



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Your guide to the Draft National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Services

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About this guide

This guide outlines the draft standards that maternity services must meet to provide safe, high-quality care.

What is HIQA?

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent authority set up to promote safe, high-quality care for people using health and social care services in Ireland.

HIQA aims to protect people and improve the safety and quality of health and social care services.

We are also responsible for:

- setting standards
- monitoring and inspecting services
- providing guidance on health information
- providing advice on the best use of resources.

What are maternity services?

Maternity services are any setting where maternity care is provided to women and their babies.

Such care can, for example, be provided in maternity units in hospitals, or in community settings. A maternity service is any person, organization or part of an organization delivering maternity services.

Maternity services may be provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) in a public hospital, a voluntary hospital or in a community setting.

Why did we develop the standards?

For women, giving birth to a healthy baby should be one of the most normal, rewarding and positive life experiences. The draft standards aim to help maternity services achieve this for women.

While most women are healthy and well and have a straightforward pregnancy, some women need extra care and support. Therefore, maternity services must be responsive to the needs of all women and these standards highlight how to do this.

Good maternal health and safe, high-quality maternity care impacts on the health and life chances of newborn babies, on their healthy development and their long-term health.

Promoting and supporting the health of women and their babies is vital to ensure the health and wellbeing of future generations.

Recent reviews and investigations of maternity services in Ireland have highlighted a need to develop standards which are specific to maternity services in Ireland.

Ireland's first National Maternity Strategy was launched by the Minister for Health in January 2016. The Strategy and these draft national maternity standards will provide the building blocks to provide a consistently safe, high-quality maternity service.

What do the standards cover?

The standards cover eight areas, which we call themes. They cover the care of women and their babies from before pregnancy until six weeks after women give birth. They do not cover assisted human reproductive services.

Each standard statement describes an 'outcome' for women receiving care. Safe, high-quality maternity care is provided to women and their babies when a service achieves these outcomes.

Each standard statement also has a number of examples of good care, called features, listed underneath them. These describe what a maternity service is likely to be doing if meeting the standard.

The themes of the Draft National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Services



Overview of the eight themes

1. Person-centred care and support

This theme describes how maternity services always place women and their babies at the centre of what they do. This includes protecting the rights of women, respecting their values and preferences and involving them in their care.

2. Effective care and support

This theme describes how maternity services can deliver the best outcomes for women and their babies, using the best available evidence and information. It includes ensuring that women and their babies receive the right care and support at the right time and in the right place.

3. Safe care and support

This theme outlines how maternity services protect women and their babies through preventing and minimizing avoidable harm, and learning lessons from when things go wrong so that the likelihood of these events happening again are reduced.

4. Better health and wellbeing

This theme describes how maternity services work with women and make every contact they have with them count in order to support women to make healthier choices, improve their health and wellbeing, and that of their families.

5. Leadership, governance and management

This theme describes how maternity services organize and run ('govern') themselves. The theme explores how services make themselves accountable, make decisions, manage risks, and meet their strategic, legal and financial obligations.

6. Workforce

This theme covers planning, recruiting, managing, organizing, supervising and developing staff so that maternity services have the numbers, the skills and abilities they need to respond to the needs of women and their babies.

7. Use of resources

A service's resources include human (the staff), physical and financial resources. This theme describes how maternity services can use their resources to deliver the best possible outcomes for women and their babies within its available resources.

8. Use of information

This theme describes how maternity services can use information to plan, deliver, monitor, manage and improve their services. Reviewing data regularly is a straightforward way to check trends and take action if any possible concerns come to light.



The background is a solid blue color. In the top right corner, there is a teal triangle pointing downwards. In the bottom left corner, there is a yellow triangle pointing to the right.

Draft National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Services

Theme 1: Person-centred care and support

This theme describes how maternity services place women and their babies at the centre of what they do.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Women are involved in the planning and design of maternity services in their local area.
- Women have equal access to maternity services.
- Information on accessing services is readily available.
- Maternity service providers respect the privacy and dignity of each woman.
- Women using maternity services are provided with information to help them make informed decisions about their care.
- Women's informed consent is sought in line with national policies.
- People providing maternity care treat women with kindness, consideration and respect.
- Women are asked about their views and preferences and these are respected and taken into account in the planning of their care.
- People working in maternity services listen to and address any concerns or complaints women or their families may have about their services.

Theme 2: Effective care and support

This theme describes how maternity services can deliver the best possible care to women and their babies using evidence-based information.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Decisions about maternity care are based on women's needs using evidence from Ireland and other countries about what works well.
- People providing maternity care follow national clinical guidelines to make sure women and their babies receive the same level of safe, high-quality care regardless of where they live.
- Women and their babies have access to safe, high-quality care in the setting most appropriate to their individual needs and risks.
- The care each woman receives is regularly reviewed to make sure that it continues to be the most appropriate.
- All people involved in maternity care work together to make sure women and their babies receive safe, high-quality care.
- Each woman knows the name of the healthcare professional in charge of her care.

