

**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Your guide to the National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Services

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About this guide

This guide outlines the 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 location where maternity care is provided to women and their babies. Maternity care includes care for women when they first look for care before and during pregnancy, during labour and birth, as well as the care of the woman and her baby after birth.

Maternity care can be provided in the community, in maternity hospitals or in maternity units in general hospitals. A maternity service provider is any person, organization or part of an organization delivering maternity care.

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 National Maternity 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 their babies. These standards highlight how maternity services can do this.

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

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

What do the Standards include?

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

Each standard statement describes an 'outcome' for women and babies 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 it meets the standard.

The themes of the 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 and their babies, 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 information based on the best available evidence. 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 by preventing and minimizing avoidable harm, and learning lessons if something goes wrong so that the likelihood of these events happening again is reduced.

4. Better Health and Wellbeing

This theme describes how maternity services work with women 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 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 of staff with the skills and abilities they need to respond to the needs of women and their babies.

7. Use of Resources

A maternity service's resources include human, 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 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 concerns come to light.



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.

Standards for Person-centred Care and Support

- 1.1** The planning, design and delivery of maternity services are informed by the identified needs and preferences of women and their babies.
- 1.2** Women and their babies have equitable access to maternity services based on their assessed needs.
- 1.3** Women and their babies experience maternity care which respects their diversity and protects their rights.
- 1.4** Women are empowered to make informed decisions about their care.
- 1.5** Informed consent to care is obtained in accordance with legislation and national policy.
- 1.6** The dignity, privacy and autonomy of each woman and baby is respected and promoted.
- 1.7** Maternity service providers promote a culture of caring, kindness, compassion, consideration and respect.
- 1.8** Maternity service providers ensure additional supports are in place for women and families who experience bereavement or pregnancy complications.

- 1.9** Complaints and concerns are responded to promptly, openly and effectively with clear communication and support provided throughout this process.

When these standards are 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, compassion, 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 information based on best available evidence.

Standards for Effective Care and Support

- 2.1** Maternity care reflects best available evidence of what is known to achieve safe, high-quality outcomes for women and their babies.
- 2.2** Maternity care is planned and delivered to meet the initial and ongoing assessed needs of women and their babies, while working to meet needs of all women and babies using the service.
- 2.3** Women and their babies receive integrated care which is coordinated effectively within and between maternity and other services.
- 2.4** An identified lead healthcare professional has overall clinical responsibility for the care of each woman and that of her baby.
- 2.5** All information necessary to support the provision of effective care, including information provided by the woman, is available at the point of clinical decision-making.
- 2.6** Maternity services are provided through a model of care designed to deliver safe, high-quality maternity care.

- 2.7 Maternity care is provided in a physical environment which supports the delivery of safe, high-quality care and protects the health and wellbeing of women and their babies.
- 2.8 The safety and quality of maternity care is systematically monitored, evaluated and continuously improved.

When these standards are met, the following is in place:

- 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.
- Decisions about maternity care are based on women's needs using evidence about what works well.
- 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 and baby receives is regularly reviewed to make sure that it continues to be the most appropriate to meet their needs.
- 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 and their babies.
- Women are asked to provide feedback about the care they receive, so that maternity services can improve where necessary.
- Maternity services make sure that their premises are clean and comfortable.
- Maternity services regularly check to see how well they are doing in providing safe, high-quality care.

Theme 3 Safe Care and Support

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

Standards for Safe Care and Support

- 3.1** Maternity service providers actively support and promote the safety of women and their babies as part of a wider culture of safety and quality.
- 3.2** Maternity service providers protect women and their babies from the risk of avoidable harm through the appropriate design and delivery of maternity services.
- 3.3** Maternity service providers monitor and learn from information relevant to providing safe services and actively promote learning, both locally and nationally.
- 3.4** Maternity service providers implement, review and publicly report on a structured quality improvement programme.
- 3.5** Maternity service providers effectively identify, manage, respond to and report on patient safety incidents.
- 3.6** Maternity service providers fully and openly inform and support women and their families as soon as possible after a patient safety incident becomes known, and continue to provide information and support as needed.

- 3.7** Maternity service providers ensure all reasonable measures are taken to protect women and their babies from all types of abuse.

