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Survey & Focus Group

Report



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Introduction

The following report outlines findings of research conducted by the QUASAR project team. The main aim of this research was to identify what people who use services, their families and professionals who support them determine elements that are important in quality system for social and VET services. The research was conducted during August to October 2023.

Research Methodology

There were two methods deployed to complete this research, an online questionnaire and focus groups. Each Project Partner circulated the Microsoft forms online questionnaire to families, people who use services and professionals. The questionnaire provided a range of closed, open-ended and multiple-choice questions and included an accessible format for persons who use services. The content for the questions were based on the literature review and SWOT analysis on existing systems and were translated into Italian and Spanish. The responses were analysed using excel and the findings are detailed below.

The project partners facilitated focus groups with families, people who use services and professionals from various disciplines. The project steering committee set similar topics to the online questionnaire questions/topics, for the focus group facilitators.

Survey Engagement

251 people participated in the Survey, with the main respondents from the project partners, countries: Italy, Ireland and Spain, with 23% of respondents from other countries with significant quality assurance experience such as Belgium, Greece, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia & the UK.

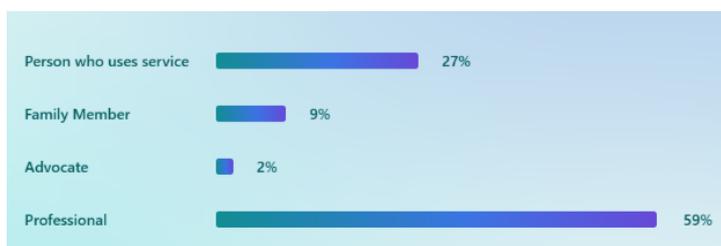


64% of respondents were from the health & social care sector, with 24% from the VET sector and 11% coming from other rehabilitation and disability organisations.

59% of respondents were professionals, people who work in the health social care, and VET sectors and people who have experience of working with quality assurance systems.

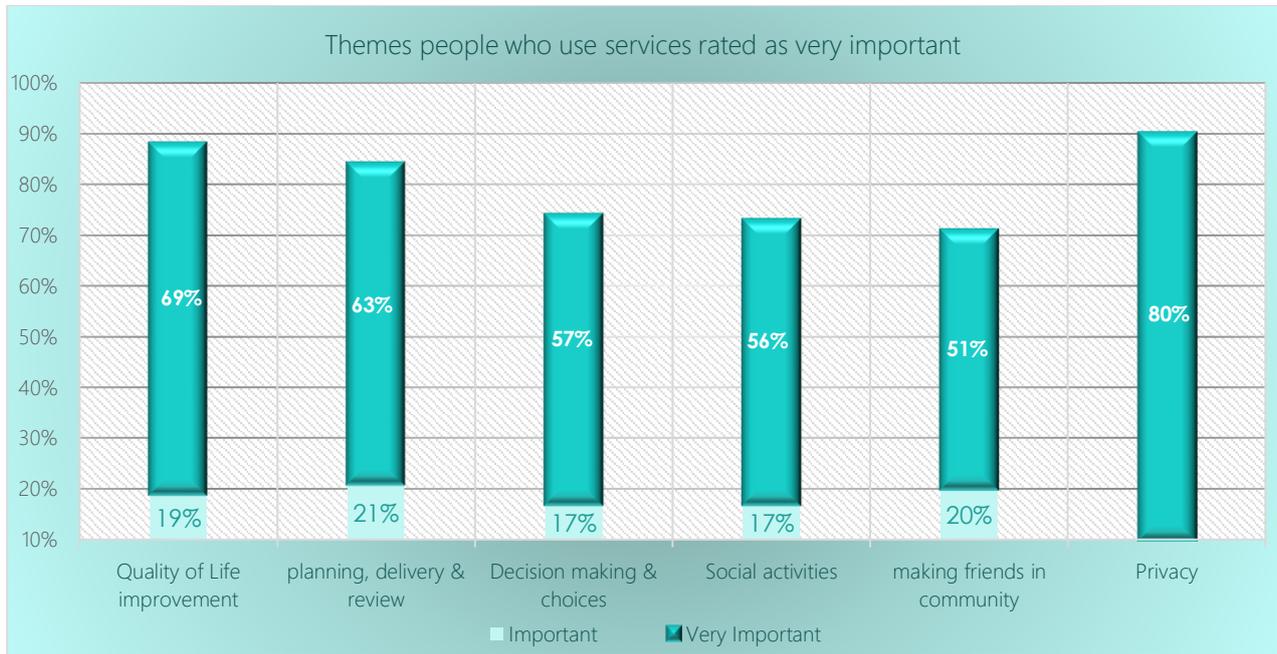
27% of respondents were people who use service and 9% their families.

