

From Activity to Outcomes

Introducing Specialty-Led KPIs in an Acute Dietetic Service

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Key message

A collaborative, specialty-led KPI programme shifted performance monitoring beyond activity counts toward clinically meaningful measures of quality, outcomes and service value.

Background

KPIs are widely used to monitor healthcare performance, but dietetic services are often measured through activity-based metrics. Existing indicators in a large acute teaching hospital dietetics department did not fully capture quality, patient outcomes or service impact. The change initiative aimed to align measurement with healthcare quality, value-based care and clinically meaningful practice.



Aim & objectives

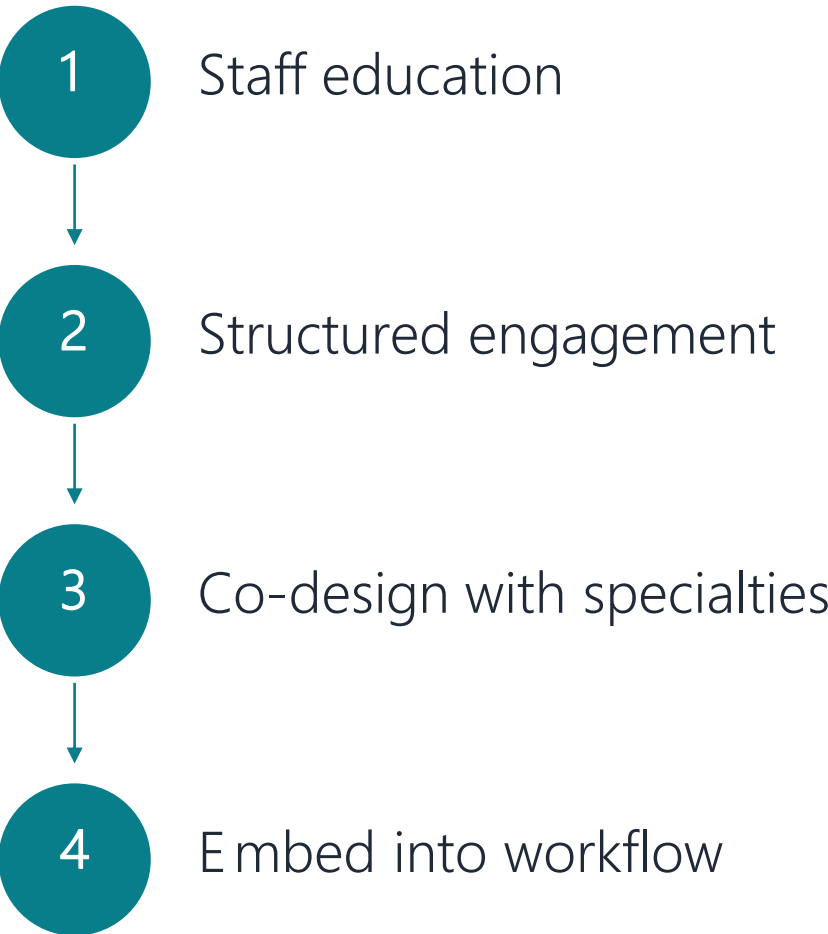
To implement and evaluate a change initiative developing specialty-specific KPIs within dietetic services to

- improve quality measurement.
- increase staff engagement with performance monitoring.
- support a transition toward outcome-focused practice.

Methods

Design & framework

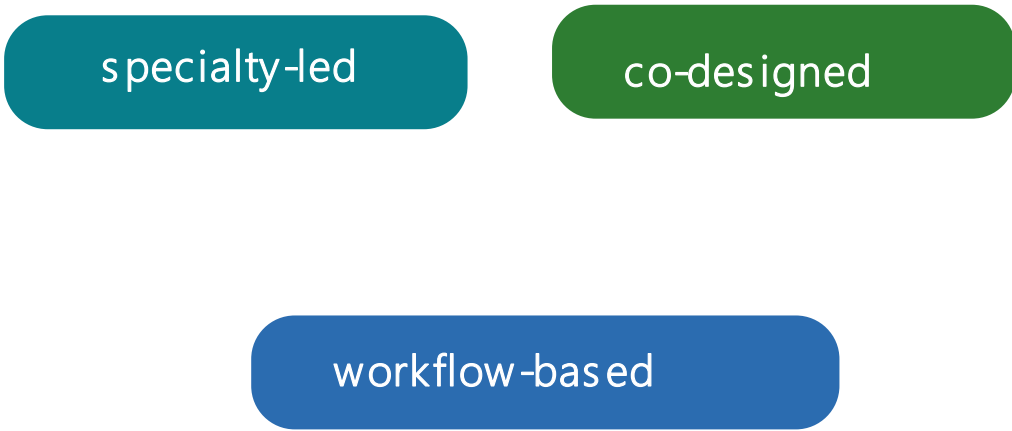
Service improvement and change management approach using the HSE Change Guide framework.



Implementation outputs



Data collection was more feasible when embedded within routine clinical practice rather than added as a separate task.



Risks & mitigations

- KPIs may encourage gaming or unintended behaviours (Goodhart's Law, Cobra Effect).
- Excessive focus on a single metric can overlook other dimensions of quality.
- Data collection can create additional workload and resistance if poorly designed.
- Indicators should be co-designed, clinically meaningful, regularly reviewed, and interpreted within context.
- Digital infrastructure to reduce burden.

Results

Fourteen specialties implemented one specialty specific KPI each.

