



Benchmarking NHS Provider Board Assurance Frameworks (BAFs)

October 2022



Introduction

This benchmarking exercise considers 17 provider Board Assurance Frameworks (BAF) with a mix of acute, mental health and ambulance Trusts. The BAFs used for analysis were those available as at July 2022.

This report focuses on:

- [General overview of BAF content](#)
- [Themes identified across BAFs](#)
- [Risk Scores](#)

General Overview of BAF content

We examined the number of strategic objectives per organisation (as articulated within each BAF). There is a range of 4 to 8 strategic objectives per Trust, with an average of 5.

There is a range of 5 to 25 risks per Trust, with an average of 11. Having a small number of risks can mean they become very broad and all-encompassing, making it harder to identify specific controls, assurances and mitigating actions. Conversely, having many risks can make the BAF feel unwieldy and unmanageable.

All BAFs aligned risks to the relevant strategic objectives, had risk references and risk owners. The majority of BAFs aligned risks to oversight committees, contained both controls and assurances, as well gaps in controls and assurances. There were mixed results for the inclusion of risk appetite and links to the operational risk register. There were a variety of ways in which elements in the BAF were presented and the comprehensiveness of their content.

Questions for consideration

Does the number of risks on the BAF feel manageable but allow for the specificity required to develop mitigating actions?

Themes identified across BAFs

We reviewed the strategic objectives and risks in the BAFs for any emerging themes.

Objectives

A summary graph of the objective themes can be found at [Appendix A](#).

The most common strategic objective themes assigned were 'quality of care', 'workforce' and 'performance/delivery/response'. It was found that the most common strategic objective themes varied between different Trust types:

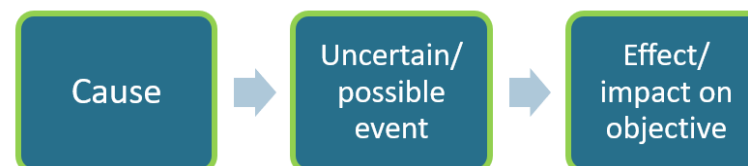
- Acute Trusts' objectives most commonly aligned to 'quality of care', 'workforce' and 'performance/delivery/response'.
- Ambulance Trusts' objectives were most commonly concerned with 'performance/delivery/response', 'improvement /research/innovation' and 'partnership'.
- For Mental Health Trusts, 'quality of care', 'governance' and 'transformation/infrastructure' were the most common areas covered by the strategic objectives.

Where strategic objectives aligned to more than one of our themes, 'quality of care' and 'workforce' were the most commonly grouped themes. Where objectives align with multiple themes this may make it harder to clearly articulate risks to achievement of the objective.

Risks

A summary graph of the risk themes can be found at [Appendix A](#). We allocated 15 of the BAF risks more than one risk theme, with one risk having four themes. The most common risk themes were 'workforce' (including recruitment/vacancies, retention and staff development/training), 'finance' (including additional staff costs, financial management, financial plan and funding) and then 'digitalisation/data security/data quality'.

BAF risks need to be clear so Trusts understand the risks they face and steps can be taken to mitigate these risks. The risk description would ideally include three key components:



Questions for Consideration

Are risks articulated with a cause, uncertain event and a clear possible impact on the relevant objective?

If risks are covering several topics, themes or objectives might there be benefit in splitting the risk into two (or more) to support the development of SMART mitigating actions?

Risk Scores

The mean average current risk score for all risks on the BAF is 13.36, with a range from 4 to 25. Graphs showing the average risk score per objective and risk theme can be found at [Appendix B](#). The objective themes associated with the highest average risk scores were: 'improvement/research/innovation' and 'culture'. The risk themes associated with the highest scoring risks were: 'increased demand' and 'transformation/infrastructure'.

The gaps between the current risk scores and target risk scores were also analysed and it was found that the average gap was 4.3 with a range from -5 (i.e., the current risk score was currently 5 below the target risk score) to +14 where the current total score is 14 above the target risk score.

There were three risks where their current scores were below their target scores: the previously mentioned risk at -5 and two further risks at -2. There are 30 risks which are at their target score, so the difference in scores was 0.

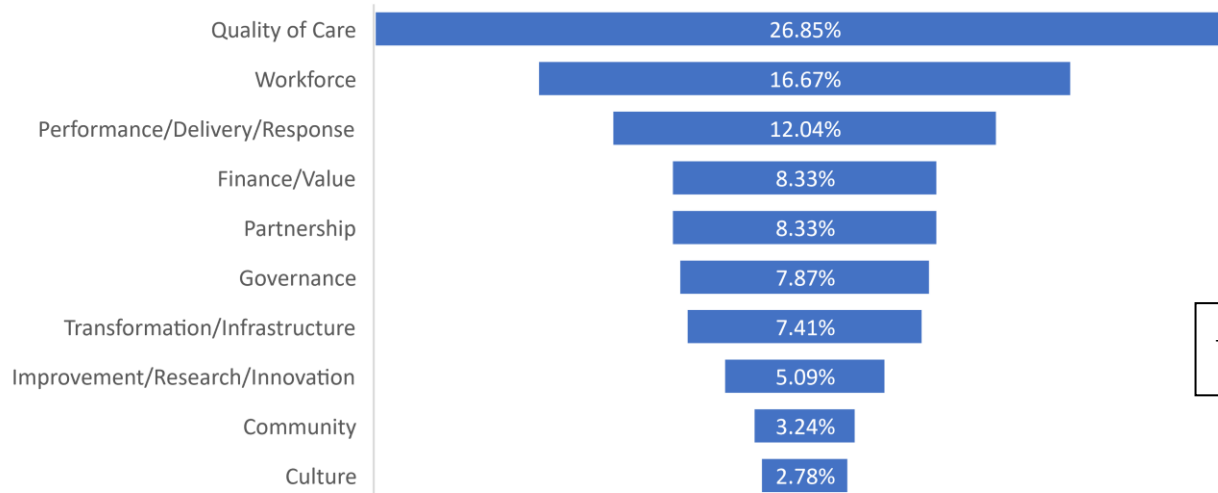
Over 30% of risks associated with 'quality of care' have a difference of eight or more between current risk score and target risk score. This reflects of the difficulty in mitigating these risks in the face of significant risks to other objectives (workforce and delivery).

