

Regulation and Monitoring
of Social Care Services

Lexicon for Social Care

December 2025

About the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory authority established to promote safety and quality in the provision of health and social care services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public.

HIQA's mandate to date extends across a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector services. Reporting to the Minister for Health and engaging with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, HIQA has responsibility for the following:

- **Setting standards for health and social care services** — Developing person-centred standards and guidance, based on evidence and international best practice, for health and social care services in Ireland.
- **Regulating social care services** — The Chief Inspector within HIQA is responsible for registering and inspecting residential services for older people and people with a disability, and children's special care units.
- **Regulating health services** — Regulating medical exposure to ionising radiation.
- **Monitoring services** — Monitoring the safety and quality of health services and children's social services, and investigating as necessary serious concerns about the health and welfare of people who use these services.
- **Health technology assessment** — Evaluating the clinical and cost-effectiveness of health programmes, policies, medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic and surgical techniques, health promotion and protection activities, and providing advice to enable the best use of resources and the best outcomes for people who use our health service.
- **Health information** — Advising on the efficient and secure collection and sharing of health information, setting standards, evaluating information resources and publishing information on the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.
- **National Care Experience Programme** — Carrying out national service-user experience surveys across a range of health services, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE.

Background

The use of consistent language is important when communicating information. It can sometimes cause confusion if people use multiple different terms or phrases when referring to the same thing. Similarly, words and phrases that are deemed appropriate can change over time. This may occur if a word or phrase is seen as offensive or outdated to some people. For example, words such as 'mental retardation' or 'handicapped' were words previously used in reference to people with a disability but are now discouraged.

Fields such as medicine have standardised the use of language by developing lexicons or terminology lists. For example, the Systemized Nomenclature of Medicine – Clinical Terms (SNOMED-CT; <https://www.snomed.org/>) is a list of words and definitions that have been developed by experts in the field. Clinical practitioners are then encouraged to use the accepted SNOMED-CT terms in their documentation and records. This provides for consistent use of language and also allows for information to be processed more readily for reporting or research purposes.

There is no comparable list of terms for use in social care. As a regulatory authority receiving statutory notifications for more than 10 years, we have observed a need for more standardised language when describing incidents that occur in designated centres. It is for this reason that we chose to commence the development of the Lexicon for Social Care and to start with terms relating to statutory notifications. It is anticipated that the lexicon will expand further over time to include terms for all aspects of social care.

The Lexicon for Social Care was developed through a rigorous process which involved a lexicon development project team and an expert group consisting of current residents of designated centres, academics, registered provider representatives, inspectors and people with experience in the development of standardised language.

About this document

- This document is published by the Office of the Chief Inspector in HIQA in order to provide information to registered providers about the most appropriate language to use when corresponding with the regulator for example when submitting statutory notifications. It will also be used by HIQA inspectors when communicating with registered providers and when writing inspection reports.
- The Lexicon should be used as a reference document for registered providers and inspectors when communicating. The use of the Lexicon is intended to improve the consistency of language used by both registered providers and inspectors. This will ensure that communication is clear and that words or terms that are outdated or ambiguous are discouraged.
- The Lexicon is arranged alphabetically by 24 themes to support ease of use.
- The term to be used is listed followed by a definition. Where there are other terms currently in use, these are listed under the entry as “alternative terms not to be used”.
- The use of acronyms is discouraged except where there is an accepted and widely used acronym for a term. Where there is, acronyms are included in the lexicon alongside the term.
- The definitions listed in the Lexicon are to aid in understanding and the consistent use of the term. They are not to be taken as definitions that supersede definitions provided in legislation or similar.

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Theme: Abuse

Accused

A person who an allegation has been made against.

Allegation of abuse

A statement describing a purported incident of abuse against another person or persons.

Altercation

A hostile or argumentative confrontation that may be either verbal or physical, or both.

Assault

An attack on a person or persons which may include, but is not limited to, verbal, physical or sexual acts.

Bullying

Repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, racial, sexual or relational, conducted by an individual or group against others.

Coercion

To threaten or to use force to get someone to do something they do not want to do.

Financial abuse

A situation in which someone harms another person in ways that relate to money.

Harassment

Ongoing unwanted and intentional behaviour that annoys or upsets someone.