Due to very low engagement of families in the research, survey there was insufficient data to do a meaningful analysis.



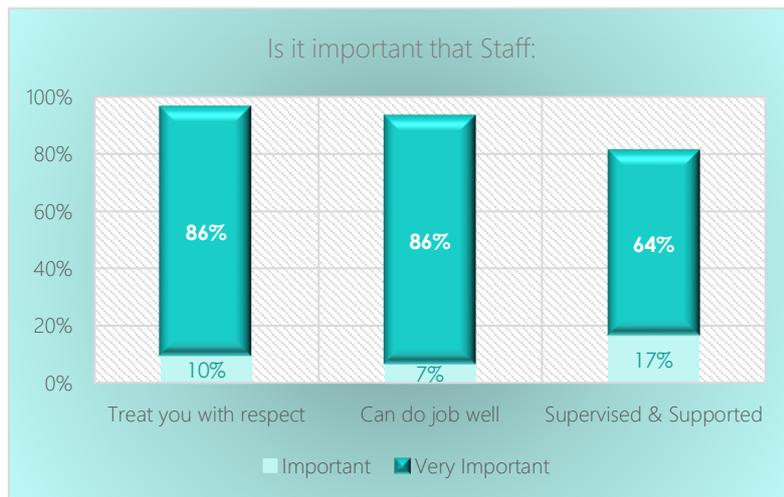
People who use Services Results

The following section provides an overview of the survey findings from the perspective of people who use services. People who use services rated the supports that are very important & important to them:



The results demonstrate that 'Privacy' is very important to respondents at 80%, with 'Quality of Life Improvement' second at 69%, and 'Planning & Delivery' third at 63%.

Other areas not rated as important but still over 50%: 'Social Activities' at 56% and 'Making Friends in the community' at 51%



When asked about staff and their attributes, 86% of respondents stated that it is very important that Staff 'Treat them with Respect' and 'Can do their jobs well'.

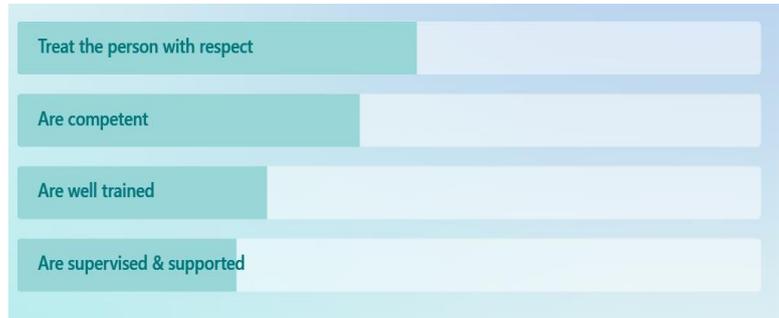
Professionals' Results

The section outlines the findings from the perspective of professionals who support people in services.

Respondents were asked to rank the statements from top to bottom in order of priority. The following demonstrates first choice for each of the statements:

Question: It is important that staff in a service:

61% of respondents stated that 'Treating the Person with Respect' 28% rated competency' with 'Well trained' at 5% and 6% for 'supervised and well trained



Question: It is important that the service provider:

50% of respondents stated that 'supporting the person in Improving their Quality of Life' as being first choice, with 22% choosing 'Empowering the person in their decision making' with empowering the person in the planning, delivery and

