

# Measuring quality in community nursing: a mixed-methods study

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## Plain English summary

### Quality indicators for community nursing

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## Plain English summary

Community nurses provide a vital service for people receiving health care at home. However, the care delivered is hard to monitor. Quality indicators (QIs) are widely used to assess care quality. A QI or measure is any aspect chosen to demonstrate the quality of care (e.g. how long it takes for a leg ulcer to heal). The aim of this project was to study how QIs are selected and applied in community nursing and how useful they are.

We conducted the study from 2014 to 2016. This included a national survey of Clinical Commissioning Groups and an in-depth investigation in five case study sites. Data were collected from NHS England representatives, commissioners, health-care managers, nurses, patients and carers. The data informed the development of good practice guidance for measuring quality. Ten stakeholder engagement events yielded feedback about the findings and the guidance.

Our survey showed a wide range of indicators in use nationally, most of which were focused on organisation of care. Case study participants agreed that the current measures fail to reflect the quality of care accurately, as they do not measure the aspects (continuity, kindness, respect) valued highly by nurses, patients and carers. Commissioners are often unaware of how conditions in which community nurses practise affect quality measures that work well in hospitals. Participants felt that nurses, patients and carers are not sufficiently involved in identifying and selecting indicators. Recording data about QIs increases nurses' workloads. The current quality measures appear to have limited use, and sometimes result in undesirable unintended consequences.

Our conclusions are as follows:

- Nurses, patients and carers should be involved in choosing quality measures.
- QIs should measure the aspects of care valued by nurses, patient and carers.
- Quality measures designed for use in hospitals should not be rolled out into the community without modification.
- Commissioners should accompany community nurses occasionally to see what community nurses' practice actually involves.

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