Institutional abuse

Mistreatment of a person due to the practices of an organisation.

Intimidation

To coerce someone in a threatening or frightening manner in order to persuade them to act according to your wishes.

Neglect

The act of intentionally or unintentionally not providing care or support to a person.

Peer abuse

Abuse that is perpetrated upon one service user by another service user.

Perpetrator

A person who caused abuse to someone else.

Physical abuse

Where a person deliberately hurts or puts a person at risk of being hurt.

Preliminary screening (abuse)

A process to establish if there are reasonable grounds for concern.

Preliminary screening form

The prescribed document used to gather information about a safeguarding concern or abuse allegation.

Psychological abuse

Behaviour that is psychologically harmful of another person and which inflicts anxiety or mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal/nonverbal conduct.

Resident-to-resident aggression

Verbal, physical, sexual and material interactions between residents which are negative, aggressive, intrusive or unwelcome and potentially cause physical or psychological distress or harm to the recipient.

Sexual abuse

Any sexual act which takes place without freely given consent or where someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity.

Threats of reprisal

When someone says something bad will happen if you speak up or that something bad might happen again.

Trust in care (Health Service Executive policy)

The policy for managing allegations of abuse against staff members.

Verbal abuse

Communication that is perceived to be a harsh, condemnatory attack towards the victim, either professionally or personally.

Victim

Someone that has been hurt or killed or has suffered, either because of the actions of someone or something else, or because of illness or chance.

Theme: Adverse Event

Accident

Something bad that happens that is not expected or intended and that often injures someone or damages something.

Accidental injury

An injury that happens without apparent or deliberate cause.

Adverse events

Situations that arise during the provision of care and support from action/inaction that actually/potentially necessitate medical intervention, impact people's human rights, wellbeing or overall care, or lead to decline in health status, disability, infection or death.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Adverse incidents

Fall

To suddenly go down onto the ground or towards the ground without intending to or by accident.

Outbreak (disease)

The spread of a communicable disease among a defined number of people.

Serious incident

An occasion where people's personal safety and wellbeing are put at risk. this is a broad term that includes adverse events.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Safety incident

Serious injury

Physical trauma to the body by an external force that needs immediate hospital or medical treatment.

Note

The above is a general definition, intended for understanding only. Detailed definitions exist in legislation and in areas of regulation such as for notification purposes. This definition does not supersede these.

Unexpected death

An death that was unanticipated or occurred earlier than expected.

Unexplained absence

An incident where a resident has been found missing from a centre without the residential care facility staff's knowledge of his or her whereabouts.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Missing; Absconsion

Theme: Behaviour

Aggression

Hostile behaviour and/or attitude towards an individual or group that results in verbal and/or physical attacks.

Agitation

Worry and anxiety that make a person feel uneasy.

Antecedent, behaviour, consequence

A descriptive assessment that is conducted as an initial part of a complete functional behaviour assessment.

Anxiety

Feelings of uneasiness, apprehension, or fear which may be caused by a perceived sense of threat or danger, or which may have no apparent cause.

Applied behaviour analysis

A psychological intervention that applies empirical approaches based upon the principles of respondent and operant conditioning to change behaviour.

Behaviour modification

A psychotherapeutic intervention primarily used to eliminate or reduce maladaptive behaviour in children or adults.

Behaviour that challenges

Where a person acts, intentionally or unintentionally, in a manner that causes discomfort or distress to themselves or others around them.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Behaviour that is challenging; challenging behaviour

Confusion

A general sense of uncertainty about what is happening to a person or what they are supposed to do.

De-escalation

Actions taken to address a person's agitated or heightened behaviour in order to relieve their stress or return them to baseline.

Emotional distress

Is a state of emotional suffering. The term encompasses a wide range of symptoms, but its hallmarks are the symptoms of depression and anxiety. People can experience it at any time, and it is usually temporary.

