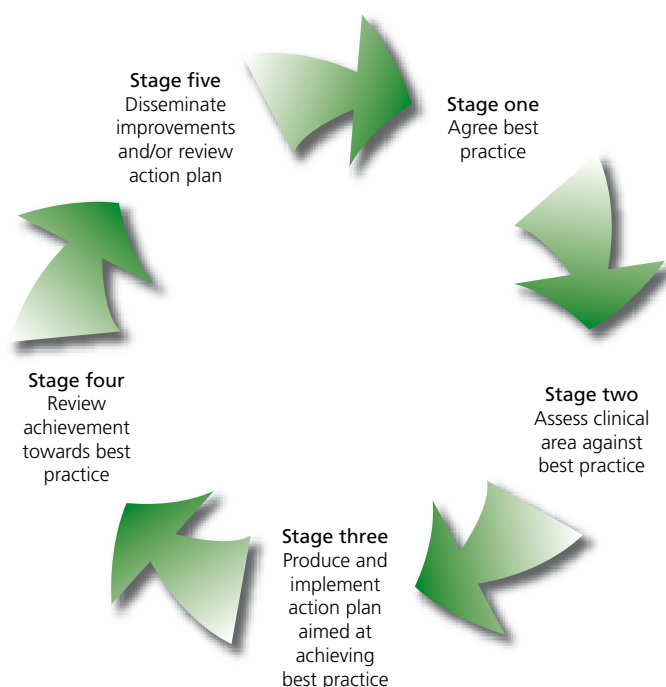


# Essence of Care benchmarking

Review of the complaints made by patients and carers to the health service ombudsman identified the need for improvement in the basic aspects of care. These complaints highlighted the quality of the patient experience, from which the Department of Health developed benchmarks in nine fundamental areas of care that most concerned patients and carers, including:

- *privacy and dignity*
- *personal and oral hygiene*
- *communication*
- *record keeping*
- *continence*
- *food and nutrition*
- *pressure ulcers*
- *safety of clients with mental health needs*
- *principles of self-care.*

The *Essence of Care Toolkit* of patient-focused benchmarks for clinical governance has statements of best practice to which practitioners compare their practice.<sup>1</sup> They go on to produce an action plan aimed at achieving best practice. The complete benchmarking process is described below.



## The benchmarking process

These benchmarks have been designed to support quality improvement and are a quality-focused activity to assure and improve clinical standards at local level. The complete toolkit along with full guidance can be downloaded from [www.modern.nhs.uk/home/key/docs/Essence%20of%20Care.pdf](http://www.modern.nhs.uk/home/key/docs/Essence%20of%20Care.pdf).

## References

1. NHS Modernisation Agency. *Essence of Care: Patient-focused Benchmarks for Clinical Governance*. London: Department of Health; 2003. Available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/12/79/15/04127915.pdf>.