



Provider Briefing Pack

Pilot audit of the draft
strengthened Quality Standards

09 May 2023

Strengthened Quality Standards
Pilot Project

Strengthened Quality Standards and Pilot Project

Background and purpose

The Aged Care Quality Standards (the Standards) are at the heart of safe and quality aged care for older Australians. All Australian Government-funded aged care services must meet the requirements of the Standards.

In response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Department of Health and Aged Care (the Department) has reviewed the Standards and developed a draft set of strengthened Quality Standards (strengthened Standards).

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC) is responsible for monitoring and assessing aged care services against the current Standards and in the future, against the strengthened Standards.

Success of the strengthened Standards will rely on their practical application in an aged care setting. The ACQSC is therefore conducting a pilot project to test how the strengthened Standards will apply in practice across relevant aged care settings. The purpose of the pilot project is to inform:

- how the draft strengthened Standards can be effectively implemented
- how ACQSC will assess provider performance against the strengthened Standards
- how the introduction of graded assessment can better differentiate provider performance and drive continuous improvement

- what support providers will need to understand and meet their obligations under the strengthened Standards. This includes identifying the guidance and resources needed to support the sector
- how to best support older persons to understand what the strengthened Standards mean for them, including the delivery of safe and quality aged care.

ACQSC has engaged Ernst and Young Australia (EY) to assist in the delivery of the pilot. Working with ACQSC, EY will develop a revised audit methodology for the strengthened Standards, guidance, tools and resources for auditors and providers.

EY is also responsible for conducting pilot audits across a sample of providers that are representative of the aged care sector considering service type, size, location and diversity of people receiving aged care.

ACQSC has received nominations from several providers to participate in voluntary pilot audits. Following commencement of pilot audits in April 2023, which initially assessed draft strengthened Standard 5 Clinical Care as a standalone, we are now expanding the pilot audits to test all strengthened Standards 1-7. This will help us to continue refining the audit approach, methodology, and inform the broader pilot audit program. Insights from the pilot will also inform the finalisation of the Standards themselves, and support the development of guidance resources.

Overview of pilot timeline

- ✔ Pilot project commenced
Jan 2023
- ✔ Providers invited to register their interest in participating in the pilot
Jan 2023
- ✔ Design of revised audit methodology, guidance and tools, and planning for pilot audits
Jan - Apr 2023
- ✔ Pilot audits focused on strengthened Standard 5 Clinical Care
Apr 2023
- ✔ Pilot audits across all strengthened Standards
May - Aug 2023
- ✔ Post-pilot provider survey, feedback and evaluation
Jul - Sep 2023
- ✔ Finalised audit methodology, guidance, tools
Sept - Nov 2023
- ✔ Development of guidance manual for strengthened Standards
Sept - Nov 2023
- ✔ End of pilot project
Nov 2023

Thank you for volunteering to participate in the pilot audits. We appreciate you contributing to the reforms in aged care to ensure safe and quality care for older persons.

A regulatory official from the ACQSC will participate in the pilot audit and if in the course of the pilot, issues with respect to your compliance under existing standards and obligations come to light, these will be referred to the ACQSC for follow up and potential regulatory action under the Commission Act and Rules.

ACQSC and EY are available for you to provide any feedback throughout the pilot. If you have any questions of concerns, please do not hesitate to contact EY at agedcaresstandardspilot@au.ey.com.



Overview of Pilot Project

This briefing pack provides information about the Pilot Project including the scope, what to expect, what is required from providers (including how to prepare), the time commitment and timelines.

Objectives

The objectives of the pilot are to inform:

- a draft audit methodology to assess provider performance against the draft strengthened Standards
- the development of supporting guidance and resources for providers to understand and meet their obligations under the strengthened Standards
- feedback to the Department and ACQSC regarding the draft strengthened Standards

The pilot audits will be executed by EY auditors, supported by an ACQSC regulatory official.

Overview

The pilot audit will include the following key activities:

- **Pre-audit preparation:** Briefing session with EY, pre-pilot survey, request for information
- **Audit execution (virtual and on-site):** Opening meeting, document review, interviews (with staff, management, consumers), on-site observations, closing meeting

- **Audit reporting:** Draft and final audit report incorporating provider feedback
- **Pilot feedback:** One-on-one and group debrief and feedback sessions with EY, post-pilot survey.

These activities will be a blend of virtual, face-to-face and on-site delivery.

Scope and sampling

The scope of the pilot audit includes testing the implementation of draft strengthened Standards 1-7 (where applicable) using the draft audit methodology developed by EY, across a sample of providers in aged care settings.

