

Defining the Terms Used

It is vital to ensure that any terms used in your aims and objectives are defined and understood by all those involved in your audit. This reduces the risk of ambiguity and errors.

For example - take the objective, 'To ensure all red cell transfusions are effective'. This poses several questions:



What do you mean by Red Cell Transfusion?

Is it all red cell transfusions or specific blood groups / specific products, and are you investigating all patients or just specific patient groups?

How would you define effective?

It could be measured in several ways, such as the increase in post transfusion haemoglobin, but you may also want to include symptomatic measurements.

This simple example shows that it is vital to make your aims and objectives clear and unambiguous and define any terms used. Developing clear aims and objectives will ensure that there is no confusion over the information you are going to collect and the standards against which you are going to compare practice.

Clear aims and objectives help to facilitate discussion of audit results and in the

development of recommendations for change.



Remember to think carefully about exactly what you want to measure,

For example - effective transfusions that raise Hb levels are not the same as appropriate transfusions!

The NHSBT Clinical Audit Proposal Form requires you to identify the aims and objectives prior to consideration of audit support.



If you require help developing your aims and objectives or with any other aspect of clinical audit, please contact the clinical audit department.

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Blood and Transplant

How to Set Aims and Objectives

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What are Aims and Objectives?



Once you have decided upon your audit topic, there may be other related issues that could be included, making your audit very large and difficult to perform.

To ensure that your audit stays focused

on the important issues you will need to list your **Aims** and **Objectives**.

Aims are Simple and Broad Statements of Intent

They describe what you want to achieve.

Example 1 *Ensure blood is only taken from suitable donors*

Example 2 *Ensure blood given to patients is safe*

Example 3 *Ensure that laboratory turnaround times are acceptable*

Objectives are Detailed and Specific Statements

They describe what aspect of quality you are going to measure to show that your aims have been met.

Using the aim from Example 1 we can develop the following objectives to show how we comply with the aim

Objective 1 - *Ensure that blood donors are accepted appropriately*

Objective 2 - *Ensure that blood donors are deferred appropriately.*

You will notice that each objective consists of a statement containing three separate points:

A **VERB** describing what you want to do, (e.g. *ensure, determine if, increase, change practice if, reduce the level of.*) an **INTERVENTION / SERVICE** (e.g. *blood donation, transfusion, giving medication*) and an **ASPECT OF QUALITY**.



When developing objectives, **Maxwell's Dimensions of Quality** are useful for deciding what you will measure to show your aims have been met.

Accessibility – Who can use a service and who should be using the service?
e.g. ensure all potential donors can access a blood donor session

Equity – Is access to care equal according to the needs of users / patients?

E.g. do all patients have access to therapeutic apheresis services?

Appropriateness – Is it the right service / intervention to undertake?
e.g. reduce the number of inappropriate transfusions.

Acceptability – Do the users and patients agree with the intervention?
e.g. determine if information leaflets are acceptable to donors

Effectiveness – Is the intervention delivered in the right way, does it improve outcomes?
e.g. change practice if treatment of re-bleeds is not effective

Relevance – How relevant is the treatment to the patient's condition?
e.g. ensure that all transfusions are relevant

Efficiency – Are the desired outcomes obtained with minimum effort, expense and waste?
e.g. Improve the efficiency of the laboratory process.