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Authority**

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agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Regulation and Monitoring
of Social Care Services

Assessment-judgment framework for infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship in designated centres for older people

Version 3: March 2025

Safer Better Care

Contents

Introduction to this assessment-judgment framework	3
Section 1. Capacity and capability of the provider to deliver a safe quality service....	9
Section 2. Quality and safety	15
Appendix 1 — Revision history	25

Introduction to this assessment-judgment framework

The Chief Inspector of Social Services within the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is responsible for registering, inspecting and monitoring compliance by registered providers with regulations and standards. This assessment-judgment framework has been published by the Chief Inspector to support these functions, specifically with regard to assessing Regulation 27 of the Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2013 as amended. This regulation requires that:

The registered provider shall:

- (a) ensure that infection prevention and control procedures consistent with the standards published by the Authority are implemented by staff*
- (b) ensure guidance published by appropriate national authorities in relation to infection prevention and control and outbreak management is implemented in the designated centre, as required, and*
- (c) ensure that staff receive suitable training on infection prevention and control*

The current relevant standards are *The National Standards for infection prevention and control in community services* (2018). The Health Act 2007 (as amended) (referred to in this document as 'the Act') requires that registered providers comply with standards set by HIQA under section 8(1) (b) of the Act.

This assessment-judgment framework should be used in conjunction with the [Assessment-judgment framework for designated centres for older people](#), which is available on www.hiqa.ie.

A standardised approach to inspection and monitoring is adapted by the Chief Inspector to consistently carry out its functions as required by the Act. This standardised approach is called the 'Authority Monitoring Approach' (AMA). All inspectors adhere to this approach and to any associated guidance, procedures and protocols.

This monitoring approach does not replace the professional judgment of inspectors, but rather gives inspectors a range of procedures, protocols and tools to assist them in carrying out their functions. This assessment-judgement framework is one of these tools.

Applying AMA and using the assessment-judgment framework will ensure that each provider is treated fairly and the assessment of compliance with regulations and standards is timely, consistent and responsive to risk identified within the designated centre. It also provides transparency for providers and the public on how the Chief Inspector assesses and makes judgments about compliance and non-compliance.

Assessment-judgment framework for infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship in designated centres for older people

The application of AMA does not replace or take away the providers' responsibility to ensure that they are in compliance with the regulations and standards, that they provide safe high-quality services for people who use their services, and that they ensure residents' rights are respected and upheld.

The Chief Inspector has also produced an updated [Guidance for the assessment of designated centres for older people](#) to support this assessment-judgment framework which can be found on www.hiqa.ie.

Additional information about AMA and how the Chief Inspector carries out its functions can be found in the *Regulation Handbook: a guide for providers and staff of designated centres*, which is also available at www.hiqa.ie

Assessment-judgment framework

There are two purposes to an assessment-judgment framework:

- It supports inspectors in gathering evidence when monitoring or assessing a service and to make judgments on compliance. The framework sets out examples of the lines of enquiry to be explored (questions to be asked) by inspectors.
- It supports providers to self-assess their own service.

Judgment descriptors

We make judgments on whether the provider is: compliant, substantially compliant or not compliant with the regulations. Table 1 defines what these levels of compliance mean, which are called 'judgment descriptors'. These are used to assess compliance against each of the regulations.

Table 1. Judgment descriptors

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Compliant: a judgment of compliant means the provider and or the person in charge are in full compliance with the relevant regulation.▪ Substantially compliant: a judgment of substantially compliant means that the provider or person in charge has generally met the requirements of the regulation but some action is required to be fully compliant. This finding will have a risk rating of yellow which is low risk.▪ Not compliant: a judgment of not compliant means the provider or person in charge has not complied with a regulation and considerable action is required to come into compliance. Continued non-compliance or where the non-compliance poses a significant risk to the safety, health and welfare of residents using the service will be risk-rated red (high risk) and the inspector will identify the date by which the provider must comply. Where |
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the non-compliance does not pose a risk to the safety, health and welfare of residents using the service, it is risk-rated orange (moderate risk) and the provider must take action within a reasonable time frame to come into compliance.

