

# **Centre for Guidelines**

## **Interim process guide for a more proportionate approach to quality standard development**

**February 2024**

## Introduction

To support the changing needs and objectives of all parts of the health and care system, [NICE is transforming](#) to ensure its guidance remains relevant, timely, useable and effective. To achieve these aims, the methods and processes that underpin NICE's guidance need to evolve.

This guide describes the interim process changes that NICE will use over the next 24 months to support proportionate approaches to the development and maintenance of NICE quality standards. It should be read alongside the relevant sections of the NICE quality standards process guide.

The interim process may be applied in the following situations:

- The health and care system needs a new or updated quality standard faster than the current process can deliver.
- The nature and extent of update needed to an existing quality standard does not justify the resource use associated with the full development process.
- To support the integration and/or incorporation of selected quality standards into NICE guidelines.

The changes outlined will be monitored and reviewed.

- NICE will consult on this interim process, then consider responses from [stakeholders](#) to the consultation, amending the process where necessary and publish a final version.
- NICE will use the interim process in selected quality standard topics over the next 24 months. This stage will inform the full update of the quality standard process guide.
- The updated quality standard process guide will be consulted on following the usual process for manual updates. This will then be finalised and published.

We welcome comments on the content of this statement. These should be addressed to [qualitystandards@nice.org.uk](mailto:qualitystandards@nice.org.uk) .

## **A proportional approach to how we develop and update existing quality standards**

As well as utilising our existing processes for quality standard development, we are introducing more proportionate, agile and responsive approaches where appropriate as described in the introduction.

Key areas in the current process guide, where NICE may decide, to adopt a more proportionate approach are:

- Developing a topic overview (3.1)
- Changes to committee decision making outside of formal meetings, including:
  - Prioritising areas for quality improvement (3.2),
  - Reviewing consultation feedback (3.6)
  - Utilisation of the guideline committee (3.2,3.6)
- Consultation (3.5)
- Use of external guidance to support the development of quality standards.

### **Developing a topic overview**

- Where a proportional approach to topic engagement is applicable due to the narrower scope of a topic, the following options may be used:  
Reducing the topic engagement comment period to 5 working days
- Limiting topic engagement to key stakeholders
- Holding a workshop with key stakeholders and topic experts

In such instances, minutes/a record of the workshop would be taken and published on the NICE website.

## **Changes to committee decision making outside of formal meetings**

### ***Prioritising areas for quality improvement:***

Where a proportionate approach is required to prioritise areas for quality improvement, a working group may be convened in place of a full quality standards advisory committee (QSAC) meeting. The working group will have the same remit as the full QSAC.

The working group will be chaired by an existing NICE committee chair and contain representation from the QSAC committee. The membership of the working group will be drawn from existing quality standard and guideline expert representative and committee standing members.

The needs of the working group are such that an appropriate spread of members' experience and expertise should be represented at each meeting. If, in the view of the chair, the spread of experience and expertise is inappropriate for the business under consideration, the meeting may be suspended or adjourned until a later date.

If the working group concludes that it cannot make a decision on the quality standard content this will result in a full committee meeting.

Where a subset of the committee has been convened in place of a full committee meeting to agree prioritised areas of care, the same group will be convened in place of a full committee meeting to review the full set of consultation comments.

### ***Reviewing consultation feedback***

In some instances, such as where consultation comments demonstrate a high degree of agreement with the draft quality standard, neither a full committee meeting, nor a working group will be convened to review the consultation

comments. The committee will instead review the consultation comments and share any feedback with the NICE team and the chair via email.

If the committee chair concludes that further committee input is required to refine the quality standard based on the consultation comments, this will result in either a full committee meeting or a working group meeting with a subset of the committee.

### ***Utilisation of the guideline committee (GC)***

The guideline committee (GC) may be utilised to prioritise areas for quality improvement and review consultation feedback, in place of a full quality standards advisory committee (QSAC) meeting. Representation from the QSAC committee will be agreed as required for the development of the Quality Standard.

This approach may be undertaken as part of a testing and refining process to incorporate quality standard statements into NICE guidelines, and will support NICE's ambitions to integrate NICE guidance, making it easier for users to find all guidance about a condition.

## **Consultation: A flexible public consultation for registered stakeholders**

Where a proportionate approach to consultation is required, NICE may reduce or extend the length of the consultation comment period depending on the extent of change to the existing content or the potential impact on the system. The minimum consultation period will be no less than 10 working days.

## **Standing down of existing quality standards**

As part of either an annual programme review, or topic specific review, stakeholder feedback may indicate a quality standard is no longer adding value to the system, such as when the quality standard has been superseded by statutory requirements. In these cases, a quality standard may be deemed suitable to be stood down and removed from the quality standards library.

The option to stand down quality standards is applicable to quality standards which are published, in development or awaiting development. Quality standards considered potentially suitable to be stood down will first undergo a process of internal consideration and initial approval by an associate director in the Centre for Guidelines Directorate.

Formal de-referral will be sought from the endorsing body before the quality standard is presented to the NICE Guidance Executive for final approval. Following agreement from the endorsing body and the Guidance Executive, the quality standard will be stood down and removed from the NICE website.

## **Use of external guidance to support the development of quality standards**

With the approval of the Guidance Executive, high quality external guidance, such as guidance from royal colleges or international guideline developers, which is not NICE-accredited can be used to support the development of NICE quality standards.