Healthcare Commission
Dignity in care for older people

Background:
In March 2006 Healthcare commission jointly with Audit Commission and CSCI produced a report on older people services called "Living well in later life". The evidence for this report was based on the analysis of national data, joint inspections and listening exercise with older people and their carers. The report highlighted many areas of concern where services needed to be improved. One such issue was Dignity and respect for older people. A subsequent analysis of the HC complaints data reinforced the need to undertake a focussed study in this area.

The joint report received considerable attention from both media and political circles and the commission made a commitment to give high priority to addressing the issues relating to Dignity and respect for older people.

The report is available on the Healthcare Commission’s website

http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/nationalfindings/nationalthemedreports/nationalserviceframeworks/nsf-olderpeople.cfm

Current work:
We are now undertaking in depth work on dignity in care for older people while in hospital.

The key approach for this project is the surveillance route. The screening and surveillance of key themes will structure
- The screening by reference to particular core standards
- The inquiry into a particular trust will provide a conclusion that there has been a lapse on a particular standard.

This exercise will enable us to identify performance of the trusts on these standards and develop a risk report for each of the trusts. Selected trusts will then be followed by a visit to verify the self-assessment. A combination of observation and interviews with staff will be used for the visits. This approach will provide us the quality assurance system for ensuring that AHC declarations are robust and give the true picture of the way services are being provided for older people.

Based on the visits and the surveillance data, trusts found not meeting the standard(s) or at risk of not meeting them, will receive a notification letter as advanced warning that the underperformance needs to be reflected in the AHC declarations for the next year for these two standards.

The trusts that have been visited will be given feedback highlighting the areas where improvements can be made.

A national report will be produced at the end of the project, which will provide a commentary on the findings on dignity in care for older people while in hospital and will also provide some good practice examples.