



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

A Guide to the National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections

20 May 2009

About the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority (the Authority) was set up in 2007 and reports directly to the Minister for Health and Children. It is the independent organisation that was set up to improve the safety and quality of Ireland's health and social care services. The responsibilities of the Authority cover the public, private (within its social care function) and voluntary sectors.

The Health Act 2007 is the legislation which outlines the Authority's areas of responsibility under law. These areas of responsibility are:

Setting Standards for Health and Social Services – we use national and international best practice to make sure that person-centred standards are developed and used in Ireland's health and social care services. The Authority does not have responsibility for mental health services.

Monitoring Healthcare Quality – we monitor the standards of quality and safety in our health services. This is done by implementing continuous quality assurance programmes.

Health Technology Assessment – we work to make sure that people using Ireland's health services are treated in the best and most efficient way possible. We do this by examining the clinical and economic effectiveness of drugs, equipment, diagnostic techniques and health promotion services.

Health Information – we provide advice on the best way to collect and share information in health and social care services. Our work also includes examining how Ireland’s health and social care services are performing and publishing information on this.

Social Services Inspectorate – we register and inspect residential homes for children, older people and people with disabilities. We also assess day-school and pre-school facilities, children’s detention centres and foster-care services.

Why these Standards are important

Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAs) are infections, such as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) that people can get as a result of healthcare procedures, or if they have open wounds.

The ongoing reduction of HCAI rates is one of the most important challenges facing health and social care services. Reducing these infections is vital to improve the quality and safety of care for people who use the health and social care services. By reducing HCAs, healthcare costs can also be reduced as fewer people will require the additional treatment associated with HCAs.

Because of the importance of reducing the number of HCAs, the Authority has developed these *National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections*.

Background

The Authority is responsible for developing national standards for health and social care services. In this document, the word “service” refers to any service, facility or organisation that provides health or social care.

The Authority will assess services to make sure that they are doing what is required of them by the Standards. The reason the Authority sets and assesses against standards is to make sure that Ireland’s health and social care services are safe and of a high quality.

Because it is a very important issue for patient safety, a lot of work has already been done on preventing and controlling HCAs both in Ireland and around the world.

This work includes national and international research, which aims to reduce the number of HCAs, improve safety for people who use health and social services and increase the quality of services. The Authority's Standards are supported by this research and are an important development for the Irish healthcare system.

These Standards are national standards. This means that they will be used in all Irish health and social care services. The Standards are in keeping with the best and most up-to-date national and international evidence.

The aim of the Standards is to provide guidance and direction to all health and social care service providers. This will help prevent and reduce HCAs so that people using these services receive the safest and highest quality care.

The Standards require that all staff who manage and provide health and social care services take responsibility for providing the best and safest service possible. It is essential that everyone plays their part in preventing and controlling HCAs.

How the Standards were developed

To develop the Standards, the Authority established a project team which examined all of the available national and international information on the area of HCAs in detail.

The Authority set up an Advisory Group to provide technical advice, review Draft Standards and provide feedback to the Authority's Project Team.

To get feedback from as many people as possible, the Authority undertook a detailed consultation process. This included:

- Publication of draft Standards
- Service-user focus groups (Dublin and Cork)
- Workshops with over 150 service providers which took place regionally (Dublin, Monaghan, Sligo and Cork)
- International review of Draft Standards
- Six-week public consultation, resulting in 107 submissions to the Authority.

Feedback on the Draft Standards was received from stakeholders, including members of the public, advocacy groups, and from public and private service providers across community, primary care and acute hospital settings.

The Authority considered all feedback in detail. The consultation process was particularly important, and assisted in developing the Standards outlined in this document.

Further details on the consultation process, including the report on the outcome of the public consultation, is available on www.hiqa.ie.

Who the Standards apply to

These Standards are designed to apply to **all** health and social care services in Ireland. This includes, but is not limited to: acute hospitals, dentistry services, community hospitals, homecare services, residential care, health centres and general practice services.

How the Standards are structured

There are 12 Standards in total. Each Standard is made up of three elements:

- The rationale. This element outlines the reason for the Standard.
- The Standard statement. This describes the intended purpose and outcome of the Standard in plain language.
- The criteria. These describe how a service can show whether or not a Standard is being met.

This document describes each Standard, with a short explanation of it.

The Standards document is available online at www.hiqa.ie.

Implementation of the Standards

In line with our responsibility under law, as outlined in section 8 (1) (b) and (c) of the Health Act 2007, the Authority sets standards on safety and quality and monitors that standards are being met.

