

A short guide to building capacity for improvement in NHS providers

September 2017

Introduction

This short guide is for NHS organisations seeking to begin or do more to build improvement capacity and capability in their organisations. It outlines a ‘dosing’ approach to embedding quality improvement (QI) skills across an organisation developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and already in use by several NHS trusts.

The quality improvement ‘dosing’ principle was first developed by Dr Robert Lloyd at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI). It is derived from the principles used to establish the appropriate dose of a medicine. For example, a group of patients all suffering from high blood pressure and placed on the same medication would not all be given the same dose of blood pressure medicine. Dosage would be based on the patient’s needs. The dosing approach applies this to healthcare providers (for a detailed explanation see Lloyd 2017 Chapter 11).

Policy context

[Developing People - Improving Care](#), is the national framework for action on improvement and leadership development in NHS-funded services. It calls for everyone throughout the system, at all levels, to know about improvement methods and how to use them including developing local capability and capacity.

What this means for your organisation

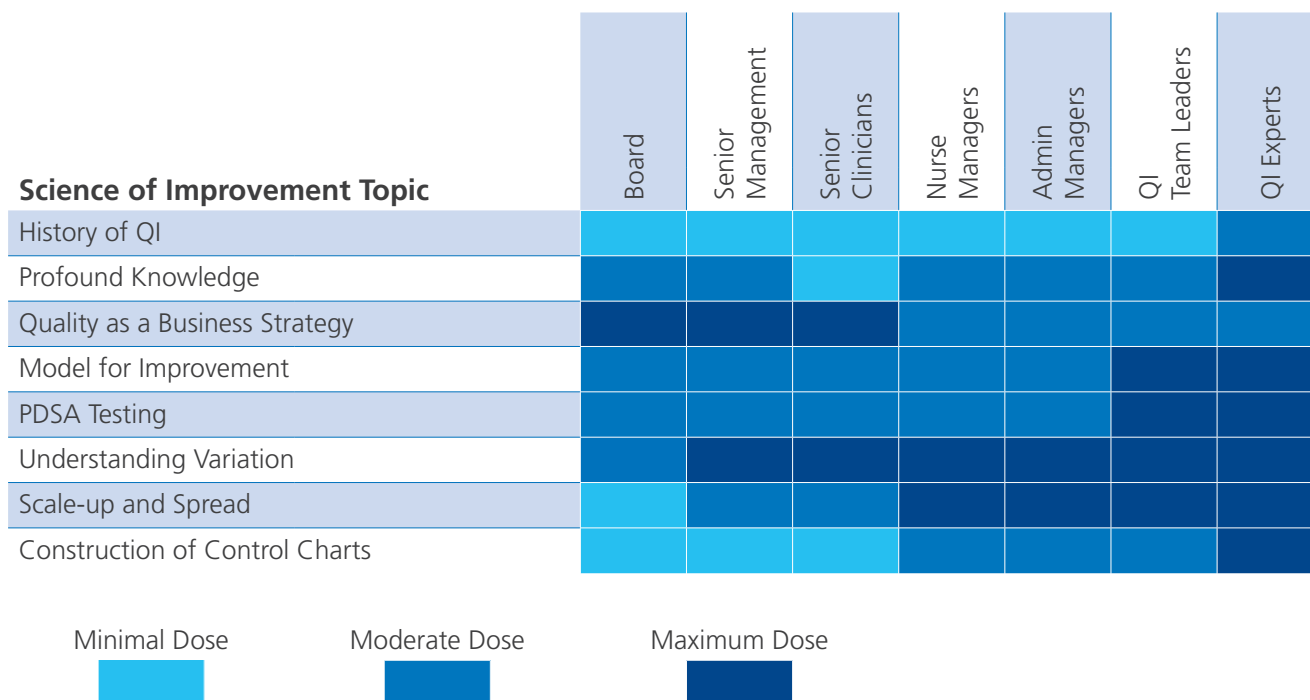
The level and extent of quality improvement skills an organisation needs depends on characteristics, including:

- size of and mix of services it provides
- organisation history and current status of its quality journey
- resources committed to learning and employee development
- commitment of senior leaders to making quality the organisation's business strategy
- staff turnover rate.

General guidelines for different groups in an organisation

Organisational Level	Required level of knowledge/expertise
All staff	Need a general introduction to and awareness of QI concepts, tools and methods. This facilitates shared understanding, helps identify more opportunities for change and is essential to building an improvement culture. Typically it comes from virtual learning opportunities, new employee orientation and/or short workshops that provide overviews of the organisation's QI approach
Middle managers/supervisors	Require the same 'dose' as senior leaders plus an understanding of the main aspects of being a sponsor and/or possible leader of an improvement team
Senior leaders	Require deeper knowledge of the science of improvement than board members. Since they are the senior sponsors for QI initiatives they need a working knowledge of the concepts, tools and methods, particularly how key measures are organised; and the difference between common cause and special causes of variation
Board members	Need to agree and understand the organisation's QI approach and its components, understand how data is used for improvement, be able to make the correct management decisions with data, and understand the strategic outcomes expected for QI projects
Internal quality experts	Need the deepest knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative methods, tools and concepts because they are guides for the organisation's quality journey. They also need to be able to teach individuals at all levels of the organisation
Quality coaches	Need to be skilled in the human side of change and QI measurement, and able to use QI tools and methods to help teams achieve their aims. They coach colleagues to test new ideas and support teams with implementation and spread.

Figure 1: Applying the dosing principle to an organisation



Note the intensity of the colour reflects the ‘dose’ of the science of improvement knowledge and skills that would be administered to each respective group. The mechanisms for administering the allocated dose would range from virtual learning (eg IHI Open School) to face-to-face workshops on the SOI.

Source: Lloyd R (2017) *Quality Health Care: A Guide to Developing and Using Indicators*, 2nd edition, Jones & Bartlett Publishing. Used with permission of R Lloyd and Jones & Bartlett Publishing.

The principle of dosing

Where can I find out more?

Read our full guide to Building capacity and capability for improvement in NHS providers. If you would like more information please contact us at NHSI.DevelopmentTeam@nhs.net