Assessment-judgment framework for infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship in designated centres for older people

The assessment-judgment framework should be applied in conjunction with the following:

- Health Act 2007 (as amended)
- Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2013 (S.I. 415 of 2013)
- Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 293 of 2016)
- Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 (S.I. 428 of 2017)
- Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 (S.I. 628 of 2022)
- Health Act 2007 (Registration of Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 61 of 2015)
- Health Act 2007 (Registration of Designated Centres for Older People) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 (S.I. 430 of 2017)
- Health Act 2007 (Care and welfare of residents in Designated centres for Older people (Amendment) Regulations 2025
- *National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland* (2016)
- *National Standards for infection prevention and control in community services* (2018)
- *National Standards for Adult Safeguarding* (2019)
- Assessment-judgment framework and guidance for the assessment of designated centres for older people
- *Guidance on a Human Rights-based approach in Health and Social Care Services*
- *Regulation Handbook*

How this document is structured

The assessment-judgment framework is set out in two overarching sections which are termed 'dimensions'. These are:

1. Capacity and capability of the provider to deliver a safe quality service

2. Quality and safety of the service

The regulations and national standards* are linked to the relevant dimension — **capacity and capability** or **quality and safety** — for ease of reporting and so do not appear in numerical order.

Capacity and capability of the provider to deliver a safe quality service

The dimension of **capacity and capability** focuses on the governance, leadership and management arrangements in place in the service. It covers how effective these are in ensuring that a good-quality and safe service is being sustainably provided. It outlines how people who work in the service are recruited and supported through education and training, and whether there are appropriate systems in place to underpin the safe delivery and oversight of the service.

Quality and safety of the service

The dimension of **quality and safety** reviews the experiences and support people receive on a day-to-day basis. It evaluates whether this is a good quality and caring service which ensures people are safe. It includes information about the environment where the service is provided.

The dimensions are inter-dependent: good governance and oversight procedures, the right resources, active use of information and a competent and confident workforce are essential to the delivery of a sustainable quality and safe service.

Essentially, person-centred care and support, safeguarding and protection, and better health, wellbeing and development for people using services all happen because the capacity and capability arrangements are there to make sure they happen.

* Where possible, the national standards are aligned to one regulation only, as a 'best fit' simply for the purpose of reporting. This does not negate the provider's responsibility in meeting these standards.

Figure 1 below details the themes in the *National Standards for infection prevention and control in community services* (2018). The four themes on the upper half of the circle relate to **quality and safety** in a service, while the four on the lower portion relate to **capacity and capability**.

Figure 1. Themes in the National Standards



Section 1. Capacity and capability of the provider to deliver a safe quality service

This section focuses on the overall delivery of the service and how the provider is assured that a good quality, safe and effective service is provided to residents.

It includes how the provider:

- implements effective governance structures with clear lines of accountability in place so that all members of the workforce are aware of their responsibilities and who they are accountable to
- ensures that the necessary resources are in place to support the effective delivery of good quality person-centred care and support to people using the service
- uses information to plan, deliver and manage services provided to residents to ensure the delivery of high-quality, safe and effective services
- designs and implements policies and procedures that embed a human rights-based approach and will make sure the centre runs effectively.

Dimension: Capacity and Capability	
Regulation 15: Staffing	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 6.1 Service providers plan, organise and manage their workforce to meet the services' infection prevention and control needs.
Line of enquiry	
1. Has the provider ensured that the number and skill-mix of staff is appropriate for the infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship needs of the residents, as assessed in accordance with Regulation 5, and the size and layout of the designated centre concerned?	

Dimension: Capacity and capability	
Regulation 16: Training and staff development	
Infection prevention and control standards	<p>Standard 5.4 Staff are empowered to exercise their professional and personal responsibility for safe and effective infection prevention and control practices and antimicrobial stewardship practices.</p> <p>Standard 6.2 Service providers ensure their workforce has the competencies, training and support to enable safe and effective infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship practices.</p>
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the provider ensured that staff have timely access to appropriate training including resources, information, education and advice to minimise the occupational exposure risk of acquiring a healthcare-associated infection, appropriate to their role? 2. Do staff receive suitable training on infection control? 3. Are staff appropriately supervised to ensure infection prevention and control measures are consistently implemented? 4. Are copies of guidance documents — relevant to designated centres for older people and related to infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship, and published by the government or statutory agencies — available and accessible? 	

Dimension: Capacity and capability	
Regulation 23: Governance and Management	
Infection prevention and control standards	<p>Standard 2.4 Service providers measure, assess and report the effectiveness of infection prevention and control practices to support improvements in infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship.</p> <p>Standard 3.2 Antimicrobial medications are appropriately prescribed, dispensed, administered, used and disposed of to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance.</p> <p>Standard 3.3 Arrangements are in place to protect staff from the occupational risk of acquiring an infection.</p> <p>Standard 5.1 The service has clear governance arrangements in place to ensure the sustainable delivery of safe and effective infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship.</p> <p>Standard 5.2 There are clear management arrangements in place to ensure the delivery of safe and effective infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship within the service.</p> <p>Standard 5.3 There are formalised support arrangements in place to ensure the delivery of safe and effective infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship.</p> <p>Standard 5.5 Service providers ensure that externally contracted agencies adhere to safe and effective infection prevention and control practices.</p> <p>Standard 7.1 Service providers plan and manage the use of available resources to meet the services' infection prevention and control needs.</p> <p>Standard 8.2 Service providers have effective arrangements in place for information governance for infection prevention and control-related information.</p>