The approach to sampling has been developed in line with the following considerations:

- Representing the diversity of the aged care sector.
- Minimising the operational impact and time commitment of the audit/s on providers without compromising the outputs of the pilot.
- Testing various approaches to auditing providers with multiple services.

Each audit will be undertaken at the provider level and will include either one or multiple service locations (e.g. day respite or residential care) or, with reference to home care services, include a selective sample of service locations.

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As such, there will be various types of audits, including:

- Standard audit – where a single service for a single provider is audited.
- Multi-service audits – where multiple services operated by one provider are audited sequentially.

What to expect from the pilot audit report

The pilot audit report is intended to provide an indication of how prepared your organisation may be for the implementation of the strengthened Standards. Findings will be reported by outcome and graded as 'Conformance', 'Minor non-conformance' or 'Major non-conformance'.

The pilot audit report will not impact your current accreditation or future registration process.

Overview of the pilot audit approach

The diagram in the following page provides an overview of the pilot approach and steps.

Audit execution will be a blend of virtual, face-to-face, and on-site delivery, dependent on the nature of services provided.

For each pilot audit step, an indicative time commitment for providers has been provided. The time commitment noted is an estimate only and may increase or decrease depending on the availability of documents, records and provider and service staff and management.



Summary of provider responsibilities

To support an efficient and effective pilot audit process, providers should:

- Read and understand this briefing pack
- Participate in a briefing session with EY and coordinate dates and times for the pilot audit/s
- Allocate a staff member who will have overall responsibility for the pilot audit process
- Notify EY in the event of an infectious disease outbreak that may impact the scheduled site observation dates
- Provide a brief to consumers, including the purpose and expected outcomes of the pilot
- Provide access to systems, facilities, documentation, and personnel during the pilot audit
- Provide feedback on draft audit report/s
- Complete pre- and post-pilot surveys and participate in debrief and feedback sessions.

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Overview of pilot audit approach and estimated time commitment

1 Pre-audit preparation

Email notification of selection (15 mins)

Group briefing session (60 - 90 mins)

Initial phone call and scheduling (15 mins)

Audit confirmation email (15 mins)

Pre-audit meeting (30 mins)

Pre-pilot survey (30 mins)

Request for information (5 hours)

Audit reminder email (5 mins)

2 Audit execution

Multi service audit

Standard audit

Virtual opening meeting (60 mins)

Virtual interviews with provider/
service management and staff and review of
documentation and records (1 - 1.5 days)

Same day confirmation call for service site visits
(5 - 10 mins)

Service 1 Evidence
gathering (3 - 4 days)

Virtual or on-site
evidence gathering
(interviews, on-
site observations,
document
and record review)
(3 - 4 days)

Service 2 Evidence
gathering (3 - 4 days)

Closing meeting (60 mins)

3 Audit reporting

Multi service audit

Standard audit

Feedback
on
Service 1
draft
report

Feedback
on
Service 2
draft
report

Feedback on
draft audit report

Final
report for
Service 1

Final
report for
Service 2

Final report

4 Pilot feedback

Post-pilot survey (15 mins)

One-on-one debrief session and group
debrief session (2 hours)

Detailed pilot audit approach

This section provides a detailed overview of the pilot audit approach, including the key activities, what to expect within each activity, what is required from providers (including how to prepare), the estimated time commitment from providers, and the timelines for the activities. Providers and services should familiarise themselves with the different pilot audit activities.

Providers and services are encouraged to ask questions at any point during the audit. Note that the process undertaken for pilot audits is the same across all providers included in the pilot.

1 Pre-audit preparation

#	Activity	Details (what to expect)	Provider responsibilities (what do you need to do)	Est. time commitment	Timeline
1.1	Email notification of selection	EY will confirm selection of providers for the pilot audit process via email and provide indication of potential timelines for the pilot audits.	Acknowledge the email and identify key persons to participate in briefing meeting.	15 mins	May 2023
1.2	Group briefing session	EY will hold a virtual (Microsoft Teams) group briefing session with providers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce providers to the Pilot Project • Share an overview of the pilot audits (objectives, scope, activities, timelines, expectations). • Respond to any questions from providers. EY will share a 'Provider Briefing Pack' to support the session.	Attend the virtual group briefing session. Prepare for the session by reading strengthened Standards and identifying questions for EY or ACQSC. https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/revise-aged-care-quality-standards-detailed-draft-for-public-consultation	60 – 90 mins	May 2023
1.3	Initial phone call and audit scheduling	EY will contact the provider/service via telephone (based on the contact details provided to ACQSC as part of the nomination process) to confirm participation in the pilot, and schedule the date and time of the pilot audit, including a pre-audit meeting, opening meeting and on-site observations (if applicable).	Attend initial phone call and support EY with scheduling the pre-audit meeting and the pilot audit. Nominate a point of contact for the remainder of the pilot audit process.	15 – 30 mins	Approx. 20 business days prior to opening meeting

