

Investigation Assurance Framework



Did you improve? How do you know?

About the Niche Investigation and Assurance Framework (NIAF)

In our view there are two critical stages to any investigation process:

1. **a good quality rigorous investigation** which identifies the correct issues and provides action-orientated recommendations; and
2. **a detailed follow-up review** at a suitable time (usually 6 -12 months) after the investigation has reported, to provide assurance that recommendations have been addressed and changes made.

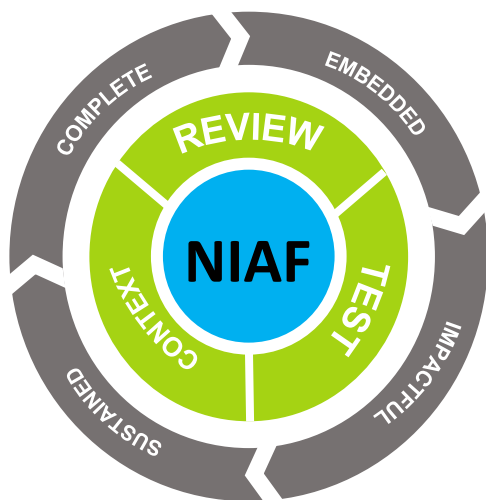
We know that for lessons to be truly learned and practice to change following incidents, the investigation process needs to be robust from start to finish. The completion of the investigation report is not the end of the process, but just the end of the beginning. The end of the investigation process only occurs when there is real assurance that 'lessons have been learned' and that changes to practice and process are now truly embedded.

NHS England now routinely ensure that a follow-up review is built into framework investigation terms of reference. We also recommend strongly that all investigative activity, whether independent or not, is only fully concluded at the point that follow-up assurance is provided. In the case of investigations, ensuring that this is done with full independence is often crucial to the success of the outcome. Having independent assurance is often welcomed by families, staff, regulators and commissioners alike.

Our team of experienced investigators all have experience of carrying out assurance and audit based review activities. Our **Niche Investigation Assurance Framework (NIAF)** provides an advanced structure to help clients to understand progress against recommendations, residual gaps and the next steps in the improvement journey.

How do we assess the improvement?

We have a deep understanding of how to ensure that learning is operationalised and embedded. The NIAF provides an accessible framework for clients to gain a clear, unbiased understanding of the effectiveness of their improvement actions. The **NIAF** looks in detail at the following key areas, asking some critical questions, which include:



0161 785 1000



info@nicheconsult.co.uk



www.nicheconsult.co.uk

niche

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE CONSULTING

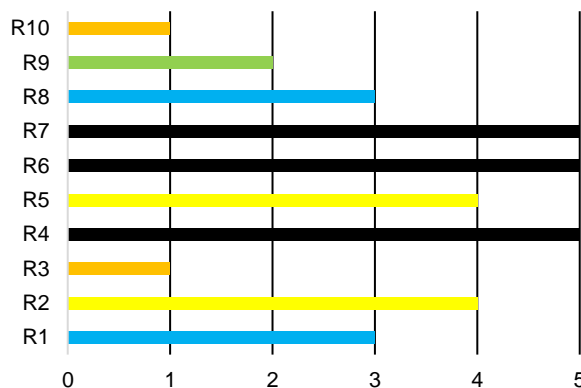
Assessment	Key questions	Evidence
1. Is the action owned and complete?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the action described appropriately? Were the right staff involved in developing the action? Do staff understand what the improvement outcome looks like? Are there residual gaps in relation to the action completion? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plans and control sheets Minutes and reports Policies / procedures Communications
2. Is the action complete and embedded?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a clear mechanism for ongoing monitoring? Is there appropriate governance surrounding the action implementation and improvement cycle? Has there been sufficient engagement, awareness and dissemination in other services / with key partners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KPI development Care plan assessments Service visits Interviews with staff Stakeholder feedback
3. Has the action had the right impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the monitoring mechanism giving the full picture? Are there any unintended consequences arising from the implementation of the action? Do audit results demonstrate improvement? Have any actions been recalibrated / reset to further impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved outcomes Same causal factor analysis Practice change Trigger tool development Internal audit evidence
4. Has the improvement been sustained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the action implementation prompted a culture shift? Has the Board been provided with end-to-end assurance? Has the improvement informed strategic plans? Has the improvement prompted greater 'reach' on KPIs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous quality improvement Cultural shift indicators Early alerts and instant action Board oversight

How do we measure the improvement?

Assessing the success of learning and improvement can be a very nuanced process. Importantly, the assessment is meant to be useful and evaluative, rather than punitive and judgemental. We adopt a useful numerical grading system to support the representation of 'progress data' – avoiding the use of traditional RAG ratings. We have a distinct focus upon demonstrating the outcome of the improvement action. Our measurement criteria includes:

Score	Assessment category
0	Insufficient evidence to support action progress / action incomplete / not yet commenced
1	Action commenced
2	Action significantly progressed
3	Action completed but not yet tested
4	Action completed, tested, but not yet embedded
5	Can demonstrate a sustained improvement

Sample Progress Tracker



We also offer targeted evaluation services around change

Occasionally clients will require a larger, more holistic analysis of the impact of change. Niche can provide evaluation services where there has been a more radical change. Our 'appreciative evaluation' method enables us to:

- take a pragmatic, real-world approach, with an emphasis on talking to people who use and work within services directly to find out their ideas and experiences;
- ensure robust methods produce useful and reliable evidence;
- work with client services to debate the evidence as it emerges – and to shape and improve the process of implementation.

What we offer

We offer comprehensive evaluation packages both during and at the end of programmes (formative and summative), to review independently and improve the implementation of new services. By doing this we identify not only **what** has happened, but also understand **why** it has happened.



Kate Jury- Partner

Kate has worked extensively within healthcare governance and assurance. She is an expert at helping organisations to support change through effective governance, culture and controls.



James Fitton - Partner

James has 32 years' experience. His Oxford MSc in evidence-based healthcare was based on a drive to ensure that good evidence is used and implemented in local services so that proper evaluation can occur.