

Citizen Centred Governance Principles

Making sense of them

The Assembly Government's Citizen Centred governance principles embody what the Assembly Government wants public services to be, focused on the needs of citizens, with citizens who are engaged and involved in the development of services and who receive services which are efficient, effective and innovative in their design and implementation.

The principles are:

- ***Putting the citizen first*** - Putting the citizen at the heart of everything and focusing on their needs and experiences; making the organisation's purpose the delivery of a high quality service
- ***Knowing who does what and why*** - Making sure that everyone involved in the delivery chain understands each other's roles and responsibilities and how together they can deliver the best possible outcomes
- ***Engaging with others*** – working in constructive partnerships to deliver the best outcome for the citizen
- ***Living public sector values*** – being a value-driven organisation, rooted in Nolan principles and high standards of public life and behaviour, including openness, customer service standards, diversity and engaged leadership
- ***Fostering innovative delivery*** – being creative and innovative in the delivery of public services – working from evidence, and taking managed risks to achieve better outcomes
- ***Being a learning organisation*** – always learning and always improving service delivery
- ***Achieving value for money*** – looking after taxpayers' resources properly, and using them carefully to deliver high quality, efficient services

The principles themselves have derived from a two year programme of governance reviews across the NHS in Wales. The extent to which individual NHS organisations are able to demonstrate their alignment with the citizen centred governance principles will contribute to the Minister for Health and Social Services' annual review of NHS bodies performance.

The following paragraphs set out further information to help readers understand the principles.

Putting the Citizen First

Putting the citizen at the heart of everything and focusing on their needs and experiences; making the organisation's purpose the delivery of a high quality service

This is not about giving citizens everything they want – sometimes different people want different things. It's about a corporate attitude of mind which puts the interests of the citizen first, before the interests of the organisation.

For a start, "citizen" has a wide definition and means anyone who receives, or is affected by, public services. So, in the NHS, patients are the obvious citizens; but there are others whom the NHS has to consider – patients' relatives, for example. Organisations may define this in different ways – patient, service user, service recipients, etc. The name doesn't matter so much. It's the attitude and organisational culture that is important, as opposed to what the organisation says.

Putting the citizen first means tailoring what an organisation does and how it delivers services to suit what its citizens want, as much as it can within its own constraints. It means the ability to look at what it delivers from the viewpoint of the citizen. So a really citizen-focussed organisation will;

- Be clear about who it is there to serve;

- Be striving on a regular basis to keep in touch with what the citizens it serves want, and what they think about the services they receive;
- Be able to tell you about how it has changed what it does to meet the expectations of its citizens – listening isn't enough, it has to translate into action as a result
- Be involving citizens at an early stage in shaping its services - beware of the paternalistic “we know what's best for them” attitude
- Treat all its citizens with dignity and respect and try hard to bend the way the organisation functions to meet their needs, rather than expect them to conform to what suits the organisation. You can tell this in all sorts of ways – how people treated at reception, for example.

Knowing who does what and why

Making sure that everyone involved in the delivery chain understands each other's roles and responsibilities and how together they can deliver the best possible outcomes

This is about crystal-clear clarity and unanimity about everyone's role and how it fits into the bigger picture. This means, for example, at Board level, each member being clear about what their role is and what the role is of the person sitting next to them and opposite. Where there is a Chair and CEO it means clarity about their – quite different but complementary – roles. But it doesn't just cover individuals, nor does it only operate within the boundaries of an organisation. Where there are Committees and Advisory Groups everyone should be clear about how they relate to the main Board and what the different roles are. And this principle doesn't stop within the organisation itself, it also means being clear about how it relates to its partners and stakeholders; how it fits into the wider picture; and being clear about how the various arms of the Welsh Assembly Government fit into the picture as well. So an organisation which knows who does what and why will:

- Internally, be clear – and be able to evidence through outcomes, documentation or conversation – the roles of the different committees and people who work within it, and be clear about what they can and can't do, and who they account to;
- Externally, be clear about who are the citizens it is there to serve and what the citizens think about the services they receive
- Have a good understanding of how the different elements of the organisation function – for example, being clear about the role of Committees and Advisory Groups and how they fit into the main Board
- Have clear arrangements for listening constructively to its staff and working with them to enable the organisation to perform to its maximum effect
- Be able to explain how what they do fits into the wider framework;
- Be able to explain, at least in outline, the roles of the other bodies to which it relates – including the Welsh Assembly Government and its various arms - and how it works together with them;
- And don't forget the "why" – being focussed on outcomes and the purpose of the organisation. It's amazing how many bodies craft a mission statement and then never look at it again. A clear articulation of what success looks like from the citizen's point of view. So organisations should be focussed on outcomes and not just outputs not primarily processes, except as a requisite of achieving outcomes.

Of course the "how" question is really important too. This is covered a bit later on in the Principles.

Engaging with Others

Working in constructive partnerships to deliver the best outcome for the citizen

In recent years, public service providers have realised that that no-one can operate effectively in isolation. Every organisation is dependent upon others to help it deliver its services and to operate most effectively. There was a time when partnership working was viewed as a desirable addition to core business if there was time and space for it; but it shouldn't be like that now. Engaging with others has got to be seen as part of the core business. So an organisation which engages with others will:

- Know who its key partners are and will be clear about the purpose of each partnership and the different roles of those involved;
- Be open and constructive in its approach, treating its partners as equals and showing respect to all of them, even if there is a disparity of size or influence;
- Ensure that its partnerships are citizen-focussed and have the aim of providing better services
- Have partnerships which have razor-sharp clarity about outcomes, evaluations and relative responsibilities
- Keep its partnerships under review and be prepared for them to change, adapt or come to an end where they no longer serve a useful purpose.