When these standards are 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.
- If 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.

Standard for Better Health and Wellbeing

4.1 Healthcare professionals work with women to promote, protect and improve the health and wellbeing of women and their babies.

When these standards are 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.
- The mental health needs of women, 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 organized and run (governed). The service must have good systems of governance in place in areas such as accountability, decision-making and risk management.

Standards for Leadership, Governance and Management

- 5.1** Maternity service providers have clear accountability arrangements to achieve the delivery of safe, high-quality maternity care.
- 5.2** Maternity service providers have formalized governance arrangements for assuring the delivery of safe, high-quality maternity care.
- 5.3** Maternity service providers maintain a publicly available statement of purpose that accurately describes the services provided to women and their babies, including how and where they are provided.
- 5.4** Maternity service providers set clear objectives and have a clear plan for delivering safe, high-quality maternity services.
- 5.5** Maternity service providers have effective management arrangements to support and promote the delivery of safe, high-quality maternity services.
- 5.6** Leaders at all levels promote and strengthen a culture of safety and quality throughout the maternity service.

- 5.7 Staff at all levels are empowered to exercise their professional and personal responsibility for the safety and quality of maternity services provided.
- 5.8 Maternity service providers systematically monitor, identify and act on opportunities to improve the safety and quality of their maternity services.
- 5.9 Maternity service providers monitor the safety and quality of services provided on their behalf.
- 5.10 Maternity services are compliant with relevant legislation.
- 5.11 Maternity service providers act on standards and alerts, and take into account recommendations and guidance issued by relevant regulatory bodies.

When these standards are 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, 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 for women and babies using maternity services. This theme applies to everyone who works in a maternity service, either directly or indirectly. It covers planning, recruiting, managing and organizing staff.

Standards for Workforce

- 6.1 Maternity service providers plan, organize and manage their workforce to achieve the service objectives for safe, high-quality maternity care.
- 6.1 Maternity service providers recruit people with the required competencies to provide safe, high-quality maternity care.
- 6.1 Maternity service providers ensure their workforce has the competencies and training required to deliver safe, high-quality maternity care.
- 6.1 Maternity service providers support their workforce in delivering safe, high-quality maternity care.

When these standards are 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 they need.

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- 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.

Standard for Use of Resources

7.1 Maternity service providers plan and manage the use of available resources to deliver safe, high-quality maternity care efficiently and sustainably.

When these standards are 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 who provide 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

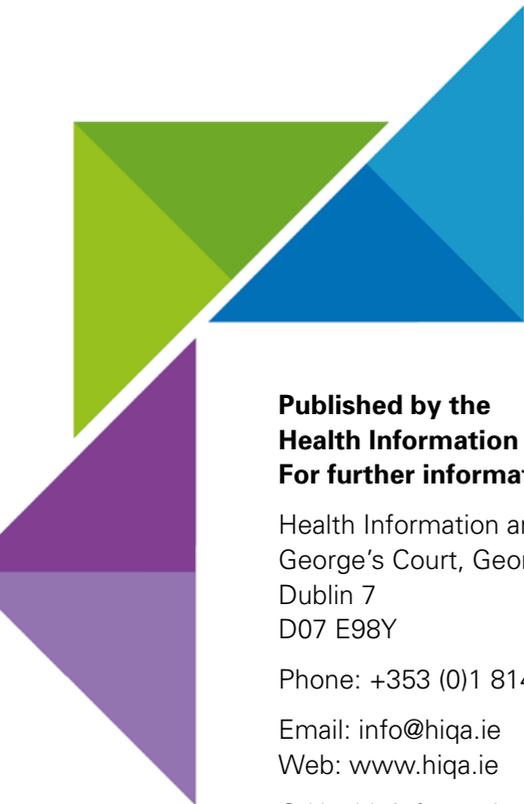
This theme describes how maternity services use information to plan, deliver, monitor, manage and improve the services it delivers.

Standard for Use of Information

- 8.1 Maternity service providers use information as a resource in planning, delivering, managing and improving the safety and quality of maternity care.
- 8.2 Maternity service providers have effective arrangements for information governance.
- 8.3 Maternity service providers have effective arrangements for the management of healthcare records.

When these standards are 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.



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