Pattern of behaviour

A recurrent way of acting by an individual or group toward a given object or in a given situation.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Behaviour trend

Positive behaviour support plan (PBSP)

An individualised, value-based care and support plan that involves analysis in order to understand why behaviours that challenge are occurring by identifying potential triggers and focussing on altering these triggers to reduce the likelihood of such behaviours being repeated.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Behaviour support plan; BSP

Positive behavioural support (PBS)

A multicomponent framework for (a) developing an understanding of the behaviours that challenging displayed by an individual, based on an assessment of the social and physical environment and broader context within which it occurs; (b) with the inclusion of stakeholder perspectives and involvement; (c) using this understanding to develop, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a personalised and enduring system of support; and (d) that enhances quality of life outcomes for the focal person and other stakeholders.

Redirect

Where a staff member attempts to attract a person's attention away from something to prevent or put a stop to a potentially negative interaction.

Responsive behaviour

A person's actions, words or gestures exhibited as a way of responding to something negative, frustrating or confusing in their social and physical environment.

Self-injurious behaviour (SIB)

Behaviours that cause harm, injury, or damage to a person's body, often as an expression of personal distress. Self-harming behaviour might include cutting, burning, head-banging, hitting, biting, pinching, severe scratching, swallowing objects, and self-poisoning.

Stereotypic behaviour

Acts which are repeated over and over again and which seem to be without any apparent adaptive function unlike other behaviours (such as many instinctive acts) which, although often formally very stereotyped in form, clearly fulfil an adaptive purpose.

Threatening

Having a hostile or deliberately frightening quality or manner.

Trigger

Something that causes someone to feel upset and frightened because they are made to remember something bad that has happened in the past or something they have a dislike to.

Theme: Care Management

Admission

The act or process of accepting someone as a patient or resident at a health or social care service.

Allow natural death

Discontinuing all medical treatments aimed at prolonging life. This does not include the withdrawing of comfort measures. Allowing natural death encompasses DNAR.

Assessment of capacity

A process conducted by a suitably qualified professional to determine a person's ability to understand information and make decisions for themselves at a particular point in time about a specific issue.

Assessment of need

A process carried out by suitably qualified professionals to identify the needs (e.g. healthcare, financial, social) of an individual who may require health or social care services.

Behavioural assessment

A process conducted by a suitably qualified professional to identify, understand and manage a person's behavioural needs.

Care/Personal plan

An overarching plan developed to support a person's health, personal and social care and support needs and provide guidance for staff.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Individual plan; personal care plan; support plan

Delayed discharge

When a person is deemed fit to leave a hospital or service but cannot do so due to other unrelated factors.

Discharge

To deem a person fit to leave or be transferred from a hospital or service.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Release

Note

Discharge should not be used to refer to moving out of a designated centre. Use "moving out".

Do not attempt resuscitation (DNAR)

When neither basic (heart compressions and ventilation) nor advanced (defibrillator or medicines) life-preserving interventions should be performed.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Not for resuscitation; DNR

End-of-life care

Care and support given to people who are near the end-of-life and who are not receiving any intervention to cure or control a disease.

Functional assessment

A measure of an individual's level of function and ability to perform specific tasks on a safe and dependable basis over a defined period.

Hand hygiene

The practice of maintaining the cleanliness of hands for the purposes of infection prevention and control.

Health screening

Test(s) carried out within a specified population for the purpose of identifying potential disease(s).

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Screening

Laceration (lacerate)

A cut or tear to skin.

Length of stay

The amount of time a person has been accommodated or present in a particular health or social care service.

Mobility assessment

An assessment carried out by a suitably qualified professional to determine a person's ability to move about their environment.

Nutritional intake

The calories and nutrients a person consumes by any route over a given period of time.

Personal care

Meeting certain needs of people, such as assisting with going to the toilet, bathing, dressing, and undressing.

Personal hygiene

The act of keeping all parts of the body clean and healthy.

Personal intimate care

Care tasks associated with bodily functions, body products and personal hygiene which demand direct or indirect contact with or exposure of the sexual parts of the body.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Intimate care

Placement

The process of identifying a suitable temporary or long-term residential or day service for a person with care and support needs.

Positioning

Deliberate placement of the patient/service user or, a body part to promote physiological and/or psychological well-being.

Preliminary assessment

Initial information gathering to determine whether and how to proceed.

Psychiatric assessment

Where a psychiatrist assesses a person's mental state.

Referral

Sending a request to another service or specialist for the purposes of assessment or treatment of a person.

Self-care

The practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health.

