

Tool 6.2: Analysing the qualitative data

What is meant by analysis?

Analysis of qualitative data aims to describe, summarise and begin drawing conclusions from responses. Broadly, this entails looking for patterns or themes across responses, while considering their frequency and how intensely they are expressed. In doing this, it may be possible to identify relationships between themes and relate ideas or behaviours to elements of organisational culture. The themes appearing in the responses can also be cross-referenced with results from other tools, highlighting consistencies and discrepancies.

Having completed the analysis, you will have a set of key themes for inclusion in the final report.

Tips for qualitative analysis

There are a number of methods for the analysis of qualitative data and there is no prescribed method for doing this. It may be that members of your patient experience team or change team have previous experience of particular approaches, and would prefer to apply these.

There are, however, a number of general tips which may help you analyse your data and ensure accuracy and consistency:

- Have at least two people look at each answer – this should help with consistency, and avoid the potential bias of one person conducting all the analysis.
- Do not guess what respondents mean – if answers don't make sense and there is no clarification, do not include it in the analysis.
- If you are not sure which category to place a theme in, or whether it is positive or negative, double check with a colleague.
- Consider keeping a record of statements that would make good quotations in the final report – this is a lot easier than going back and trying to find them at a later date.
- Bear in mind the risk of bias and reading into statements – try to be as objective as possible.



Note

When analysing patient information please ensure you are treating data in line with the Caldicott principles and adhering to your organisation's information governance policy. If in doubt, seek the advice of your Caldicott guardian as necessary.

A suggested process for analysing the data

If your change team does not have previous experience of qualitative analysis, the following is a possible approach:

Step 1: collating the data

- You may be using a variety of sources for your patient experience qualitative data, eg CQC national inpatient survey, local patient surveys, brief interviews with patients.
- Regardless of the source, collate all of the responses into a single document or spreadsheet.
- If using interviews, gather detailed notes or verbatim written transcriptions.
- Anonymise or redact parts of any statements which could identify individuals.
- Effective anonymisation ensures no individually identifiable information is gathered or retained and, where such information is given, it is removed and replaced with pseudonyms, replacement terms or elusive descriptors.

Step 2: read the responses for a 'general sense'

- Read through responses to gain a sense of the tone and major themes emerging.



Step 3: re-read responses to identify individual themes

- Re-read the responses, concentrating this time on the detail of what is being said.
- For each response separate out and record the key statements or parts of statements.
- For each statement identify the key theme being discussed. Record the theme in a column next to each statement (see example below). Your patient experience leads may have already done this.
- If a single statement refers to multiple themes, break it down into its component themes and list these. For example '*I had real confidence in the staff looking after me. They were really caring and involved me in all my care decisions*'. They could break down into the themes of '*Trust in staff*', '*Kindness and empathy*' and '*Involvement in decision making*'.
- Group the theme under one of the five different cultural elements.
- Some statements and themes may themselves cross different cultural elements. If this is the case, either list them under all the relevant elements, or chose the one cultural element that seems most appropriate.
- If a theme does not neatly fall under one of the five cultural elements, list it under 'Other'.

Example:

My time on ward A was about as good as I could hope for. All of the staff were so caring, and it was amazing to see how well they worked together. They really seemed to just get on! In the way they behaved I just got the real feeling the patients were the main priority in this hospital.

Cultural element	Theme	Statement
Vision and values	Patient first	I got the real feeling the patients were the main priority in this hospital
Support and compassion	Kindness and empathy	All of the staff were so caring
Teamwork	Working together	It was amazing to see how well they worked together

Step 4: classify the statements as positive, negative or neutral

- Having now themed all of the statements and listed them under the different cultural elements, make an assessment of whether they are positive, negative or neutral and mark this next to each statement (see example below)
- There is inevitably a subjective element to this process. It may therefore be worthwhile having two people assess the statements independently to avoid bias and ensure consistency.

Example:

Cultural element	Theme	Statement	positive	negative	neutral
Vision and values	Patient first	I got the real feeling the patients were the main priority in the hospital	✓		
Support and compassion	Kindness and empathy	All of the staff were so caring	✓		
Teamwork	Working together	It was amazing to see how well they worked together	✓		

Step 5: repeat above steps for each response

- Go through each response and continue to build your spreadsheet.
- List statements under existing themes, or create new themes if they have not been mentioned before.
- Listing statements under themes and recording whether the statements are positive or negative will allow you to assess how often a particular theme is mentioned, and whether respondents are predominantly positive or negative about it (see example below, with an answer from a different respondent).
- If you are finding the data set is becoming too large, you may want to split it, eg a separate spreadsheet for each cultural element, three separate spreadsheets for positive, negative and neutral comments, etc.

Example:

Honestly, I just don't think the hospital is how it used to be. People were nice enough when I spoke to them, but every time I tried to raise an issue it just seemed they were too busy and they weren't really going to take suggestions seriously. Every day during my stay I got cold food which I hadn't ordered, and despite repeatedly pointing this out they kept on doing it.

Cultural element	Theme	Statement	positive	negative	neutral
Vision and values	Patient first	I got the real feeling the patients were the main priority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Every time I tried to raise an issue it just seemed they were too busy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Support and compassion	Kindness and empathy	All of the staff were so caring	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Quality and choice of food	I got cold food which I hadn't ordered		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Learning and innovation	Responding to feedback	They weren't really going to take suggestions seriously		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Despite repeatedly pointing this out they kept on doing it		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Teamwork	Working together	It was amazing to see how well they worked together	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		