

Frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the *National Standards for Adult Safeguarding*

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Mental Health Commission (MHC) have developed National Standards for Adult Safeguarding to help health and social care services reduce the risk of harm, promote people's rights, health and wellbeing, and to empower people to protect themselves.

What is adult safeguarding?

Adult safeguarding is about promoting people's rights, health and wellbeing when they are using any health or social care service.

It is also about preventing harm happening to people, and working with them to protect them effectively if harm does happen.

There may be times when a person is more vulnerable to harm and unable to protect themselves. It is important that all staff know their responsibilities and how they should act at these times.

Adult safeguarding in Ireland

Adult safeguarding in Ireland is currently undergoing substantial change. Alongside the work of HIQA and the MHC, there are two other major pieces of work in relation to adult safeguarding. These are: the development of a national adult safeguarding policy for the health sector by the Department of Health; and the revision of the HSE's national operational adult safeguarding policy, and structures and processes being put in place to support adult safeguarding at a local level.

What is the role of HIQA and the MHC in setting standards for adult safeguarding?

HIQA's role is to develop standards, inspect and review health and social care services and support informed decisions on how services are delivered. HIQA aims to support services to safeguard people and improve the safety and quality of health and social care services across its full range of functions.

The MHC's role is to regulate and inspect mental health services, support continuous quality improvement and to protect the interests of those who are involuntarily admitted and detained under the Mental Health Act 2001.

HIQA and the MHC recognise the importance of increasing the quality and safety of services for all adults in Ireland, especially those who may be at risk of harm.

What is the purpose of the National Standards?

Having National Standards for Adult Safeguarding in place allows for a consistent approach to preventing and responding to harm if it does occur. They outline a way of working for health and social care services and support the development of a culture where safeguarding is embedded into practice rather than being viewed as a separate activity.

The National Standards for Adult Safeguarding offer a common language to describe adult safeguarding in health and social care services and help people using services to understand what they should expect from a service that is committed to promoting their rights, health and wellbeing and protecting them from the risk of harm.

The standards also support the development of integrated working in and between the range of health and social care services that people interact with, recognising that people may be at increased risk of harm when they are using multiple services or when they are moving from one service to another.

Who do the National Standards apply to?

These standards have been approved by the Minister for Health. This places a responsibility on all residential services for older people and people with disabilities and all publicly-funded health and social care services to begin implementing these national standards. As these standards have been jointly developed and approved by the MHC, they should be implemented by all mental health services.

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 with experience of health and social care services, their families, advocates, staff working delivering services, and policy makers and submissions made during a six-week public consultation. Further information on the standards development process can be found on our website, www.hiqa.ie.

How will the National Standards be monitored?

Adult safeguarding is a component of a number of national standards developed by HIQA. These standards are regulated and inspected against in both residential services for older people and for people with disabilities and are inspected and monitored in healthcare services. Similarly, the autonomy, capacity and involvement

of people using services in decisions about their care and treatment are key themes in the MHC's Quality Framework for Mental Health Services in Ireland.

The new National Standards for Adult Safeguarding build on these existing standards and frameworks. While HIQA can inspect against these standards, the aim of the new standards is to support services to improve their practice and to promote people's rights, health and wellbeing and reduce the risk of harm.

While the National Adult Safeguarding Standards do not create any legal obligations for mental health providers, they constitute best practice in the delivery of services. The Mental Health Commission will consider the best way to monitor their implementation using our existing quality and judgement support frameworks.

Where can I find a copy of the National Standards?

A full copy of the National Standards, along with a poster for people using services is available on www.hiqa.ie.

Further resources to support the implementation of the National Standards are in development and will be freely available for use by all health and social care services.

For further information about the National Standards, please contact the Standards team at standards@hiqa.ie.

For press queries, please contact:

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