Questions for Consideration

Do the risks with the greatest difference between current and target risk score get the greatest attention?

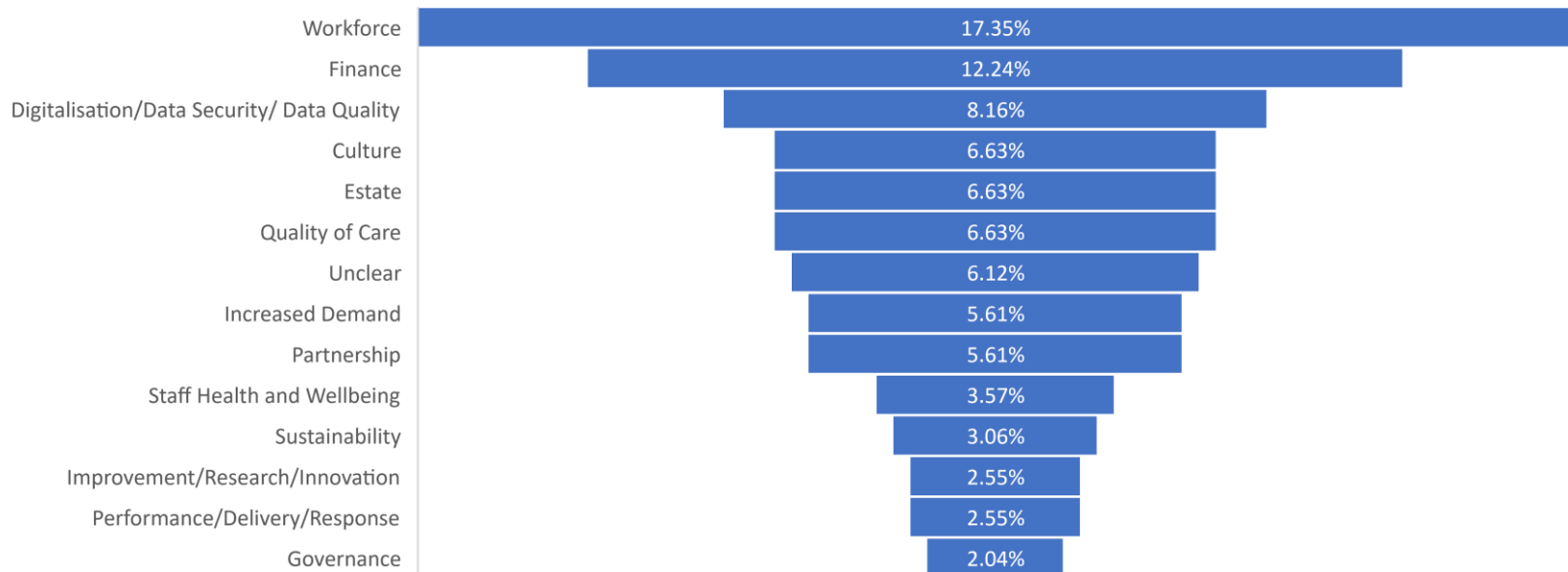
Is your organisation clear on how risks which are now at or below the target risk score should be monitored and whether they should remain on the BAF?

Objective Themes



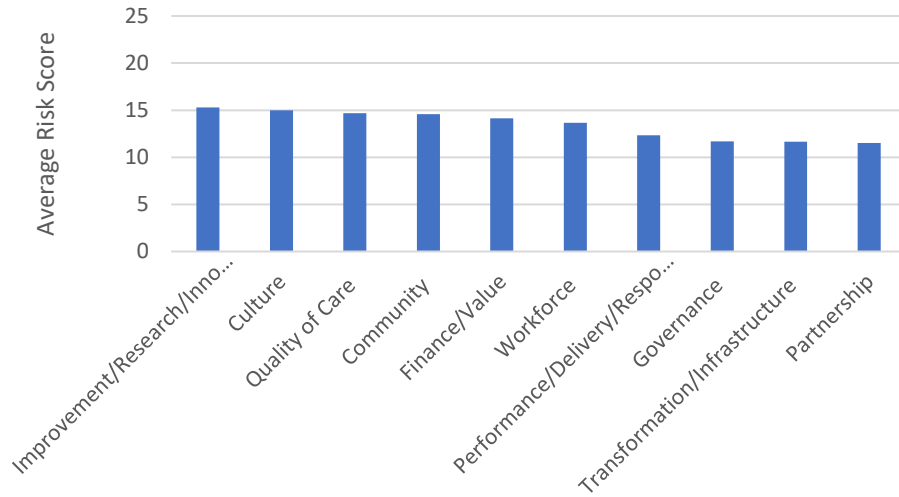
Themes with less than 2% have not been included

Risk Themes



Appendix B: Average Risk Score by Objective Theme

Average Risk Score by Objective Theme



Themes with only 1 or 2 risks assigned were removed from this analysis

Average Risk Score by Risk Theme