Supporting to move

Assisting a person to move about their environment.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Moving; handling, manual handling, handling, patient handling

Suspected (cause of death)

To have an idea or impression of the cause of death without certain proof.

Suspected (infectious disease)

To have an idea or impression of the presence of an infectious disease without certain proof such as laboratory confirmation.

Therapeutic intervention

An intentional interaction(s) or event(s) which is expected to contribute to a positive outcome for a person, which is selected on the basis of their identified needs, and which is underpinned by an informed understanding of the potential impact and value of the interaction/event involved.

Transfer

To move someone or something from one place, vehicle, person, or group to another.

Theme: Disability/Care and Support Needs

Activities of daily living (ADLs)

Those skills required to manage one's basic physical needs, including personal hygiene or grooming, dressing, toileting, transferring or ambulating, and eating.

Activity

Something that is done for the purposes of enjoyment or therapeutic benefit.

Autism

A neurological and developmental condition that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave.

Care and support needs

The various practices and processes that a service puts in place to manage the assessed needs of the individual (service user).

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Care needs; support needs

Communication difficulty

An issue which inhibits the ability of a person to communicate with others.

Complex needs

Two or more needs affecting a person's physical, mental, social or financial wellbeing that requires additional care and support on a daily basis.

Deaf

Unable to hear, either completely or partly.

Dementia

A group of symptoms caused by a range of organic disorders that affect the brain.

Developmental delay

When a child takes longer to reach certain development milestones than other children their age.

Dietary needs

The various foods, fluids and supplements required to optimise a person's health.

Disability

In relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the state or to participate in social or cultural life in the state by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

Dual diagnosis

A person with a mental health illness and one of either intellectual disability or substance abuse disorder.

Faecal incontinence

Involuntary passing of stool.

FEDS assessment

Feeding eating drinking and swallowing assessment.

Intellectual disability (ID)

A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning) which started before adulthood (18 years), with a lasting effect on development.

Learning difficulty

A difficulty in acquiring knowledge or skills, in particular any of various neurodevelopmental conditions affecting either general intellectual ability or the learning and use of specific academic skills such as reading, writing, or mathematics.

Mental health

A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Mobility

The capacity to get around. although impairments in bodily functioning can place restrictions on people's mobility, the social model of disability would point to the restrictions caused by the physical environment, such as problems with access to buildings and transport.

Modified diet

A modified diet is one that has been adjusted in regards to texture or content.

Neurodivergence

When a person's brain processes, learns, thinks and/or behaves differently from what is considered "typical".

Recommended diet

A diet, for example a low calorie diet, as recommended by a dietician team.

Sensory impairment

Sensory impairment is the common term used to describe deafness, blindness, visual impairment, hearing impairment and deafblindness.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Sensory disability

Social needs

The need for a sense of connection, intimacy, trust, and friendship.

Urinary incontinence

Unintentional passing of urine.

Ward of court

A person who is deemed by the courts to be unable to look after their affairs and has a committee appointed to do so on their behalf (as of april 2023 one can no longer be made a ward of court in accordance with the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015).

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Wardship

Theme: Emergency

Emergency admission

A person provided with residential care at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Crisis admission

Emergency evacuation

Where there is an urgent need for people to exit or escape a place due to an imminent threat.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Unplanned evacuation

Fire alarm activation

An occasion where a fire alarm issues an audible and/or visual alert.

Medical emergency

An occasion where a person requires urgent attention from a doctor or other relevant health professional.

Road traffic incident

The unintended collision of one motor vehicle with another, an object, or person.

Theme: Equipment and resources

Alarm bracelet

A wearable device worn by a service user that alerts staff if the person enters a particular area.

Assistive technology

Any device or system that allows an individual to perform a task that they would otherwise be unable to do, or increases the ease and safety with which the task can be performed.

Bed bumper

A device made of soft material which is placed at the side of a bed to prevent a person falling out of the bed.

Bedrail

A rail or board along the side of a bed, for example one that connects the headboard with the footboard.

Colostomy bag

A specialised plastic bag that collects faecal matter from the digestive tract through an opening in the abdominal wall called a stoma.

Communication aid

Any device or support which helps a person communicate more effectively with others.

Compression stockings

Clothing worn on the lower leg to assist circulation.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Pressure stockings

Crash mat

A piece of thick soft material placed on the floor intended to reduce the risk of harm in the event of a fall.