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1 Pre-audit preparation (continued)

#	Activity	Details (what to expect)	Provider responsibilities (what do you need to do)	Est. time commitment	Timeline
1.4	Audit confirmation email	EY will send an audit confirmation email with confirmed dates of the pilot audit. The email will also include a pre-audit preparation tool to help the provider prepare for the pilot audit.	Acknowledge the email. Complete the pre-audit preparation tool to prepare for the pilot audit.	60 mins	Approx. 20 business days prior to opening meeting
1.5	Pre-audit meeting	<p>The EY audit team will arrange a meeting with the key contacts at the provider (and the service) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the Audit Lead for the pilot audit and share contact details. • Clarify expectations of the audit. • Understand the provider and/or service context (corporate & clinical governance, operations, key personnel, recent changes, etc.) to support the development of the request for information (RFI). • Discuss the RFI requirements. • Provide a brief overview of the pre-pilot survey. • Confirm the audit is scheduled, including opening meeting and preliminary interview dates, site visit dates, and any relevant logistics, site entry requirements (where required), other key contacts. • Confirm who will be on site (for relevant services) and any other staff that will likely be interviewed. • Respond to any questions from the provider. 	<p>Attend the pre-audit meeting.</p> <p>Prepare for meeting by reviewing this briefing pack and identifying any questions or points of clarification for EY.</p>	30 mins	Approx. 15 business days prior to opening meeting

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1 Pre-audit preparation (continued)

#	Activity	Details (what to expect)	Provider responsibilities (what do you need to do)	Est. time commitment	Timeline
1.6	Audit confirmation email	EY will share an RFI with the provider in advance of the pilot audit to support the provider and service in preparing the documentation required to be reviewed during the pilot audit.	Review the RFI and collect/collate the information, documents and records requested to ensure an efficient audit process. Provide RFI documents to EY 5 business days prior to the opening meeting or as directed, and reach out to EY auditor with any queries.	10 mins	Approx. 15 business days prior to opening meeting
1.7	Upload of documents	Using the RFI and link included to the ACQSC secure SharePoint site, upload requested documentation.	Upload documentation and provide further information where documents cannot be provided by 5 business days prior to the opening meeting. Contact EY if there are any issues, or points of clarification needed.	5 hours	5 business days prior to opening meeting
1.8	Pre-pilot survey	EY and ACQSC will prepare and issue a web-based pre-pilot survey. The pre-pilot survey will help establish a baseline of understanding and expectation of providers for the purpose of the pilot evaluation.	Complete the web-based pre-pilot survey within the stated timeframes. Escalate to EY if any issues with completing the survey.	10 mins	15-20 business days prior to opening meeting
1.9	Audit reminder email	EY will email the provider and service to re-confirm the audit schedule and dates, logistics (if conducting site visits), and also confirm survey completion	Acknowledge the email and confirm the audit can proceed on the scheduled dates.	5 mins	3 business days prior to opening meeting

2 Audit execution

#	Activity	Details (what to expect)	Provider responsibilities (what do you need to do)	Est. time commitment
2.1	Opening meeting (virtual)	<p>EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official will conduct an opening meeting at the start of the first day of the audit with the provider, service staff and representatives as appropriate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an overview of the audit process, including scope and approach • Discuss the operations of the provider and service and recent risks, issues, incidents • Confirm the site facilities • Discuss RFI follow up if required • Seek clarifications. <p>Informal opening meetings may also be held on subsequent days of the audit.</p>	<p>Ensure that all key management and staff (provider and service level) attend the opening meeting.</p> <p>Additionally, the provider and service must provide the EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official with an overview of operations and recent risks, issues, incidents relevant to the scope of the audit.</p> <p>Providers are asked to provide examples of what they are proud of and what is working well.</p>	60 mins
2.2	Preliminary interviews (virtual)	<p>EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official will schedule meetings with management from the provider (e.g. Board member, executive management, Quality Manager, Director of Nursing, General Managers, etc). These key personnel will have been identified during the pre-audit meeting.</p> <p>The objective of the preliminary interviews is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable evidence gathering at the provider level (if relevant) • Enable the audit team to target any on-site activities. 	<p>Ensure senior management are available to participate in interviews.</p>	4-5 hours
2.3	Preliminary document reviews (virtual)	<p>EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official will review documentation and records shared by the provider and service against the actions and outcomes of the strengthened Standards.</p> <p>Note: Where possible, document review of the provider’s policies and processes may be conducted off-site to reduce time spent on site and to target questions while on-site.</p>	<p>Share all documents and records requested by EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official, including providing access to digital systems and platforms if documentation is stored in an online environment.</p> <p>Prepare for the document review by collating documents/records relevant to the RFI issued by EY auditors and the requirements of strengthened Standards 1-7.</p>	N/A