We will assess and publicly report on the performance of services against the *National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections*.

The majority of the Standards are practical and should be straightforward to put in place. It is important that the healthcare staff, who are responsible for providing and managing services, develop plans to put the Standards in place.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) is the main provider and funder of health and social care services in Ireland. As a result, the Authority will expect the HSE to prepare a detailed plan based on existing gaps in services.

Private and independent health and social care services should also take full account of these Standards when implementing their own measures for preventing and controlling Healthcare Associated Infections.

Implementation plans should contain steps to immediately deal with and manage the risk of serious gaps, and put in place a programme of measures leading to the Standards being met within 12 months of the date of publication.

The only exception to this is Standard 3 which has a three-year timeframe.

To make sure that the Standards remain up to date, the Authority will review these Standards no later than three years after their publication date.

The National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections

There are 12 National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections:

Standard 1:

The prevention and control of Healthcare Associated Infections is effectively and efficiently governed and managed.

Explanation

It is important that staff at all levels are accountable for the reduction and control of HCAs. All services should have clear lines of responsibility and reporting to help prevent and control HCAs. This encourages better patient safety and quality of care.

Standard 2:

Structures, systems and processes are in place to effectively manage and implement the programme to prevent and control Healthcare Associated Infections.

Explanation

All services should have structures such as committees and teams, and systems and processes, for example, annual work plans, to help prevent and control HCAs.

Standard 3:

The physical environment, facilities and resources are developed and managed to minimise the risk of service users, staff and visitors acquiring a Healthcare Associated Infection.

Explanation

The risk of the spread of HCAs is reduced when the design of the physical environment is in line with best international evidence. This can include providing single rooms, enough physical space in clinical areas, and an environment that can be kept clean easily.

Standard 4:

Human resources are effectively and efficiently managed in order to prevent and control the spread of Healthcare Associated Infections.

Explanation

Good human resource management can impact on safety and quality within health and social care services. Providing ongoing education to all staff on the prevention and control of HCAs can lead to a safer service.

Standard 5:

A communication strategy is in place which ensures information relating to Healthcare Associated Infections is communicated and responded to in an efficient, timely, effective and accurate manner.

Explanation

A good communication strategy which helps to share useful information, both internally and externally, can improve the quality of services. This communications strategy can also help to inform everyone on how they can prevent and control HCAs.

Standard 6:

Hand hygiene practices that prevent, control and reduce the risk of the spread of Healthcare Associated Infections are in place.

Explanation

Hand hygiene is known internationally to be the single most important measure to prevent the transmission of HCAs. Because of this, it is very important that all services have a strong culture of good hand hygiene to prevent the spread of HCAs.

Standard 7:

The spread of communicable/transmissible diseases is prevented, managed and controlled.

Explanation

All services should put in place policies, procedures and systems that prevent and control communicable/transmissible diseases (that is, diseases or organisms that are passed from one person to another). This is very important for the safety and quality of health and social care services.

Standard 8:

Invasive medical device related infections are prevented or reduced.

Explanation

A quarter of all HCAs are related to the use of invasive medical devices (devices that are put into a patient's body or breaks the skin, for example ventilators and urinary catheters). To increase patient safety, all services should put specific policies, procedures and systems in place which reduce the risk of getting an infection from the use of invasive medical devices.

Standard 9:

Microbiological services are available in a timely and effective manner to support the service to prevent and control Healthcare Associated Infections.

Explanation

All services should have access to good microbiology services that respond quickly to make sure all HCAs are detected and dealt with as soon as possible, to help with a patient's treatment and care.

Standard 10:

Healthcare Associated Infection and communicable/transmissible disease outbreaks are managed and controlled in a timely, efficient and effective manner in order to reduce and control the spread of Healthcare Associated Infections.

Explanation

All services should make sure outbreaks of HCAs or other diseases are effectively managed and controlled to reduce the effect they have on all service users, staff and the general public.

Standard 11:

Healthcare Associated Infections and antimicrobial resistance are monitored, audited and reported through a systematic surveillance programme.

Explanation

Services that monitor HCAs and share this information with their staff are better at preventing and controlling HCAs. All services should have a plan in place to monitor HCAs and follow up on the information collected.

Standard 12:

There are systems in place to reduce and control antimicrobial resistance.

Explanation

When antimicrobials (such as antibiotics) are not used in the right way or are over used, there is an increased risk that micro-organisms (such as bacteria) will be able to resist the effects of the antimicrobials. All services should have a plan that helps prevent this from happening.

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