

## Defining the Terms Used

It is vital to ensure that any terms used in your aims and objectives are defined and understood by all those involved in your audit. This reduces the risk of ambiguity and errors.

For example - take the objective, 'Ensure all red cell transfusions are effective'.

This poses further questions:

### ***What do you mean by Red Cell Transfusion?***

*Is it all red cell transfusions; or specific blood groups / specific products? Are you investigating all patients; or specific patient groups?*

### ***How would you define effective?***

*It could be measured in several ways, such as an increased post transfusion haemoglobin level, but could also include measurements of symptomatic improvement.*



This simple example shows that it is vital to make your aims and objectives clear and unambiguous and define any terms used.

Developing clear aims and objectives will ensure that there is no confusion over the information you intend to collect; and the standards against which you are going to compare practice.

Clear aims and objectives help to facilitate discussion of clinical audit results and with development of recommendations for change and improvement.



**Remember – think carefully about exactly what you want to measure, for example – effective transfusions that raise Haemoglobin levels are not the same as appropriate transfusions!**

The Clinical Audit Protocol / Planning Template (FRM3720) requires you to identify aims and objectives prior to consideration of audit support.



If you require help developing your aims and objectives or with any other aspect of clinical audit, please contact a member of the clinical audit team.

Further information about clinical audit is available from SharePoint on the clinical audit pages: <https://nhsbloodandtransplant.sharepoint.com/sites/Clinical/SitePages/Clinical%20Audit.aspx> where full details of all completed clinical audit reports can be found (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020). All leaflets in this series (INF450-INF460) are available via the controlled document library on NHSBT Intranet (Link)

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## Leaflet 5

# Developing Aims and Objectives in Clinical Audit

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## What are Aims and Objectives?

Once you have chosen your audit topic (see INF452 Identifying a Clinical Audit Topic), it can be tempting to include other related issues. Care must be taken to avoid making your audit overlarge or hard to perform.



To ensure that your audit stays focussed on the important issues you will need to clearly define your **Aims** and **Objectives**.

### Aims...

...are simple and broad statements of intent. They describe what you want to achieve; some examples are below:

**Example 1** – *Ensure blood is only taken from suitable donors*

**Example 2** – *Ensure blood given to patients is safe*

**Example 3** – *Ensure sample turnaround times are acceptable*

### Objectives ...

...are more detailed and specific statements. They describe what aspect of quality you are going to measure to show that your aims have been met.

Using *Example 1*, we can develop objectives to show how we comply with the aim

**Objective 1** - *Ensure that blood donors are accepted appropriately*

**Objective 2** - *Ensure that blood donors are deferred appropriately*

You will notice that each objective consists of a statement containing three separate points (*with examples given in brackets*):

- A **verb** describing what you want to do, (*ensure, determine if, increase, change practice if, reduce the level of*)
- An **intervention / service** (*blood donation, transfusion, giving medication*) and
- An **aspect of quality**

### Maxwell's Dimensions of Quality

(Maxwell R.J. 1984 Quality Assessment in Health, BMJ 288 1470-1)

Maxwell's six dimensions of quality are useful for deciding what you will measure to show your aims have been met.



## 1. Access (to service)

Who can use the service and who should be using the service?  
(*Ensure all potential donors can access a blood donor session*)

## 2. Equity

Is access to care fair and equal according to the needs of users / patients?  
(*Do all patients have access to therapeutic apheresis services?*)

## 3. (Social) Acceptability

Do the users and patients agree with the intervention?  
(*Determine if information leaflets are acceptable to donors*)

## 4. Effectiveness (for individuals)

Is the intervention delivered in the right way, does it improve outcomes?  
(*Change practice if for example, if treatment of re-bleeds is not effective*)

## 5. Relevance (to needs)

How relevant is the treatment to the patient's condition?  
(*Ensure that all transfusions are relevant*)

## 6. Efficiency and Economy

Are the desired outcomes obtained with minimum effort, expense and waste?  
(*Improve the efficiency of the laboratory process*)