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2 Audit execution (continued)

#	Activity	Details (what to expect)	Provider responsibilities (what do you need to do)	Est. time commitment
2.4	Same-day confirmation call (when site visits are undertaken)	EY auditor will call the nominated service point of contact 1 hour prior to the audit to confirm that it is appropriate that the audit can proceed (i.e. there are no health or operational concerns that would prevent the audit commencing).	Respond to EY's call and provide confirmation of audit commencement.	3 – 4 days
2.5	On-site observations (where relevant)	EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official will undertake on-site observations throughout the pilot audit to observe and validate the practical implementation of systems and processes to deliver safe and quality aged care. This may include discussions with consumers and staff.	Ensure EY auditors and ACQSC representative are provided a comprehensive induction to the physical site and are provided access to all relevant areas.	
2.6	Interviews and feedback (on-site or virtual)	EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official will interview key provider staff and management to understand the systems and processes for delivering safe and quality care. Feedback will also be sought from older persons and their representatives on the safe and quality delivery of care.	Ensure EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official are provided access to key staff, management and older persons over the course of the pilot audit.	
2.7	Document review (on-site or virtual)	EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official will review documentation and records shared by the provider and service against the actions and outcomes of the strengthened Standards. This may be completed either on-site (e.g. residential facility or provider head office) or virtually.	Share all documents and records requested by EY auditors and ACQSC representative.	
2.8	Closing meeting (on-site or virtual)	<p>EY auditors and ACQSC regulatory official will hold a closing meeting at the end of each day of the audit to provide a progress update and request additional documents or information.</p> <p>The closing meeting on the final day of the audit will include discussion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key observations and issues • Verbal feedback on potential findings and graded ratings • Process for audit reporting and audit graded ratings • Seek feedback on the audit process • Next steps (including overview of post-pilot survey). 	Ensure all key management and staff attend the closing meeting at the end of the last day of the audit. Ensure all key management and staff attend the closing meeting at the end of the last day of the audit.	

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3 Audit reporting

#	Activity	Details (what to expect)	Provider responsibilities (what do you need to do)	Est. time commitment	Timeline
3.1	Draft audit report	EY auditors and the ACQSC regulatory official will prepare a draft audit report that details the findings and graded ratings (e.g. conforming, minor non-conformity, major non-conformity).	N/A	N/A	Within 10 business days of closing meeting
3.2	Feedback on draft audit report (including optional meeting with the Audit Team)	EY auditors will share the draft pilot audit report with the provider for feedback and to correct any factual inaccuracies. If required, the Audit Team may have a virtual meeting with the provider to discuss the feedback.	Review the draft audit report and provide any feedback/ correct any factual inaccuracies. Feedback must be provided within the digital audit system, portal or via email. Whilst not mandatory, the provider may choose to include proposed corrective actions from the pilot audit in its plan for continuous improvement.	5 hours	Within 5 business days of receiving draft report
3.3	Final audit report	EY auditors and the ACQSC regulatory official will review the feedback received from the provider and finalise the report to be shared with ACQSC and the provider. z EY auditors may contact the provider if further clarification is required.	Ensure that the nominated point of contact for the audit is available to discuss / clarify feedback with EY auditor.	N/A	Within 5 business days of receiving feedback from provider

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4 Pilot feedback

#	Activity	Details (what to expect)	Provider responsibilities (what do you need to do)	Est. time commitment	Timeline
4.1	Post-pilot survey	<p>EY and ACQSC will prepare and issue a web-based post-pilot survey to all providers that have participated in the pilot audits.</p> <p>The post-pilot survey will collect feedback from providers on the pilot audit process. The survey will also seek to understand any shift in perceptions and understanding of providers regarding the draft strengthened Standards and the audit activities.</p>	Complete the survey using the web-form within the agreed timeframes. Escalate any issues with completing the form to EY.	10 - 15 mins	May - June 2023
4.2	One-on-one debrief session	<p>EY will facilitate a one-on-one debrief session with providers that have participated in pilot audits to seek feedback and insights regarding the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and content of the draft strengthened Standards • Draft audit methodology and pilot audit process • Clarity and effectiveness of briefings, communications, guidance, resources, tools which supported the pilot audit process. 	<p>Participate in the one-on-one session with EY to share feedback.</p> <p>To prepare for this session, seek feedback and insights from staff/management that participated in the pilot audits.</p>	60 mins	May - September 2023
4.3	Group debrief session	<p>EY will facilitate a focus group with a group of providers that participated in the pilot to seek feedback and insights on the overarching pilot audit program and the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and content of the draft strengthened Standards • Draft audit methodology and pilot audit process • Clarity and effectiveness of briefings, communications, guidance, resources, tools which supported the pilot audit process. 	<p>Participate in the focus group with EY and other providers to share feedback.</p> <p>To prepare for this session, seek feedback and insights from staff/management that participated in the pilot audits.</p>	90 mins	August – September 2023