Falls alarm

A device which alerts others when a person has fallen.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Fall detector

Helmet

A device that is worn on the head to protect from injury.

Hoist

A device to safely lift and transfer someone who has limited mobility.

Incontinence wear

Disposable clothing worn by persons who have difficulties with continence.

Mobility aid

A device used to aid a person in moving around their environment.

Personal protective equipment

Any device or appliance designed to be worn or held by an individual for protection against one or more health and safety hazards.

Pressure-relieving mattress

A mattress designed to maintain tissue integrity by equalising and redistributing pressure over larger contact areas.

Sling

A strap, piece of cloth, or ropes for supporting, lifting, or carrying.

Splint

A flexible or rigid supportive device used to maintain or support a joint of body part's position(s) to promote pain reduction or healing.

X-ray

A type of radiation that can go through many solid substances, allowing hidden objects such as bones and organs in the body to be photographed.

Theme: Facilities

Accommodation

A place to stay or live.

Communal facilities

The space and resources made available for the use and enjoyment of all service users.

Dining room

A space where service users can gather to consume food or snacks.

Ensuite

Used to describe a bathroom that is directly connected to a bedroom, usually for the sole use of the occupants of the bedroom.

Laundry

The dirty clothes and sheets that need to be, are being, or have been washed.

Multi-sensory room

Multi-sensory rooms are specially designed environments which give users an opportunity to completely relax or access a wide range of sensory experiences for therapy, learning or fun. Multi-sensory rooms are used by people of all ages and all abilities for relaxation, focused work, stimulation, physiotherapy, communication and stress release. They are sometimes also used for specific work, such as a teaching tool for children with additional needs.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Sensory room; snoezelen

Recreational facilities

Indoor or outdoor spaces made available for people to engage in activities such as sports, exercise or socialising.

Special care unit

A facility for children with very high support needs aged between 11 and 17 years of age which is intended to be a short-term, stabilising, safe and secure therapeutic environment. It is a premises, or a part of premises, comprising secure residential accommodation in which a child, in respect of whom a special care order or an interim special care order has been made, is detained for the purpose of the provision to that child of special care and includes accommodation and facilities required for the provision of special care

Theme: Governance

Accountability

The acceptance of responsibility for one's own actions.

Audit

An official examination of records and practices.

Community healthcare organisation

The regionalised organisational structures of the Health Service Executive (HSE) that provides community and primary healthcare services in Ireland.

Complaint

Allegations about a service being unsatisfactory or a service user being mistreated.

Complaints procedure

A process which describes how an organisation receives, investigates and manages complaints.

Coroner's inquest

A formal investigation into the circumstances surrounding a person's death carried out by a coroner.

Culture

The attitudes, behaviour, opinions, etc. of a particular group of people.

Debrief

To carefully review upon completion.

Interprofessional collaboration

Collaborative practice happens when multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds work together with patients, families, carers and communities to deliver the highest quality of care across settings.

Investigation

The act or process of examining a crime, problem, statement, etc. carefully, especially to discover the truth.

Legal duty

An obligation arising out of contract or law.

Notify

To tell someone officially about something.

Organisation

A structured group of people who work together for a shared purpose.

Policy

A document which sets out how individuals or an organisation should behave in a certain context.

Professional guidelines

A document which describes how a professional should act in a specific context.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Guidelines

Protected disclosure

Information provided by an employee which describes wrongdoing and where the employee is entitled to legal protection as a result.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Whistleblowing

Reflective practice

Learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice.

Registered provider

An person (either natural or by law) providing residential care services in Ireland operating in line with the Health Act 2007 (as amended) registered with HIQA.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

RP; Service provider; Support provider; Registered provider representative

Staff misconduct

Where a staff member acts in a manner contrary to law or employee policy.

Staff rota

A timetable that describes what staff are to be present for a specified future period.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Duty roster

Standard operating procedure (SOP)

A set of actions that is the official or accepted way of doing something.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Procedure; protocol; process

Standards

Standards are a set of high-level outcomes that describe how services can achieve safe, quality, person-centred care and support. They are evidence-based and informed by engaging with those who use and provide our health and social care services.

