that it needs to be highlighted to the healthcare body commissioning the review for further investigation.

Where the report describes information provided by an interviewee without further corroboration the report will normally present the information as having been *reported* to the review team and leave it open for the healthcare organisation commissioning the review to determine whether or not this statement can be formally substantiated.

If there are disputes about a report that has been issued (particularly in relation to disputes over matters of fact) the review team will not seek to definitively determine the circumstances and it will be for the healthcare organisation commissioning the review to resolve.

Draft reports will be quality assured internally by the Royal College or professional body undertaking the review prior to issue. The precise arrangements for this quality assurance process will vary depending on individual approach of the Royal College or professional body completing the review.

Why is this important?

It is important that invited reviews reach clear conclusions and make achievable recommendations, and that these conclusions are based on comprehensive and detailed information sources that can be corroborated (or where necessary further investigated by the healthcare organisation commissioning the invited review). By producing invited review reports in this way we are able to ensure that invited review reports are expert, and comprehensive in addressing the terms of reference set.

15

Patient safety

Operating principle:

The healthcare organisation commissioning a review will be responsible for addressing any patient safety risks identified to them by the review team in a timely manner.

In the event that they do not do so, the review team reserves the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate regulator(s).

If the review team identify circumstances where patient safety may be at risk, appropriate recommendations will be made in their report for consideration and action by the healthcare organisation commissioning the review. Where the matter concerned is urgent, immediate advice about the review team's view will be provided to the Medical Director of the healthcare organisation (or other responsible officer) at the conclusion of the invited review visit. The timescale provided to for action will be dependent on the level of seriousness of the issue(s) identified. In providing advice in these circumstances the review team's primary responsibility will be towards ensuring patient safety and meeting the professional duties set by their regulatory body.

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews have a responsibility for ensuring the prompt sharing of serious issues regarding patient safety with the relevant regulator either by the healthcare organisation being reviewed or themselves.

This advice will then be confirmed in writing by letter prior to the review team's production of their report, so that the healthcare organisation can take any recommended action as necessary to protect patients, staff, or in some circumstances the clinician(s) themselves.

Why is this important?

It is important that where an invited review identifies immediate and unresolved risks these are addressed in a timely manner. Following this operating principle means we are able to maintain patient safety.

16

Follow up

Operating principle:

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews will follow up the outcome of their report's recommendations with the healthcare organisation commissioning the review.

This will normally involve following up actions taken with the healthcare organisation during the six months after the final report has been provided to them.

The purpose of this follow up is to request a progress report on the actions being taken to address the recommendations made. When following up a review the aim would be to establish that the report's recommendations have been agreed by the healthcare organisation, and have either been addressed, or that an action plan has been put in place by the Medical Director and/or Nursing Director to ensure that they will be addressed. In the event that the review team identify that their recommended action has not been taken, and the safety of patients is compromised, the review team reserve the right to refer the matter and their concerns directly to a regulator as above.

Why is this important?

Through undertaking this follow up we are able to ensure that recommendations are acted on, and patient safety risks are addressed.

17

Openness and transparency

Operating principle:

Healthcare organisations commissioning invited reviews should be open and transparent about the circumstances under review.

Where a healthcare organisation has commissioned an invited review of clinical activity in response to concerns about the quality of patient care, they should also be open and transparent with patients, their relatives and the public.

For example, where patient safety risks or other issues related to the quality of patient care have been identified the healthcare organisation commissioning a review should take steps to publicise and make available to the public a clear summary of the review that has taken place and the actions the healthcare organisation is taking to address the recommendations made.

The healthcare organisation's summary should include clear information on:

- The reasons for the invited review
- It's terms of reference, conclusions and recommendations, and
- The actions taken by the healthcare organisation to address the issues identified by the review and the recommendations made.

The specific information a healthcare organisation can make available about a review will vary from review to review depending on the circumstances involved. It is also important that the healthcare organisation takes account of their legal responsibilities towards the confidentiality of their patients and staff. Some of the legislation a healthcare organisation will need to consider when publishing information about invited reviews will include the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998*, the *Data Protection Act 1998*, and the law relating to patient confidentiality. The healthcare organisation concerned may need to take their own legal advice on these points.

Throughout the invited review process the healthcare organisation commissioning the review will also be responsible for meeting its duties under the legislation enacted through the *The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014* and in particular for meeting the duty of candour that it has to patients as described by this legislation in relation the circumstances considered by the invited review.

Healthcare organisations should also work closely with their regulators and share information about invited reviews with them proactively where necessary to ensure that the safety of patients can be maintained.