- Maternity service providers can access all necessary information to make decisions with a woman about her care.
- People providing maternity care listen to and look into concerns about the wellbeing of women or their babies.
- Maternity services regularly check to see how well they are doing in providing safe, high-quality care.
- Maternity services make sure that their premises are clean and comfortable.
- Women are asked to provide feedback about the care they receive, so that maternity services can improve where necessary.

Theme 3: Safe care and support

This theme describes how maternity services deliver safe care to women and their babies.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Maternity services learn from national and international information and evidence about the best ways of keeping women and their babies safe.
- Maternity services work to protect women and their babies from different types of abuse.
- Although maternity care can never be completely free from risk, maternity services do all they can to stop anything going wrong.
- Women and their families, and everyone working in the service, are supported to raise concerns about the safety and quality of the service.
- Maternity services actively look for ways to make their care safer.
- When something goes wrong, the maternity service manages, reviews and learns from the event so it can take steps to prevent it from happening again.
- The maternity service is open and honest with women, their partners and families as soon as possible after an incident has been identified.

Theme 4: Better health and wellbeing

Pregnancy and birth are times when a woman has a unique opportunity to focus on her health and wellbeing and that of her baby. Positive choices made by women can give their babies the best start in life.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Women and their families are supported to make positive lifestyle choices before, during and after pregnancy.
- Maternity services support women and their partners in becoming parents.
- The people providing maternity care work with women and their families to help maintain and improve their health and wellbeing.
- Maternity services support women to breastfeed their babies.
- Women's mental health needs during and after their pregnancy are recognized and additional care is provided as needed.

Theme 5: Leadership, governance and management

This theme covers how a maternity service is organised and run (governed). The service must have good systems of governance in place in areas such as accountability, decision-making and risk management.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Everyone working in the maternity service has a clear understanding of what their job involves and when to seek support and advice.
- Maternity services publish their aims and objectives and details of the services they provide.
- Maternity services only provide care that they know they can deliver safely and well.
- Maternity services regularly look for ways to improve.

Theme 6: Workforce

Every staff member has a vital part to play in promoting safe and high-quality care to women and babies using maternity services. The workforce theme applies to everyone who works in a maternity service, either directly or indirectly. It covers planning, recruiting, managing and organising staff.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Maternity services make sure that there are enough staff in place to meet the level of demand on the service and to provide safe, high-quality maternity care.
- The people providing maternity care have the skills and experience needed.
- The people providing maternity care receive regular training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.
- Staff receive support, training, and supervision so they can perform their jobs to the best of their ability.
- Staff are registered with the appropriate professional regulatory body.

Theme 7: Use of resources

This theme describes how maternity services use their money and resources to deliver services in the best possible way.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Maternity services look for opportunities to improve their services and achieve better outcomes for women and their babies.
- Maternity services take into account the needs of women and their babies and the levels of demand on the service when making resource decisions.
- The people responsible for providing maternity care use resources responsibly.
- Decisions about how maternity services use their resources are informed by the views of women using the services.

Theme 8: Use of information

This theme describes how maternity services use information to plan, deliver, monitor, manage and improve the services it delivers.

When this standard is met, the following is in place.

- Maternity services use all relevant information to plan and deliver safe, high-quality care.
- Maternity services have access to and use quality information when making decisions about the care of women and their babies.
- The people providing maternity care respect women's privacy and confidentiality.
- The people providing maternity care record all information accurately and store it securely.

Public consultation process

We would like to hear your views on the draft national standards. The draft national standards are available for public consultation for an eight-week period.

We invite all interested parties to submit their views.

The closing date for receipt of feedback is
5pm on Monday 16 May 2016

How to make a submission

A number of consultation questions have been prepared for your consideration when reviewing the standards. These questions are not intended in any way to limit feedback, and other comments are welcome.

There are several ways to tell us what you think.



Your comments can be submitted online by completing the consultation feedback form on our website, www.hiqa.ie, or by downloading and returning your form to us either by email or post. You can email your completed forms to standards@hiqa.ie.



You can print off a copy of the feedback form from our website and post it to us at:

Health Information and Quality Authority
National Standards for Safer Better Maternity
Services Consultation
George's Court
George's Lane
Smithfield
Dublin 7
D07 E98Y



For further information or if you have any questions, you can talk to a member of the team by calling 01 814 7400.

How we will use your comments

We will review and consider all submissions received during the consultation process. Following this process, we will finalize the Draft National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Services.

This is your opportunity to participate in the development of national standards for maternity services. We wish to thank you in advance for taking the time to submit your comments.

The final draft national standards will be presented to our Board for its approval. Following approval by the Board, the draft national standards will then be submitted for approval to the Minister for Health.



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For further information please contact:**

Health Information and Quality Authority
George's Court, George's Lane
Dublin 7
D07 E98Y

Phone: +353 (0)1 814 7400

Email: info@hiqa.ie

Web: www.hiqa.ie

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