Line of enquiry

1. Are there governance and management systems in place that assure the provider that the infection prevention and control practices are safe, appropriate and effectively monitored?
2. Is there a clearly defined management structure in place that identifies the lines of authority and accountability, specifies roles and details responsibilities and deputising arrangements for infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship?
3. Does the provider have systems in place that assures it that staff adhere to standard precautions at all times, whether infection is known to be present or not?
4. Does the provider ensure sufficient resources are available to ensure the effective delivery of safe quality care, including compliance with best practice in infection prevention and control?
5. Does the provider have management systems in place to ensure that the service provided in relation to infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship is safe, appropriate, consistent and effectively monitored? For example:
 - a. there are well-prepared contingency arrangements in place to respond to an outbreak
 - b. staff have access to specialist infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship advice and support, when required
 - c. there is a minimum of one on-site infection prevention and control link practitioner with protected time, appropriate training, to manage key areas of infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship as identified within the service
 - d. do staff receive suitable training in infection prevention and control??
 - e. staff are kept up to date with information such as new or revised infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, safety alerts and national updates as made available
 - f. where externally contracted agencies are used, they adhere to safe and effective infection prevention and control best practice and relevant legislation as required
 - g. effective arrangements are in place for information governance, for infection prevention and control-related information

- h. management systems ensure that clinical communication includes infection control risks and multi-drug-resistant organisms² when residents are transferring between services
 - i. that effective arrangements are in place to facilitate staff to raise concerns about the quality and safety of care and support provided to residents?
 - j. refurbishment projects or construction of a new facility is undertaken in line with relevant legislation and standards
 - k. expert infection prevention and control advice is sought prior to the commencement of any refurbishment or new build project and forms part of the planning process
 - l. regular reviews of the resources required to meet the provider's infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship needs for the centre are undertaken — these may include:
 - maintenance and refurbishment of existing buildings
 - investment in necessary equipment and supplies
 - investment in single-use or single-patient-use equipment
 - replacement of equipment when effective cleaning can no longer be achieved
 - m. facilitate all residents and staff to avail of vaccinations in accordance with current national policy.
6. Has the provider completed an annual review of the quality and safety of infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship delivered to residents in the designated centre, to ensure that such care is in accordance with the *National Standards for infection prevention and control in community services* set by HIQA under section 8 of the Act and approved by the Minister under section 10 of the Act?
7. Was the annual review of the quality and safety prepared in consultation with residents and their families?
8. Is a copy of the annual review made available to residents and, if requested, to the Chief Inspector?
9. Is a quality improvement plan developed and implemented to address issues highlighted by the annual review?

² A multi-drug resistant organism (MDRO) is a germ that is resistant to many antibiotics. If a germ is resistant to an antibiotic, it means that certain treatments will not work or may be less effective.

Dimension: Capacity and Capability	
Regulation 31: Notification of incidents	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 3.4 Outbreaks of infections are identified, managed, controlled and documented in a timely and effective manner.
Line of enquiry	
1. Has the person in charge of the designated centre notified the Chief Inspector of the outbreak of any notifiable or confirmed outbreak of infection as set out in paragraph 7(1)(e) of Schedule 4 of the regulations, within two working days of their occurrence?	

Section 2. Quality and safety

The focus of this section is about the lived experience of people using the service. This includes how people:

- are empowered to exercise their rights, achieve their personal goals, hopes and aspirations
- make choices and are actively involved in shaping the services they receive
- receive effective person-centred care and support, at all stages of their lives
- are able to live in a safe, comfortable and homely environment
- are protected from healthcare-associated infections.

Dimension: Quality and safety	
Regulation 5: Individual assessment and care plan	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 1.1 People are provided with appropriate information and are involved in decisions about their care to prevent, control and manage healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance.
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the provider, in so far as is reasonably practical, arranged to meet the infection prevention and control needs of each resident when these have been assessed? 2. Has the person in charge arranged a comprehensive assessment by an appropriate healthcare professional of the health, personal and social care needs of a resident or a person who intends to be a resident immediately before or on the person's admission to the designated centre concerned? 3. Did this assessment include the infection prevention and control needs of the individual, including information about the resident's colonisation or infection status documented in their care record? 4. Is the care plan prepared under this regulation available to the resident concerned and, with the consent of the resident or where the person in charge considers it appropriate, made available to their family? 5. Has the person in charge ensured that residents' care plans are formally reviewed, at intervals not exceeding four months, and where necessary revised, after consultation with the residents concerned and where appropriate the residents' families? 	