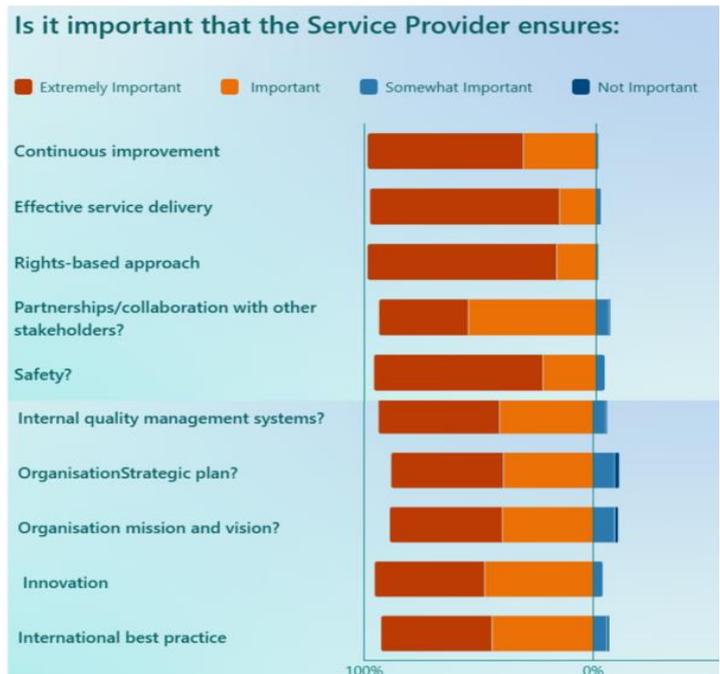
review of their services.14% put Privacy as first choice and supporting engagement in social activities at 5%

Professionals were asked to rate the level of importance that the service provider ensures:

'Effective Service Delivery' & 'Rights Based Approach' both scored as 'extremely important' at 82% and 'Safety' at 73%

Continuous Improvement scored next highest at 67%.

Areas such as 'Strategy', 'Mission & Vision', 'Innovation' and 'International Best Practice' all scored under 50% as 'extremely important', with having an 'Internal Quality Management system' scoring just above 53%.



However, four areas received an average 10% scoring of 'not important' to 'somewhat important'. (*Internal Quality Management along with Mission and Vision, Strategy and International Best Practice*)

Experience with Quality Assurance systems

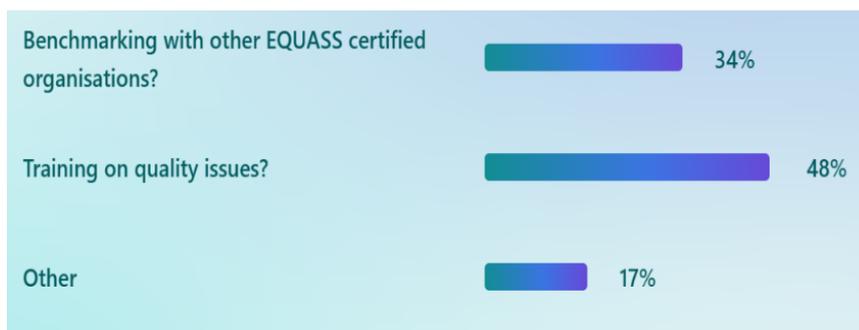
When asked, 64% of professionals who responded to the survey had experience, working with quality assurance systems.

34% stated they had experience of EQUASS, while 28% stated they had worked with New Directions (*Ireland's day services quality framework*), 12% had experience of ISO and 5% had experience of EFQM.



Other quality systems mentioned were POM's, CARF, QMark, CQL and SEQF.

When asked, 48% of professionals stated they would be interested in training on quality issues and 34% stated they would be interested in benchmarking with other EQUASS certified organisations.



Other areas of interest included building stronger links between quality measures and the rights-based approach, balancing rights and responsibilities, piloting initiatives, collaboration, research and impact measurement / evaluation.