Statement of purpose

Describes the purpose and function of a health and social care service.

Temporary absence

A person not being present in the short term.

Theme: Health and Social Care Professionals

Advanced practitioner

Professionals who are educated to master's degree level and are approved by a relevant body to have the competencies to be senior decision makers that undertake a comprehensive advanced physical and/or mental health assessment of people with complex multiple healthcare needs.

Clinical nurse manager (CNM)

A nurse with management responsibilities for staff and clinical care.

Clinical nurse specialist (CNS)

A nurse with specialist training in a specific aspect of care (e.g. skin integrity, dementia).

Consultant

Doctor with special training and knowledge in a particular area of medicine.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Specialist

Coroner

An official who examines the reasons for a person's death, especially if it was violent or unexpected.

Dietitian

A qualified health professional concerned with nutrition and diet.

Doctor

A qualified professional with a medical degree whose job is to treat people who are ill or hurt.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Physician

General practitioner (GP)

A doctor based in the community who treats patients with minor or chronic illnesses and refers those with serious conditions to specialists.

Health and social care professionals

A large cluster of health care related professions and personnel whose functions include assisting, facilitating, or complementing the work of physicians and other specialists in the health and social care system, and who choose to be identified as allied health personnel.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Allied health professionals

Healthcare professional

A professional with a qualification that allows them to provide one or more of a range of health care services.

Infection prevention control (IPC) person/team

A person or team that advises on the prevention, surveillance, investigation and control of infection.

Multidisciplinary team (MDT)

A group of health care workers, working collaboratively, who are members of different disciplines providing specific services.

Occupational therapist (OT)

A specialist in rehabilitation who seeks to maintain or improve someone's level of physical and/or psychological functioning.

Optician

A qualified professional whose job is examining people's eyes and prescribing glasses or contact lenses to correct sight problems.

Pharmacist

A qualified professional who specializes in the preparation, dispensing, and management of medications.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Chemist, druggist, apothecaries, pharmacologists

Physiotherapist

A qualified professional who treats people using physiotherapy.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Physio

Podiatrist

A qualified professional whose job is to treat problems and diseases of people's feet.

Psychiatrist

A doctor who specialises in psychiatric illnesses and is registered by an appropriate authority.

Psychologist

A qualified mental health professional who uses psychological evaluations and talk therapy to help people learn to better cope with life.

Registered nurse (nurse)

A qualified and registered professional who provides nursing care to people who are ill or injured.

Scope of practice

The range of roles, functions, responsibilities and activities which a registered practitioner is educated, competent and has authority to perform.

Social care worker

A registered professional who plans and provides professional care and support to individuals and groups of all ages who experience marginalisation, disadvantage or special needs.

Social worker

A registered professional whose job is to help people in a particular area who have social disadvantages or personal problems.

Speech and language therapist (SALT)

A qualified professional who enables people with communication disorders and swallowing disorders to achieve their maximum potential.

Tissue viability nurse (TVN)

Specialist nursing service for wounds that are taking a long time to heal. This includes surgical wounds, leg ulcers or pressure ulcers.

Theme: Human Rights

Advance healthcare directive

In relation to a person who has capacity, means an advance expression made by the person, in accordance with section 84 (Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015), of his or her will and preferences concerning treatment decisions that may arise in respect of him or her if he or she

Advocacy

A process of empowerment of the person which takes many forms and includes taking action to help communicate wants, secure rights, represent interests or obtain services needed.

Assisted decision-making

An arrangement where a service user can be supported by a decision-supporter to make decisions about their care and welfare.

Autonomy

The ability of a person to direct how they live on a day-to-day basis according to personal values, beliefs and preferences. In a health and social care setting, autonomy involves the person using a service making informed decisions about their care, support or treatment.

Bodily integrity

Bodily integrity is the inviolability of the physical body and emphasizes the importance of personal autonomy, self-ownership, and self-determination of human beings over their own bodies.

Civil rights

Entitlement to equal social opportunities and equality under the law.

Consent

To agree to do something, or give permission to someone to do something.

Deprivation of liberty

The procedure prescribed in law when it is necessary to deprive of their liberty a person who lacks capacity to consent to their care, support or treatment in order to keep them safe from harm.