Dimension: Quality and safety	
Regulation 6: Health care	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 3.2 Antimicrobial medications are appropriately prescribed, dispensed, administered, used and disposed of to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance. Standard 4.1 People are empowered to protect themselves and others from healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance.
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Has the provider, having regard to the care plan prepared under Regulation 5, provided appropriate medical and healthcare to residents, including a high standard of evidence-based nursing care in accordance with professional guidelines issued from time to time by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (An Bord Altranais agus Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann)?2. Where the care plan prepared requires additional professional expertise or access to other treatment for infection, does the person in charge, in so far as reasonably practicable, make them available to the resident?	

Dimension: Quality and safety	
Regulation 9: Residents' rights	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 4.1 People are empowered to protect themselves and others from healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance.
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the provider, in so far as is reasonably practical, maintain and respect the rights of all people irrespective of their infection status? This includes their rights to privacy, dignity and autonomy in so far it does not interfere with the rights of other residents. 2. Are residents supported to exercise choice in relation to infection prevention and control in so far as such exercise does not interfere with the rights of other residents? 3. Are residents facilitated to communicate freely at all times including during outbreaks and in particular have access to — <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) information about current affairs and local matters, (ii) radio, television, newspapers, internet, and other media, (iii) telephone facilities, which may be accessed privately, (iv) voluntary groups, community resources and events. 	

Dimension: Quality and safety	
Regulation 11: Visits	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 1.1 People are provided with appropriate information and are involved in decisions about their care to prevent, control and manage healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance.
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the provider ensured the designated centre has a written visitor policy, to include the process for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. normal visitor access? 2. access during an outbreak of a communicable disease, and an epidemic or a pandemic? 3. arrangements for residents to receive nominated support persons? 2. Has the provider made arrangements for a resident to receive visitors? 3. Has the person in charge ensured that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. in so far as is reasonably practical, visits to a resident are not restricted, unless: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. such a visit would, in the opinion of the person in charge, pose a risk to the resident concerned or to another resident, or ii. the resident concerned has requested the restriction of visits? b. having regard to the number of residents and needs of each resident, suitable communal facilities are available for a resident to receive a visitor, and, in so far as is practical, a suitable private area which is not the resident's room is available to a resident to receive a visitor if required? c. on occasions when visiting is restricted, restrictions are in place for the shortest period possible and that during such times residents are facilitated to maintain communication and links with family? d. Notwithstanding subparagraph (c), residents are supported to receive visits from nominated support persons during an outbreak of a communicable disease, epidemic or pandemic subject to any guidance published by appropriate national authorities in relation to infection prevention and control and outbreak management? 	

Dimension: Quality and safety	
Regulation 17: Premises	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 2.2 Care is provided in a clean and safe environment that minimises the risk of transmitting a healthcare-associated infection.
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the provider ensured that the premises of the designated centre are appropriate to the number and needs of the residents of that centre and in accordance with the statement of purpose prepared under Regulation 3? 2. Has the provider, having regard to the needs of the residents of the designated centre, including their infection prevention and control needs, provided premises which conform to the matters set out in Schedule 6 of the regulations? For example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. is the centre clean and well maintained b. are there adequate arrangements in place for cleaning and disinfecting the premises, especially in the event of an outbreak c. is there adequate storage space, ventilation, heating and lighting suitable for residents in all parts of the designated centre used by residents d. are there appropriate sluicing facilities e. are there adequate laundry facilities f. are the premises of sound construction and kept in a good state of repair that support good infection and control practices g. is there a sufficient supply of piped hot and cold water, which incorporates thermostatic control valves or other suitable anti-scalding protection? h. is there a separate kitchen which has sufficient cooking facilities, kitchen equipment and tableware. 3. Can the centre and its furnishings be effectively cleaned in compliance with infection prevention and control best practice, appropriate to the service provided? 	

4. Has the provider ensured that arrangements are in place for the cleaning[‡] and disinfection[§] of the centre, in line with best practice and guidance?

[‡] Cleaning: the physical removal of foreign material such as blood and bodily substances, rust, dust, dirt, debris, spillages and so on. Cleaning physically removes rather than kills micro-organisms. It is achieved with water, detergents and mechanical action and should always precede any disinfection process.