Living Public Service Values

Being a value-driven organisation, rooted in Nolan principles and high standards of public life and behaviour, including openness, customer service standards, diversity and engaged leadership

This is about what really drives the organisation – the corporate culture and the values which it tries to live out. We have deliberately not tried to define too closely exactly what constitutes “public service values” since the particular values which need to apply in different organisations may well be stated in different ways. But they will never be in conflict. Nolan principles, the Civil Service Code, openness, the Welsh Assembly Government Customer Service Standards, will all help here. In the NHS in Wales, these are defined within its *Values & Standards of Behaviour framework*. Almost every organisation will have a statement of what its values are. The key issue is the extent to which they are put into practice in the way in which it goes about its business. So, for example, most organisations will tell you that they value their staff as their most important resource etc; but some make a reality of that, and some don't. Similarly, you might find that what really drives some organisations is the personality of the person at the top; or whatever the most pressing issue of the moment might be – there are organisations which are reacting to what happens to them, rather than being proactive in pursuing their objectives. So organisations which live public service values will:

- Be able to tell you, on a reasonably consistent basis, what are the values which drive the organisation and be able to show you where they are written down;
- Have values which adequately reflect the public service ethos in their particular circumstances;
- Exhibit corporate and individual behaviour patterns which seek to live out these values (don't forget that organisations, like people, never get a 100% score in this area!)

- Be, at heart, a value-driven organisation rather than marching to any other tune – as long as the values are right. Preservation of the status quo, for example, actually drives some organisations, even when this might not be in the best interests of the citizen.

Fostering Innovative Delivery

Being creative and innovative in the delivery of public services – working from evidence, and taking managed risks to achieve better outcomes

Thinking outside the box, willingness to try something new, experimenting with new modes of delivery – however it's expressed, the principle is the same. Really good organisations are open to new ideas and are prepared to be creative, to try things and to take managed risks in the process. Again, there might be a difference here between rhetoric and practice, since some organisations will say that they are innovative (and will actually believe that) but in practice fear of failure or criticism will be the prevailing attitude.

This is where risk management comes into the principles. Most organisations have risk management processes which are at least adequate in principle. The issue is the extent to which in practice the organisation is actually managing risk rather than maintaining risk registers to satisfy the auditors. Really good organisations will be prepared to take managed risks and at times be prepared to fail. They will recognise that in these complex times they need to have a discerning risk appetite – much more careful with the banking arrangements, for example, than in trying different ways of doing things; and they will base their decisions on evidence of what seems to be working and what doesn't. Risk management is simply an extrapolation of the basic principle of considering whether to take an umbrella with you when you go out in the morning – what will I do if it rains? is it likely to rain? Does it really matter that much if I get wet today, considering my appointments? How does the inconvenience of carrying an umbrella around balance out against the possibility of getting caught in a shower?

Organisations which are fostering innovative delivery will:

- Be able to show you how they encourage innovation as an integral part of their business;
- Be able to tell you about things which they have tried which have worked successfully, and which they have then built upon; and things which haven't worked but have contributed to learning;
- Use evidence as a matter of course in formulating their policies and strategies;
- Have a risk management system which is a reflection of how they go about the business of managing risk, rather than be a self-enclosed process;
- Be discerning in their risk appetite, according to the circumstances, and neither reckless not timid in their approach.

Being a Learning Organisation

Always learning and always improving service delivery

This Principle flows from the previous one. Most organisations will assure you that they are “learning organisations” - or at least are trying to be - but fewer will be able to give you examples of what they have learned in the last twelve months. Again, it sometimes comes back to culture – what happens if there is criticism of the organisation or its activities? Some organisations, or individuals within organisations, will respond by coming out fighting, to demonstrate that they were right all along; others will welcome the occasion as an opportunity to improve what they do. For processes, the principle of getting it right the first time is really good; but for policies, really good organisations will know that they are unlikely to get it completely right the first

time, and that they need feedback and evaluation so that they can grow and learn. So being a learning organisation means:

- Having systems in place to get feedback about the services it provides, and have a loop which uses this feedback to improve what it does;
- treating complaints seriously and welcoming them as an opportunity to improve;
- having a culture which isn't defensive or blame-oriented, but which recognises that what it does can never be perfect, and which seeks opinions and feedback in order to provide better services;
- Investing in the training and development of its staff.

Achieving Value for Money

Looking after taxpayers' resources properly, and using them carefully to deliver high quality, efficient services

Good organisations take their stewardship responsibilities extremely seriously, both in looking after the resources under their control – it's not just money – and using it to the best effect. The key issues here are:

- ***propriety*** – behaving in accordance with the principles of frugality and good governance;
- ***regularity*** – not doing anything which it is not empowered to do; and
- ***value for money***, which has three elements: efficiency, using the minimum resources needed to achieve the objective; effectiveness, making sure that resources deployed achieve the desired aim; and economy, getting the best balance between inputs and outputs.

Organisations which are achieving value for money will:

- have proper systems in place for financial control and management, including in-year monitoring of expenditure and taking corrective action if necessary;
- be transparent, open and accurate in their financial reporting;
- Have an Audit Committee which subjects the organisation to scrutiny and challenge in matters of propriety, regularity and value for money.
- have a culture of using public resources carefully and frugally, with the avoidance of extravagance or waste;
- have good systems of project management, budget delegations and training in financial management