



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

Achieving Quality in Human Services

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Quality and Standards in Human Services Conference
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What is the NESC Project About?

In a nutshell



This project is concerned with how regulation and standards can best contribute to good quality, continuously improving human services

(performance emphasis rather than mere compliance)



The Overall Project

- **Overview of Concepts and Practice**
 - Conceptual overview of regulation, standards and quality improvement
 - Draws on international experience & reviews Irish experience
 - Identifies key themes
 - Suggests some questions for further exploration
- **Six reports exploring the regimes of quality and accountability**
 - Residential Care for Older People
 - Homecare for Older People
 - End-of -Life Care in Hospitals
 - Disability Services
 - The School System
 - Policing
- **Synthesis Report**
 - Summarises results
 - Draws conclusions

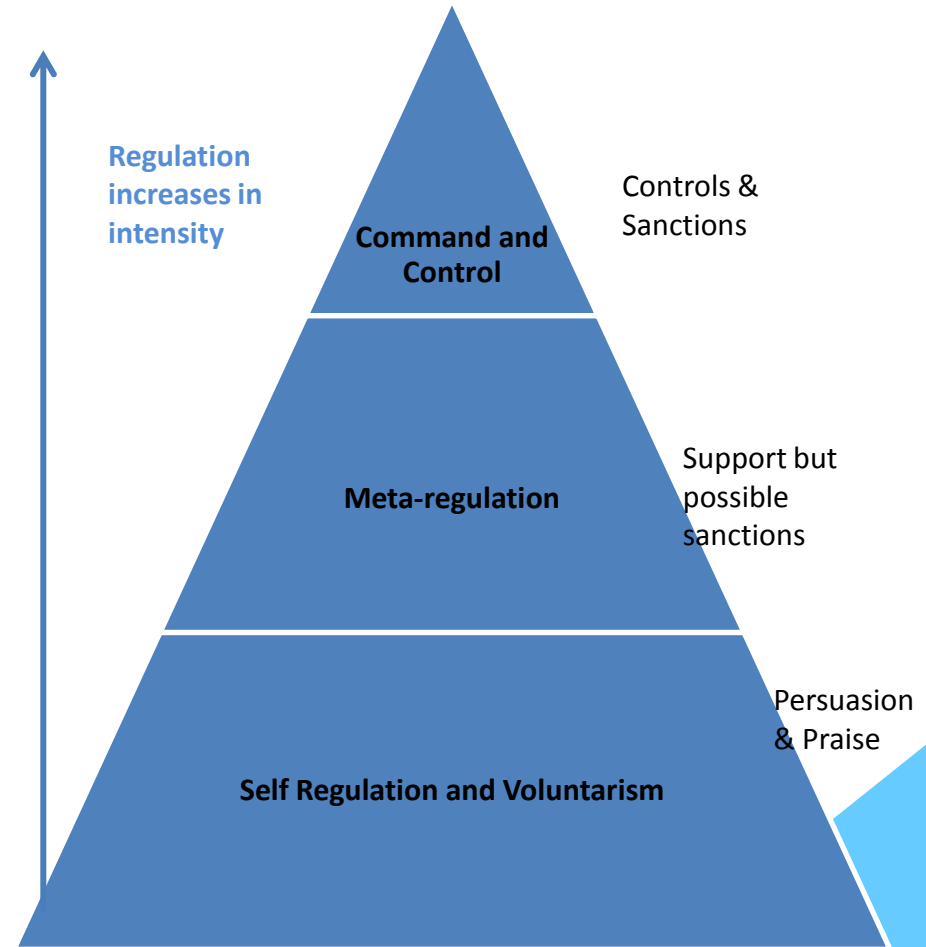


5 Core Themes Identified

- **Responsive Regulation**
- **Focus on Service Users**
- **Devolution with Accountability**
- **How to Maintain/Improve Quality while Cutting Costs**
- **Monitoring and Learning**

Responsive Regulation

- Regulation in a continuum – from broad base of pyramid to narrow top
- Meta-regulation in the middle – 'regulation of self-regulation'
- Variants – eg. 'strengths-based', 'smart regulation'
- Balances between persuasion and punishment – context is important
- Is this a limiting model?



Involvement of Service Users

- **Move towards person-centred services**
- **Greater levels of consultation**
- **User involvement**
 - Eg. Student Councils, Residents' Committees
- **Service delivery is changing**
 - Eg. Disability services
 - Implications for standards & quality improvement

Devolution with Accountability

- **Guiding principles 'at the centre', with application devolved to the local context**
- **Centre = oversight + support role (compliance?)**
- **Local providers = flexibility & opportunity to improve quality (performance?)**
 - **Creativity & innovation**
- **But ... challenging in the current economic climate?**

Maintaining quality while cutting costs?

- **Limited evidence, but**
- **Requires focusing on the service user**
- **Importance of work processes & systems**
- **Centrality of measurement**
- **Recognising & rewarding frontline workers**
- **Working across organisational boundaries**
- **Identification and reduction of waste**
- **Holding managers to account**

Monitoring and Learning

- **Focus on outcomes**
 - What outcomes? How measured?
- **Diagnostic monitoring**
 - 'Why' questions seeking root causes
- **Shared learning**
 - Triple loop learning
- **Data collection, analysis & feedback**

What we've learnt from the different services – Multiple Routes to Quality

- **Policing** – independent oversight
- **Schools** – clearer focus on outcomes
- **Disability** – some innovative practices by NFPs
- **Eldercare** – strong independent regulator
- **Homecare** – monitoring of contracted-out packages
- **End-of-life care** – strong re-orientation of practice within hospitals

Quality & Cost Reduction

- **for the next three to five years at least, the credibility and leverage of the quality movement will rise or fall on its success in reducing the cost of health care – and, harder, returning that money to other uses – while improving patient experience. “Value” improvement won’t be enough. It will take cost reduction to capture the flag. Otherwise, “cutting” wins.**

Improving Care & Reducing Waste

- **Great leverage in cost reduction comes directly – powerfully – exactly from focusing on meeting the needs of the person you serve. “Waste” is actually just a word that means, “Not helpful. Improving care and reducing waste are one and the same thing’.**