FAQs

1. What is the purpose of this pilot audit?

These pilot audits will inform:

- how we will adjust the way we assess provider performance under the strengthened Standards
- how the introduction of graded assessment outcomes can drive performance
- the support providers will need to understand and meet the strengthened Standards
- how to best support older Australians to understand the strengthened Standards and what they mean for the delivery of safe and quality aged care
- feedback to the Department regarding application of the strengthened Standards.

2. Why was I selected to participate in the pilot?

Providers have been carefully selected for the pilot to ensure they are representative of the broader sector (i.e. represent sufficient diversity in service type, location, size, persons receiving care). Participation in the pilot is voluntary, and providers can choose to withdraw their participation at any time.

3. Who will conduct the pilot audit?

The pilot audits will be conducted by auditors from EY and a regulatory official from the ACQSC. Your assigned EY auditor will contact

you in advance of the audit to introduce themselves and schedule a briefing session to provide an overview of the pilot.

4. How long will the site visit take?

The duration of the site visit will depend on the provider's service type (including total number of services for diversity of aged care settings), size and location. It is expected that most audits will take between 3 and 4 days (including both virtual and on-site evidence gathering). However, this does not include any time taken by auditors to review documentation prior to the on-site evidence gathering (where applicable). Depending on the type of services being provided and the size of the provider, some pilot audits may not require on-site evidence gathering at all. Audits may take longer where the provider is not adequately prepared for the audit.

5. How much time will I have to prepare for the audit?

Timeframes for the pilot audits are tight and you will have at least 10-15 business days to prepare for the audit. Preparation for the audit should be undertaken accordingly with dedicated resources made available to assist with the audit process (where possible)



6. Is there any information I can provide in advance to consumers and their family/representatives?

Your auditor will provide you with a leaflet to be distributed to consumers which provides information about the strengthened Standards and their potential involvement in the pilot.

7. Who should we contact if we want to reschedule the audit?

Please note that due to the tight timeframes for the pilot, reschedules are difficult to accommodate. Where there are exceptional circumstances, please contact EY (agedcarestandardspilot@au.ey.com) or your EY auditor to request a reschedule. Note that if EY is unable to identify mutually agreeable audit dates with you, an alternative provider may be selected to participate in the pilot in your stead.

8. What do we do if there is an outbreak on site?

If there is an outbreak of COVID-19, influenza or gastroenteritis in the days leading up to the site observations, please contact us at agedcarestandardspilot@au.ey.com.

As the audit is not regulatory activity, our primary objective is to ensure the care and safety of older Australians, your staff, and our audit team. We will attempt to reschedule to enable you to focus your efforts on responding to the situation at hand.

9. What is the output of the audit?

All providers participating in pilot audits will be provided an audit report that details the observations and graded ratings (i.e. conforming, major non-conformity or minor non-conformity) against each outcome of each strengthened Standard.

10. When will I receive the audit report?

A draft audit report will be made available to the provider for review within 10 business days of the closing meeting.

11. Will I have the opportunity to provide feedback on the audit report?

Providers have 5 business days (from receiving the draft audit report) to provide feedback and correct any factual inaccuracies.

Please note that only factual or contextual inaccuracies may be corrected through the feedback process and no new evidence will be considered by the auditors.



12. How will the information from the audit be used?

All information gathered for the purpose of the pilot audit will only be used to inform the audit findings and outcomes and to improve the audit methodology, guidance, resources and tools.

EY will not retain any information or documents shared by the provider after the conclusion of the pilot and EY auditors are subject to strict privacy and confidentiality requirements.

However, any concerns about consumer safety or care provision observed or noted by EY auditors or ACQSC regulatory official as part of the pilot audits will be referred to the ACQSC for follow up.

13. Who can we speak to if we have any questions or complaints about the audit?

Please direct all matters regarding the pilot audit to agedcarestandardspilot@au.ey.com.



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
GPO Box 9819, in your capital city