



# NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE 2026

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**NHS IMPACT**  
Improving Patient Care Together

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# Embedding a Quality Management System and what it means in practice

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3 March 2026



East and North  
Hertfordshire Teaching  
NHS Trust

# ProudToBeENHT

# Agenda

- Aim of session
- Introduction
- What is a management system?
- Lessons from the NHS
  - What I've picked up on the way
  - The VMI/NHS Partnership
  - The East and North Hertfordshire Production System

# Aim

To **clearly** share:

- a personal perspective of what a quality management system is;
- lessons I've learnt along the way; and
- point participants to sources of information to deepen knowledge.

# Introduction

- This will be an (un)masterclass, however...
- Led trust level improvement since 2007
- Executive Director of Improvement – NHS Improvement
- Implemented a QMS at East and North Hertfordshire since 2023

# What is a management system?

A quality management system (QMS) is a set of processes and practices that a company uses to ensure that its products and services meet the highest level of customer satisfaction. - *Lean VLOG*

QMS is a coordinated and dynamically interconnected approach to planning, improving, controlling and assuring high-quality care. A QMS is applied across all levels of an organisation – from team to board. It is aligned to strategy, underpinned by documented processes, procedures and responsibilities, and embedded in organisational culture. - *Q Community*

# What is a management system?

JURAN TRILOGY



# What is a management system?

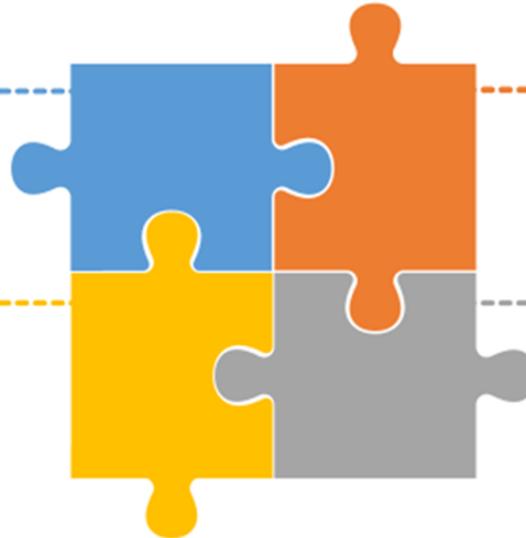
## The ELFT quality management system

### Quality planning

Identify the needs of the customer & population  
Develop service models to meet the need  
Put in place structures & process to manage the service

### Quality improvement

Identify what matters most  
Design project and bring together a diverse team  
Discover solutions through involving those closest to the work, test ideas, implement and scale up



### Quality control

Identify clear measures of quality for the service and monitor these over time.  
Take corrective action when appropriate.  
Internal vigilance to hold gains made through improvement

### Quality assurance

Periodic checks to ensure the service is meeting the needs of the customer & population  
Actions to address gaps identified

From Shah A. Moving beyond quality improvement projects. BMJ 2020

# What is a management system?

ISO 9001:2015  
Quality Management System



## Key Principles of ISO 9001:2015

1. Customer Focus
2. Leadership
3. Engagement of People
4. Process Approach
5. Continuous Improvement
6. Evidence-Based Decision Making
7. Relationship Management

# What is a management system?



# Lessons I've learnt on the way

## Does quality improvement improve quality?

Mary Dixon-Woods <sup>1</sup>, Graham P Martin <sup>2</sup>

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 31098223 PMID: [PMC6465806](#) DOI: [10.7861/futurehosp.3-3-191](#)

### Abstract

Although quality improvement (QI) is frequently advocated as a way of addressing the problems with healthcare, evidence of its effectiveness has remained very mixed. The reasons for this are varied but the growing literature highlights particular challenges. Fidelity in the application of QI methods is often variable. QI work is often pursued through time-limited, small-scale projects, led by professionals who may lack the expertise, power or resources to instigate the changes required. There is insufficient attention to rigorous evaluation of improvement and to sharing the lessons of successes and failures. Too many QI interventions are seen as 'magic bullets' that will produce improvement in any situation, regardless of context. Too much improvement work is undertaken in isolation at a local level, failing to pool resources and develop collective solutions, and introducing new hazards in the process. This article considers these challenges and proposes four key ways in which QI might itself be improved.

**Keywords:** evaluation; healthcare organisation; hospitals; patient safety; quality improvement; research design/methods.

[PubMed Disclaimer](#)

# Lessons I've learnt on the way

In 2010, 72% of NHS trusts and foundation trusts mentioned 'lean' in their annual report.

But lean done properly is like taking your organisation to the gym.

Many of these trusts just bought the trainers!

