

Medical Practitioners Assurance Framework Refresh Frequently Asked Questions for Registered Managers in England

This document has been developed to support Registered Managers working in the independent healthcare sector around the implementation of the [Medical Practitioners Assurance Framework Refresh](#).

Context questions

1. What is the Independent Healthcare Providers Network?

The Independent Healthcare Providers Network (IHPN) is the representative body for independent sector healthcare providers. Our members deliver a very diverse range of services to NHS and private patients including acute care, primary care, community care, clinical home healthcare and diagnostics. IHPN represents the independent sector in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2. What is the Medical Practitioners Assurance and why was it developed?

The Medical Practitioners Assurance Framework (MPAF) was initially developed by IHPN in 2019 to improve consistency around effective clinical governance for medical practitioners across the independent sector and to raise the bar in medical leadership.

The original framework was developed under the leadership of former National Medical Director at NHS England, Sir Bruce Keogh with expert input from a balance of IHPN members and key external stakeholders. These included the Patients Association, General Medical Council, Care Quality Commission, Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England/Improvement and Royal Colleges and the refresh largely mirrored this approach.

The MPAF is designed to align with existing legal and regulatory frameworks and work towards them being better implemented, rather than adding more bureaucracy. The framework was therefore refreshed in 2022 to draw on best practice from within the sector and applies some of the key lessons learnt plus findings from national reports and inquiries including the Independent Inquiry into the issues raised by Paterson (2020) and the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review (2020).

3. How does the MPAF fit into an organisations Clinical Governance system?

The MPAF supports clinical governance. Clinical governance is a system through which healthcare providers are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which clinical excellence can flourish (Department of Health). It encompasses quality assurance; quality improvement; risk and incident management and pertains to all clinical services in a hospital or clinic.

Developing, operating and quality assuring clinical governance for doctors is a key responsibility for organisations and boards. It includes making sure there are clear lines of accountability throughout organisations and visible leadership from boards. There are a number of processes and activities which can support clinical governance for doctors some of which are outlined in the MPAF Refresh.

4. How do I know if the MPAF applies to my organisation?

The framework is a guidance document that will be of use to all independent providers who engage with doctors and medical practitioners.

How will the MPAF be monitored?

5. How will the IHPN monitor compliance with the framework?

IHPN as a member organisation does not monitor compliance with the framework. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) now uses the framework's principles in assessing how well-led an independent service is, with the framework a requirement of the NHS 2022/23 Standard Contract which all independent sector providers of NHS-funded care must adhere to.

The MPAF has been developed as to provide the most up to date view of expected practice around medical governance. It was therefore designed to be iterative with an inbuilt review process and should be viewed as a starting point for the sector from which to build. As such, the framework will also be reviewed periodically to ensure the principles remain in-keeping with current best practice around medical governance in the health system.

6. Will the CQC use the MPAF as part of their inspection methodology?

Although the MPAF is not part of the regulatory framework, the CQC have stated that:

"Robust medical governance is central to patient safety and high-quality care. CQC very much welcomes the updates that IHPN has made to strengthen the Medical Practitioners Assurance Framework and we are pleased to have been part of the expert advisory group that helped shape its development."

"Where providers can demonstrate effective implementation of its principles, this is considered as evidence of good governance and informs the judgement we make about how well led services being provided by that organisation are."

IHPN are working with the CQC to support consistency in how inspectors incorporate the framework in their inspections.

Questions about the document itself

7. How is the MPAF structured?

The document is divided into four key areas:

- creating an effective clinical governance structure for medical practitioners,
- monitoring patient safety, clinical quality and encouraging continuous improvement,
- supporting annual whole practice appraisal,
- raising and responding to concerns.

Under each of the key areas, the framework sets out "What are we trying to achieve?", provider responsibilities and medical practitioner responsibilities.

8. Who is the MPAF for?

The framework is focused on all medical practitioners working in independent healthcare settings through practising privileges or on an employed basis.

9. Will doctors know about the MPAF?

In October 2019 and in September 2022, IHPN shared a letter with our members regarding the MPAF and its refresh, encouraging them to forward it on to the Chair(s) of the Medical Advisory Committee(s) (or equivalent) and to all Registered Managers in their organisation, with the aim of ensuring a consistent message around the newly refreshed MPAF across clinical leaders and Registered Managers in the independent healthcare sector.

10. How can you share the MPAF with patients?

While the MPAF is not designed specifically for patients, it can be shared with them. IHPN has also worked with the Patients Association to develop a [patient animation](#) on “What to expect from independent healthcare” which we encourage independent providers to share on their websites which simplifies many aspects of the MPAF.

Questions about the Implementation of the framework?

11. Is implementation of the MPAF mandatory?

While the MPAF is not part of the regulatory framework, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) now uses the framework’s principles in assessing how well-led an independent service is, with the framework a requirement of the NHS 2022/23 Standard Contract which all independent sector providers of NHS-funded care must adhere to.

12. Do all aspects of the MPAF have to be implemented?

It is intended that the MPAF should be seen and used as a guidance document rather than a tick list or checklist. Individual organisations will have different structures and the framework does not require those structures to be replaced, but rather requires providers to consider the principles and to be able to demonstrate how their individual systems and processes meet the expectations of the framework.

What support is available from IHPN on implementing the MPAF?

13. Are there other supporting resources to assist with the implementation of the MPAF?

Alongside the framework, IHPN supporting resources are available to IHPN members on a [private IHPN members page](#) and includes access to the patient animation, information for chairs of Medical Advisory Committees (and equivalents), Executive Boards. Other training and support material will be added during 2023.

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