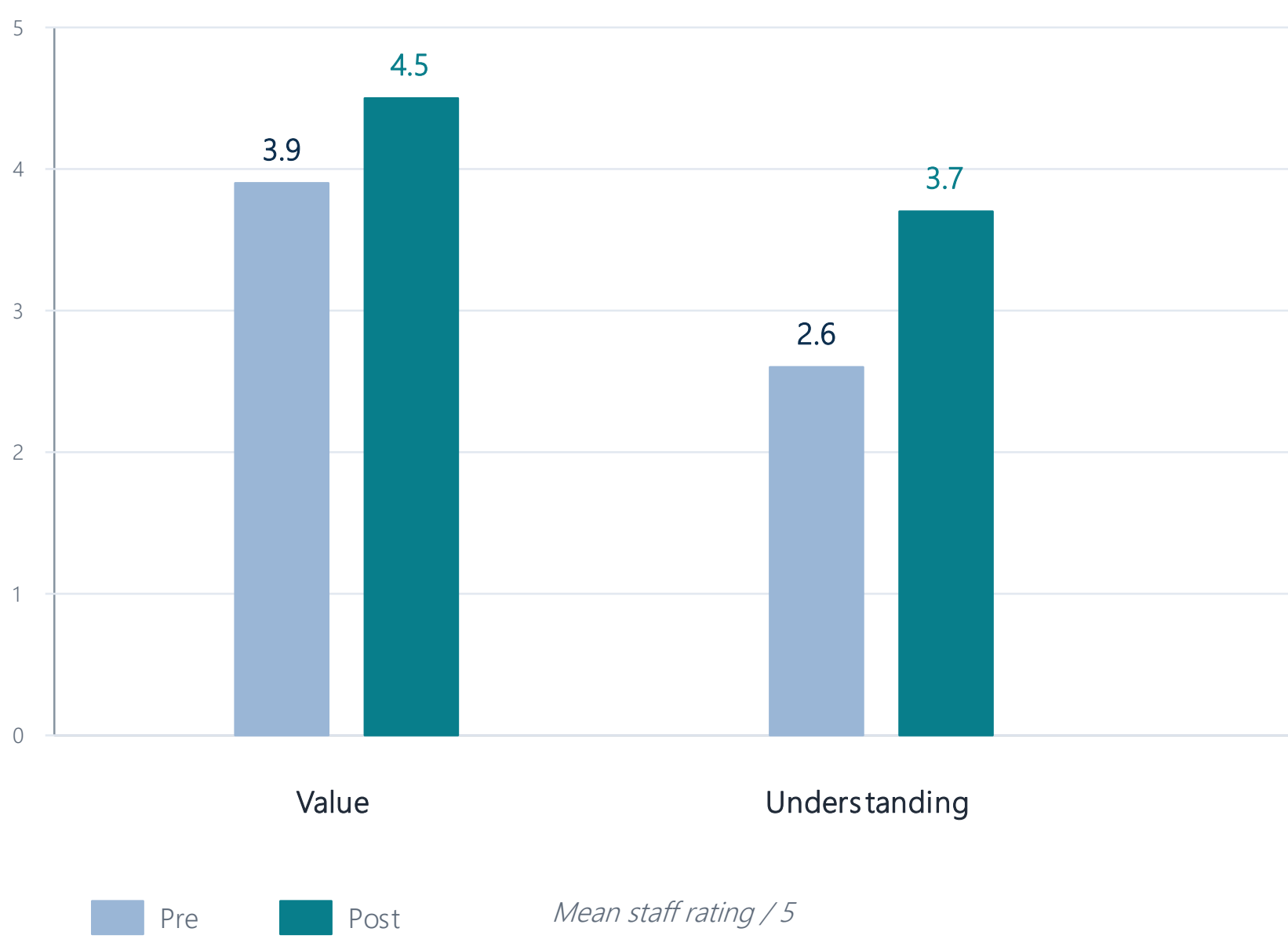
Staff rating of KPI value increased from 3.9/5 to 4.5/5.

Staff rating of KPI understanding increased from 2.6/5 to 3.7/5.

Feasibility improved when data collection was embedded into existing clinical workflows.

Staff perception of KPIs

Perceived KPI value and understanding improved during implementation.



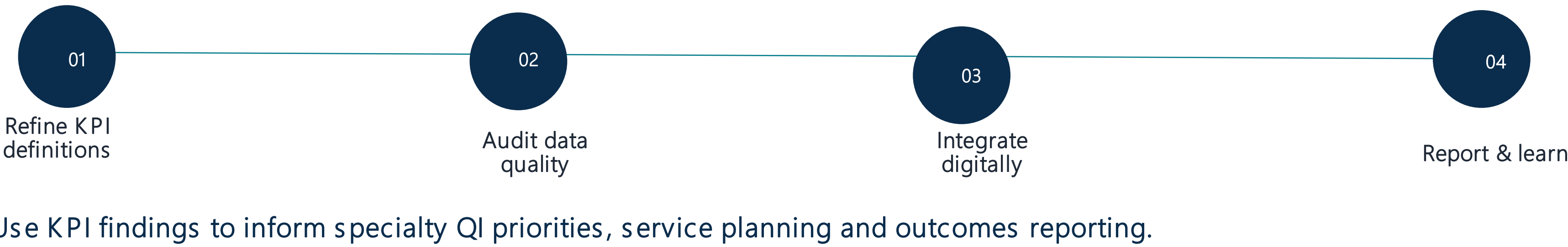
Outcome-focused indicators strengthened the department's ability to demonstrate service value.

Conclusion

A collaborative change initiative can successfully introduce clinically meaningful KPIs in acute dietetic services.

Outcome-focused indicators support quality improvement and value demonstration. Sustainability depends on leadership support, digital infrastructure and continued staff engagement.

Next steps



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