Alan Martyn, Director of Lean Transformation, NHS Improvement

# Lessons from the VMI partnership



## How to Foster a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Learning from NHS - Virginia Mason institute Partnership

Nicola Burgess

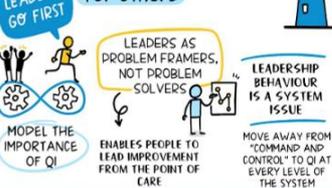
**1. BUILD CULTURAL READINESS** as foundation for better QI outcomes



**2. EMBED QI ROUTINES AND PRACTICES** into everyday practice



**3. HAVE LEADERS SHOW THE WAY** and light the path for others



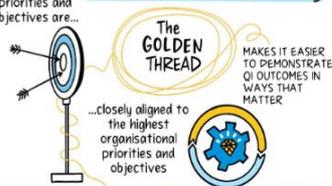
**4. RELATIONSHIPS** aren't a priority, **THEY'RE A PREREQUISITE**



**5. HOLD EACH OTHER TO ACCOUNT FOR BEHAVIOURS,** not just outcomes

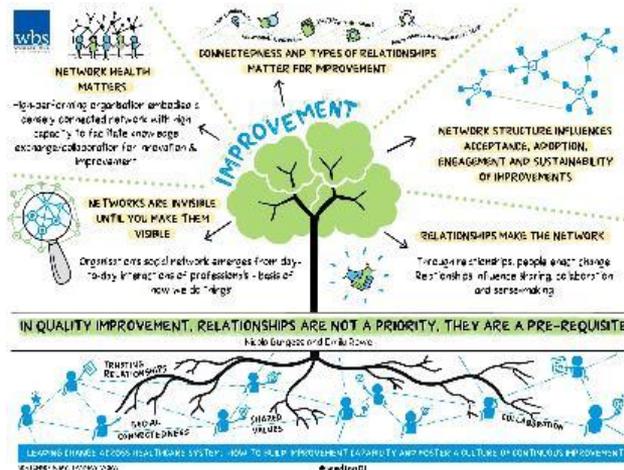
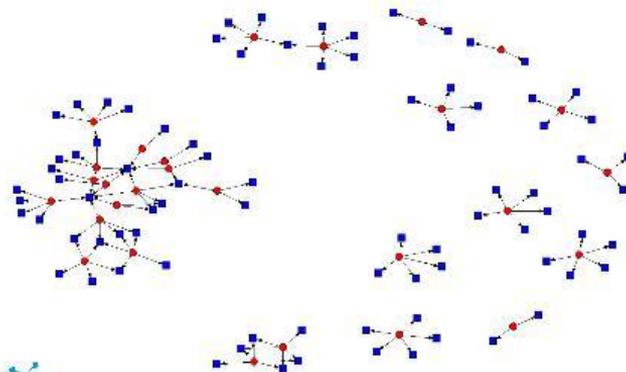
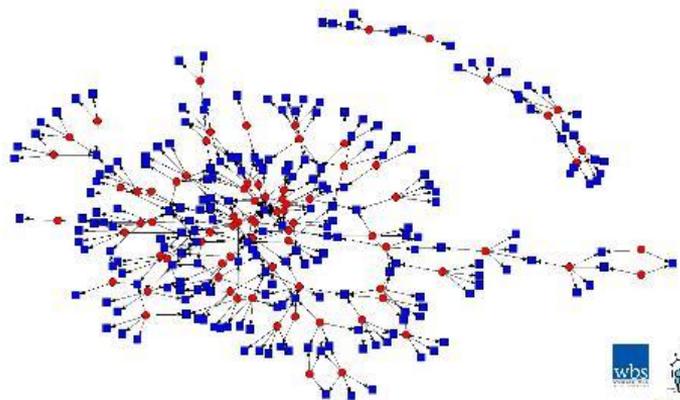


**6. THE RULE OF THE GOLDEN THREAD:** not all improvement matters in the same way

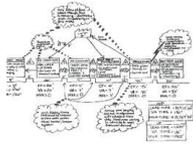


LEADING CHANGE ACROSS HEALTHCARE SYSTEM: HOW TO BUILD IMPROVEMENT CAPABILITY AND FOSTER A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

# Lessons from the VMI partnership



# Lessons from the VMI partnership



System Thinker

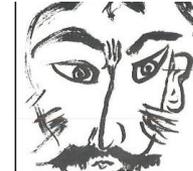


Coach

Problem Framer



“Go and See”



Learner

Skills	Follow Up
1st	Review Issue Board for next or 10-14 day status
2nd	Review Items due
3rd	Review Issues
Complete Forwarding Form	Issue and status of changes
Quality Check - (and then to our DSD)	Review activities
Feedback	
0th	Management Questions
	- What is working well for you?
	- What are the greatest challenges?
	- What is our biggest risk for you?
	- Do there are any other things for
	0-100 scale?
	- How are you doing today?
	- How will you work with you?

Standard Work

# Lessons from the ENH Production System

## THIS TAKES TIME



Requires some  
investment



Start with the  
senior leadership



Introduce some  
tools early



Don't assume that  
even QI people  
will like the change



Standardisation  
is hard



This is the way  
we run the business

# Connecting the Dots: The Strategic Goal Cascade

Strategic goals are whole organisation focus; they define the Trust's direction of travel and multi-year ambitions that lead us to achieving our vision with the intention to transform the organisation

These goals are shared and cascaded locally with leadership and teams working together to agree their own annual objectives that align and support delivery of operational efficiency and effectiveness



# Financial savings

