

## Frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the *National Standards for infection prevention and control in community services*

### 1. What do the National Standards cover?

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has developed *National Standards for community health and social care services in Ireland* which cover infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship.

### 2. Who do the National Standards apply to?

The National Standards have been designed to apply to all community health and social care services outside of the acute hospital setting. Examples of services include but are not limited to: ambulance services, care delivered in the home, general practices, dental practices, residential services for older people and people with a disability, day care services and pharmacies.

### 3. How were these National Standards developed?

The National Standards are based on national and international evidence, and were developed by engaging with a diverse range of informed and interested parties. This was achieved by convening an advisory group, conducting focus groups with people using community health and social care services and staff working in these services, and a holding a six-week public consultation. Further information on the Standards Development Process can be found on our website, [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

### 4. What is infection prevention and control?

Infection prevention and control is the discipline and practice of preventing and controlling healthcare-associated infection and the spread of infectious diseases in a health or social care service. Many of these infections are avoidable if simple measures are taken to address risks that have the potential to cause such infections. These National Standards cover such measures including include good hand hygiene, training staff in infection prevention and control and ensuring all equipment and the environment is clean.

### 5. What is a healthcare-associated infection?

A healthcare-associated infection is an infection that develops either as a direct result of healthcare interventions such as medical or surgical treatment, or from being in contact with a health or social care setting. They can have a huge impact on people, causing distress and anxiety, serious illness, disability and in some cases even death.

As a result of the rapid turnover of patients in acute healthcare settings, complex care is increasingly being delivered in the community, and a number of these infections are no longer confined to hospitals and are increasingly prevalent in community care settings. These National Standards cover how to prevent and control the spread of infections in community health and social care services.

## **6. What is antimicrobial stewardship?**

Many common infections are becoming more difficult to treat as they are resistant to antimicrobial medication, including commonly used antibiotics. This is in part due to the overuse and misuse of antibiotics. Antimicrobial stewardship is about:

- only taking antibiotics when needed and as prescribed
- ensuring that every person:
  - receives the right antibiotics
  - for the right infection type
  - at the right time.

The importance of adhering to antimicrobial stewardship practices is emphasised throughout the National Standards. Antimicrobial stewardship plays an important role in preventing and controlling infections in community health and social care services.

## **7. How will these standards be monitored?**

These Standards have been approved by the Minister for Health. Under the Health Act 2007, this places a responsibility on all residential services for older people and people with disabilities and all publicly-funded health and social care services in the community to begin implementing the National Standards. Prior to any regulatory activity being carried out by HIQA, a comprehensive monitoring guide to the National Standards will be published on our website.

It is envisaged that all other privately provided community services will adopt these national standards to promote improvements in the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections in their services.

## **8. Where can I find a copy of the National Standards?**

A full copy of the National Standards, along with support tools to aid you in implementing the standards, can be found on our website, [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

**For further information about the National Standards**, please contact the Standards team at [standards@hiqa.ie](mailto:standards@hiqa.ie).

**For press queries, please contact:**

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