Why is this important?

It is important that healthcare organisations are open and transparent with patients and the public about the circumstances of invited reviews. By setting out this position Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking reviews can support healthcare organisations to be open and transparent.

18

Working with regulators and other external bodies

Operating principle:

When undertaking invited reviews, Royal Colleges and professional bodies will work closely with regulators and other external bodies involved in assuring the quality and safety of patient care.

The primary responsibility for sharing information about a review resides with the healthcare organisation commissioning the review. If asked to confirm that a review has taken place, the Royal College or professional body will do so, referring the regulator to the healthcare organisation concerned for detailed information relating to the review. In the unlikely event this information is not provided, Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking review reserve the right to disclose in the public interest but still in confidence any information about the review to a regulator where required.

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews have a responsibility for ensuring the prompt sharing of serious issues regarding patient safety with the relevant regulator either by the healthcare organisation being reviewed or themselves.

Discussions about practical arrangements for information sharing in this area are ongoing between a number of Royal Colleges, professional bodies, and regulatory bodies and this document may be further updated following the conclusion of these discussions.

Why is this important?

By working closely with regulators in this way we are able to ensure that patient safety can be assured.

19

Feedback from healthcare organisations commissioning reviews

Operating principle:

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews will have a clear process for receiving feedback from healthcare organisations and using this to inform service development.

The specific processes followed will vary depending on the approaches of the individual organisation involved. Whatever the individual approach taken to collating this feedback, all those undertaking invited reviews should aim to have systems in place to ensure that they are able to learn from feedback about the quality and timeliness of the reviews they provide, and the way they have delivered them.

It is important that the processes for invited reviews are quality assured – one method of quality assurance that Colleges may wish to use is that of peer review which may involve Colleges quality assuring each other's processes.

Why is this important?

When providing a service of this nature it is important to have a well-structured system in place that can be used to gather feedback on how the service is received.

By taking this approach we are able to ensure that this feedback is gathered, learnt from, and used to inform improvements.

Continual quality assurance of the invited review process is central to maintaining standards and quality.

20

Feedback from reviewers

Operating principle:

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews will have a clear process for receiving feedback from their reviewers and using this to inform service development.

Again, the specific processes followed will vary depending on the individual organisation involved. Whatever the individual approach taken to collating this feedback, all those undertaking invited reviews should aim to have systems in place to ensure that they are able to learn from this feedback from those who help them to deliver invited reviews.

Why is this important?

When providing a service of this nature it is important to have a well-structured system in place that can be used to establish feedback on how the service is regarded by those who are providing it.

By taking this approach we are able to ensure that this feedback is gathered, learnt from, and used to inform improvements.

21

Complaints

Operating principle:

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews will have a clear formal complaints process for those involved in external reviews and using this to inform service development. The word 'Complaints' in this context refers only to concerns regarding the process/conduct of the review. It does not refer to an appeal against the outcome/recommendations of the review.

The specific processes followed will vary to some extent based on the individual organisation involved but the following should be a part of any complaints process:

Reviewers, healthcare bodies or those working in them, and if necessary, patients, will be able to make a complaint. Complaints should normally be made within three months of the incident (if there was one) or within three months of the publication of the Invited Review in question.

The professional body will first ask the Invited Review manager to look at the complaint.

If the complainant is unsatisfied with this response a senior person (who was not involved in the original review) should review the complaint.

Why is this important?

General feedback about a service should be separated from the sorts of issues that might lead to a formal complaint. By making a complaint, an individual or organisation may wish to express a more serious concern.

In addition, the opportunity to have a complaint reviewed by a senior person who was not involved in the original invited review is vital to ensure both a fair process and one that enables organisational learning regarding invited reviews.

22

Thematic learning and trend analysis

Operating principle:

Royal Colleges and professional bodies undertaking invited reviews will have a clear process for collating and reporting on the themes arising from their invited reviews.

Specific approaches in this area will depend on the individual organisation but the aim of all of those undertaking invited reviews will be to collect and present this information in a way that enables it to be used to inform improvements to clinical practice.

The collection of this information should include information arising from feedback and formal complaints regarding the reviews as this is also an important area for learning about conducting invited reviews.

Why is this important?

We consider that the collated themes from invited reviews provide a significant resource for improving clinical practice. By identifying and reporting on each of these themes Royal Colleges and professional bodies carrying out reviews can make a significant contribution to assuring patient safety and improving patient care. By analysing themes from feedback and complaints on a regular basis, Royal Colleges and professional bodies will have the opportunity to improve the invited review process as a whole.

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