[§] Disinfection: a process used to reduce the numbers of viable micro-organisms, but which may not necessarily inactivate some infectious agents, such as spores.

Dimension: Quality and safety	
Regulation 25: Temporary absence or discharge of residents	
Infection prevention and control standards	Standard 8.1 Information is used to plan, manage and deliver care that is in line with safe and effective infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship practices.
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When a resident is temporarily absent from a designated centre for treatment at another designated centre, hospital or elsewhere, has the person in charge where the resident lives ensured that all the relevant information about the resident is provided to the receiving designated centre, hospital or place?2. When the resident returns from another designated centre, hospital or place, has the person in charge where the resident lives taken all reasonable steps to ensure that all relevant information about the returning resident is obtained from the other designated centre, hospital or place?	

Dimension: Capacity and Capability	
Regulation 26: Risk Management	
Infection prevention and control standards	<p>Standard 5.2 There are clear management arrangements in place to ensure the delivery of safe and effective infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship within the service.</p> <p>Standard 3.4 Outbreaks of infection are identified, managed, controlled and documented in a timely and effective manner.</p>
Line of enquiry	
<p>1. Has the registered provider ensured that the risk management policy includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. hazard identification and assessment of infection risks throughout the designated centre b. the measures and actions in place to control risks associated with infectious diseases? c. arrangements for the identification, recording, and investigation from outbreaks of infectious diseases? d. a process for the implementation of actions and recommendations arising from risks associated with infection diseases? e. a process for the audit, review and learning from outbreaks 	

Dimension: Quality and safety	
Regulation 27: Infection control	
Infection prevention and control standards	<p>Standard 2.1 Infection prevention and control is part of the routine delivery of care to protect people from preventable healthcare-associated infections.</p> <p>Standard 2.3 Equipment is decontaminated and maintained to minimise the risk of transmitting a healthcare-associated infection.</p> <p>Standard 3.1 Arrangements are in place to support effective hand hygiene practices to minimise the risk of acquiring or transmitting infection.</p> <p>Standard 3.3 Arrangements are in place to protect staff from the occupational risk of acquiring an infection.</p> <p>Standard 3.4 Outbreaks of infection are identified, managed, controlled and documented in a timely and effective manner.</p>
Line of enquiry	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the provider ensured that infection prevention and control procedures, consistent with the standards published by the Authority, are in place and implemented by staff? 2. Does the provider ensure that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. staff adhere to standard precautions** all of the time for all residents using services, whether infection is known to be present or not? b. when standard precautions alone may be insufficient to prevent cross-transmission of specific infectious agents, staff adhere to additional precautions, known as transmission-based precautions 	

** **Standard Precautions:** are a group of routine infection prevention and control practices and measures that should be used for all people at all times regardless of suspected, confirmed or presumed infectious status, in any setting in which care is delivered. Standard precautions include, appropriate to the setting, the following:

- hand hygiene
- use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- management of spillages of blood and bodily fluids
- appropriate patient placement
- management of sharps
- safe injection practices
- respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- management of needle-stick injuries
- management of waste and management of laundry
- decontamination of reusable medical equipment
- decontamination of the environment
- occupational safe

- c. equipment for use by residents is in good working order and all reusable equipment is maintained, decontaminated, stored and managed in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, and best practice guidance
 - d. staff adhere to the World Health Organization's (WHO's) 'five moments of hand hygiene' principles or emerging best practice and relevant national guidance?
3. Does the provider ensure that:
- a. the service is in compliance with legislation and national and international best practice recommendations for the infrastructure of the facility, including the building, water supply, air quality and waste disposal.
 - b. hand hygiene facilities appropriate to the setting are provided in line with best practice and national guidelines
 - c. antimicrobial medications are appropriately prescribed, dispensed, administered, used and disposed of to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance
 - d. arrangements are in place to protect staff from the occupational risk of acquiring an infection
 - e. residents are informed about infection prevention and control precautions that need to be taken to protect them or others from healthcare-associated infection risks.
4. Does the provider ensure that:
- a. guidance published by appropriate national authorities in relation to infection prevention and control and outbreak management is implemented in the designated centre as required
 - b. staff receive suitable training on infection prevention and control

Appendix 1 – Revision history

Revision Date	Summary of changes
January 2024	Version 1 — first published. This supersedes the <i>Assessment judgment framework for Regulation 27 - Infection control: Designated centres for older people: V2: June 2022</i> , which is now obsolete and should no longer be consulted.
March 2025	Version 2 – revised in response to updated regulations for designated centres for older people 2025



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