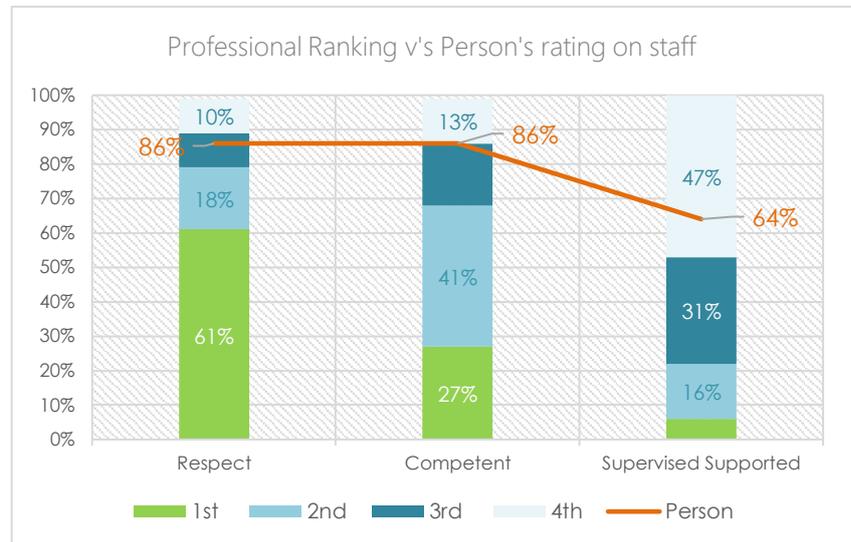
Survey Results Comparisons

It is interesting to examine and compare responses to the similar questions by people who use services and professionals. (People who use services and staff rated the survey questions differently, choosing from very important to not important and professionals ranking in order of priority. The graphs (*staff and service supports*) below demonstrate the professionals ranking in order of one to four and the person who uses services rating of very important.

Comparison of Views on Staff

People who use services and professionals, both rated Respect and staff competence high, with both ranked in the top three for professionals and the person rated as very important at 86%.

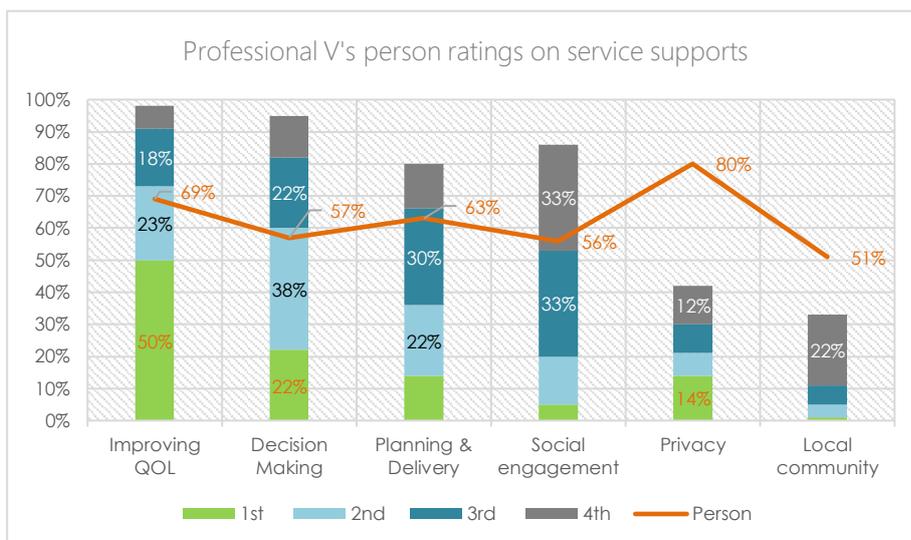
However, supervision and support did not rate as highly both for the person and the professional.



Comparison of Views on Service Support

By analysing and demonstrating the results, (different methods and ratings, as outlined above) from both professionals and people, the research has provided some common themes.

Improving Quality of Life & Decision making, are the top two choices and match the persons 'very important' rating. While Planning & delivery and social engagement, top three choices, align with the person's ratings for same.



However, people who use services rated 'Privacy' significantly higher than other thematic areas, in their survey and much higher than the top four ratings the professional rated with a gap of 34%. Making friends in Local community also demonstrates a difference in priority, with a 18% gap between the professional & the person.

Focus Group Feedback – General

The focus groups discussed elements for a quality service; there were some topics comparable with the findings from the survey respondents.

Key areas highlighted were supporting a rights'-based person-centred approach, having staff who are respectful and competent and providers implementing processes and systems in place that contribute to quality service provision.

The feedback from each of the focus group has been summarised and analysed in order to examine if any trends or themes emerged in responses. A number of themes emerged from the focus groups to include staff and business.

The table below outlines an overview of responses to a selection of the questions asked of people who use services and professionals who support them.

| Person who uses services response | Professionals response |
|--|--|
| Q. What do you think a quality service looks like? | Q. How do you think service providers can ensure a good quality service? |
| Response Themes relating to Staff | Response Themes relating to Staff |
| Competent, empowered, respectful & well-trained staff | Empowering the person (<i>autonomy, self-awareness & esteem</i>) |
| Rights based approach | Continual professional development |
| Person centred approach / Quality of Life | Rights based Approach |
| Appropriate staff levels | Good working relationships |
| Strong communication & Respect | Person centred Approach |
| During focus groups staff emerged as a theme in discussions; staff using a rights-based and person-centred approach with a focus on empowerment were acknowledged as elements of a quality service, along with good communication and relationships. | |
| Response Themes relating to Business | Response Themes relating to Business |
| Processes | Defined quality system, clarity on service provision |
| Measurement | Continual professional development |
| Annual reports | Listening, analysing and improving |
| Staff training support structure | Self-evaluation & monitoring of quality ethos |
| Quality Framework / Quality Ethos | Measuring feedback & satisfaction |
| Themes relating to business also emerged during the focus groups, the importance of having clear processes and objectives with a focus on review and monitoring were evident. | |

Focus Group Feedback – People who use Services

The following is a summary of views raised through focus groups with people who use services, who were of the view that service providers should:

- Ensure that the service is clean and safe for its users
- Follow all service policies in relation to ethics
- Ensure there is a good working relationship where clients are comfortable giving feedback
- Engage with service users regularly (in person) and also gather feedback through surveys/online forms that are easy to read
- Ensure service is accessible (transport to service)
- Implement changes that are suggested through the feedback process
- Be specific about what the service offers
- Employ good staff who treat the person well and support with their personal issues.

Focus Group Feedback – Families

The following are a summary of views raised through focus groups with families:

- Quality service providers develop procedures to continuously monitor the service delivery.
- Service providers should view quality assurance systems as a tool that can improve the effectiveness of the service delivered leading to improved service user satisfaction.
- Reduce additional bureaucratic load on monitoring activities
- A quality system should require the evaluation of improvement action plans not just at the end, but also throughout the implementation of the planned improvement action.
- Professionals need to be able to adapt to the specific needs of the group and have access to good quality resources and procedures
- Quality services ensure that the person supported has autonomy, can access resources and services on their own and be respected
- Quality assurance processes should ensure that all people supported receive an effective service, not just because of the luck through meeting sensitive and competent people, but ensure the systematic delivery of an effective service, despite luck and staffs' good effort.

Service impact on a Persons Quality of Life

In the focus groups with people who use services and families, there were discussions in relation to quality of life, all focus group participants acknowledged that they believe it is important that the service they receive has a positive impact on their quality of life, therefore these needs be considered in the context of quality service delivery.

See below some quotes from people who use services, who participated in the survey and focus groups and the impact of a quality service on their lives

'It means to live with less barriers'

Socially: *"It helps me in that the approach my centre had helped me to improve my mind set. The way they promote social interactions with non-judgemental actions."*

Work: *"Within my centre, we have linked in with external organisations in relation to employment. I like that I know they are there when I need them."*

Community: *"We are exposed to positive things in our centres. There is a huge sense of community. It motivates you to get involved with other organisations and charities in our communities."*

Friends: *The service has enabled me to make friends within the service as we are all helping each other. "It wises you up to the company you keep outside of the centre, The Decider Skills course really helped us to learn about friendships and relationships."*

Confidence: *I set challenges to build my confidence, 'The service suits my need; I have more self-esteem' 'I can make more friends now'*

Education: *'The service supports me to attend college and having a work/life balance'*

Focus Group Feedback – Professionals

During the focus groups a number of additional areas were discussed with professionals, the following section provides an overview of responses.

Development of an organisation's Internal Quality Framework: When asked how organisations developed their quality frameworks each organisation's approach differed. Some organisations were using a structured analytical approach, utilising planning, processes, procedures, monitoring and measuring and utilising the metric results to inform and change.

While other organisations looked at the human element to build their quality structure. Staff's principles, competency and awareness are the key drivers in providing quality services.

Some participants suggested that there is a shift towards future quality systems being more driven by service providers themselves. This approach involves increased involvement, self-evaluation, and self-regulation by organisations.

Others comments suggested there is a challenge of balancing the expectations of service users, and other stakeholders including the need to prioritise the well-being and quality of life of service users and the providers' principles, while also meeting funders' requirements.

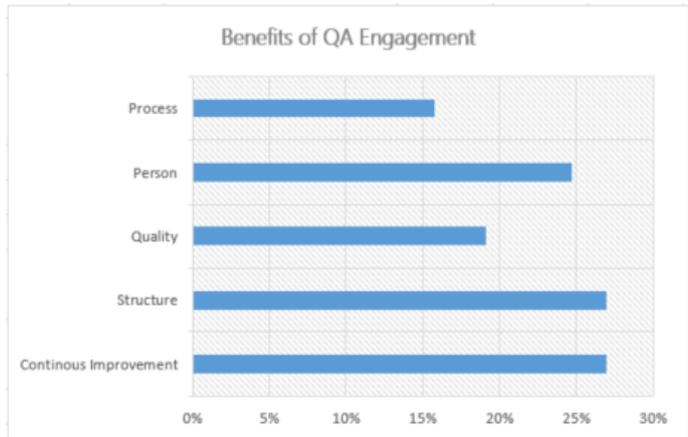
Training & Understanding: During the focus groups, some professionals identified that within their organisation; staff did not necessarily understand the difference between quality assurance systems and regulation and are often viewed as the same thing.

The focus groups identified a lack of focused training and understanding on quality systems and processes. They also acknowledged a lack of both human and technical resources, affecting quality services.

Benefits of QA Engagement: The benefits of organisations engaging in quality assurance systems was discussed in the groups. A number of themes emerged during the sessions, these were analysed and a number of categories identified, see outlined in the graph.

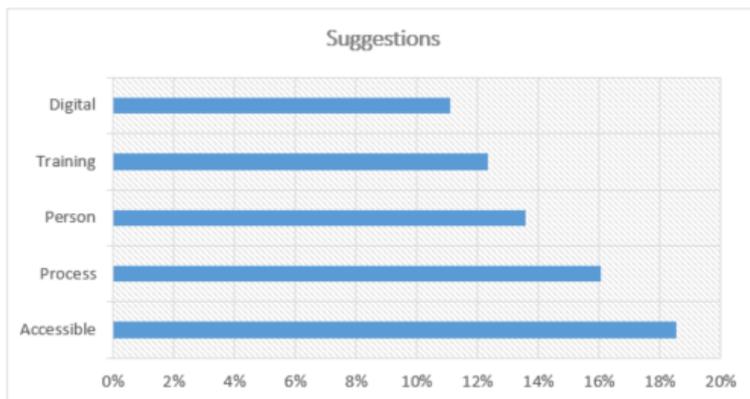
Interestingly out of the five themes identified, which scored between 16% and 27%, there is a strong focus on system and process.

The results suggest that professionals see multiple benefits in engaging in a QA process from benefits for the person using the service to a focus on continuous improvement.



Remarks made by focus group participants included *"helps ensure the quality of services provided"* and *"organise the entity into a process management system"*.

Suggestions for Improvement of Quality Systems: A number of themes emerged during the focus groups, following analysis a number of categories were identified, see outlined in the graph below.



The theme of accessibility was highlighted, with comments such as *"must be simple and jargon free"* and *"the language is too unnatural. We have to read each sentence several times to make sure we understand the questions"*.

In terms of responses from people who use services, comments included *"very much geared towards people with intellectual disabilities and issues with capacity - needs more focus on people with physical and sensory disabilities"* and *"having tools to improve the quality of life"*.

Key Elements Required for a Quality Management System: Professionals were also asked what they thought were key elements of a quality management system, again a number of similar themes were raised amongst the groups, these include:

- Strategy (*providers have plans in place to meet objectives (Focus groups)*)
- Rights based approach
- Staff training & commitment
- Needs based (*providing right service for the right person*)
- Flexible
- Evaluation and continuous improvement

Areas for Future Consideration

Based on the results of and feedback from the survey along with an analysis of the focus groups below are some suggestions for consideration into the future, this research highlights the following:

Staff: Staff should be empowered and knowledgeable about quality principles to provide and monitor quality services and monitor quality. Clear and comprehensive training and guidance will form a key part of this.

Organisational Approach: Effective implementation of quality should be holistic and include all organisational personnel, rather than just a quality manager, this approach ensures a more comprehensive understanding and commitment to the quality system.

Quality of Life as a Principle: How to define and measure quality of life is an increasingly important concept and needs, to be considered in the context of quality assurance for human services.

Continuous improvements: A quality system should focus on continuous improvements and emphasise the achievement of results and outcomes.

Quality Systems: A quality system should not be a burden on the organisation, quality has to be practical, needs to be easy to understand and not create large administrative burdens.

A Learning Community: Service providers require a community for sharing experiences, practices, provide more support on quality system implementation.