Dignity

Treating people with compassion and in a way that values them as human beings and supports their self-respect, even if their wishes are not known at the time.

Disableism

Discrimination or prejudice against disabled people.

Disadvantaged

Not having the standard of living conditions, education, etc. that most people have.

Discrimination

Treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc.

Disempowerment

To take away someone's confidence and feeling of being in control of their life.

Enduring power of attorney

A legally recognised arrangement that lets a person plan ahead for a time when they may be unable to make certain decisions for themselves.

Empowerment

To give someone official authority or the freedom to do something.

Fairness

The quality of treating people equally or in a way that is right or reasonable.

Human rights-based approach to care and support

Care and support that seeks to ensure that the human rights of people using services are protected, promoted and supported by staff and services.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Rights-based care; human rights-based approach to care; rights based support

Inequality

The unfair situation in society when some people have more opportunities, money, etc. than other people.

Inequity

The quality of being unfair, or something that is not fair or equal.

Liberty

Lack of restrictions being placed on people's movement except in specific circumstances, such as when procedural safeguards can be applied according to the law.

Privacy

The right that someone has to keep their personal life or personal information secret or known only to a small group of people.

Religious rights

The freedom to practise your religion.

Respect

The objective, unbiased consideration and regard for the rights, values, beliefs and property of other people.

Rights

Being treated with fairness, respect, equality and dignity and having a say over one's own life.

Theme: Information

Body map

A graph depicting the front and back of a human body which is used to represent injuries or other relevant information.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Body chart

Directory of residents

A list that contains the names and associated details of people living in a service.

Documentation

A piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record.

Guidance document

A document which describes how a service should provide care or support in a specific context.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Guidance

Personal health information

The data related to a person's medical history, including symptoms, diagnoses, procedures, and outcomes.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Health information

Personal information

Any information about a living person, where that person either is identified or could be identified.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Personal data

Personally identifiable information (PII)

Any representation of information that permits the identity of an individual to whom the information applies to be reasonably inferred by either direct or indirect means.

Record

A piece of information or a description of an event that is written on paper or stored electronically.

Report

A spoken or written account of something that has been observed, heard, done or investigated.

Resident's guide

A book of information about the residential care facility for residents.

Unique identifier

A numeric or alphanumeric string that is associated with an individual person using a service.

Theme: Medical and Nursing Care

Airway/breathing/circulation (ABC)

A systematic approach to the immediate assessment and treatment of a critically ill or injured person.

Aspiration

The process of breathing a substance into your lungs by accident.

Baseline

A usually initial set of critical observations or data used for comparison or a control.

Behaviour psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD)

A heterogeneous group of non-cognitive symptoms and behaviours occurring in people with dementia.

Bruise

An injury or mark where the skin has not been broken but is darker in colour, often as a result of being hit by something.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation: a method used to keep someone alive in a medical emergency, in which you blow into the person's mouth then press on their chest and then repeat the process.

Care

The provision of what is necessary for the physical and mental health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of an individual.

Cast

A hard covering used to keep a broken bone in the correct position and protect it until it heals.

Cause of death

The disease or injury which started the train (sequence) of morbid (disease-related) events which led directly to death, or the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced the fatal injury.

Chronic

(especially of a disease or something bad) continuing for a long time.

Clinical waste

The term used to describe waste produced from healthcare and similar activities that may pose a risk of infection, for example, swabs, bandages, dressings etc. or may prove hazardous, for example medicines.

Continence

The ability to control when you urinate and empty your bowels.

Contributory cause of death

Any cause of death that is neither the immediate, intervening, originating antecedent nor underlying cause; hence these are other significant conditions that contributed to the fatal outcome, but were not related to the disease or condition directly causing death.

CT scan

Computerized tomography scan: a medical test that involves using x-rays to create a three-dimensional image (appearing to have length, width, and height) of the inside of the body.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Computed tomography scan

Death

The end of the life of a person.

Delayed diagnosis

The late identification of a specific disorder, syndrome, or disease which could potentially limit a person's treatment options.

Depot injection

An injection formulation of a medication which releases slowly over time to permit less frequent administration of a medication. They are designed to increase medication adherence and consistency, especially in patients who commonly forget to take their medicine.

Depression

A group of common mental disorders characterized by mood change, hence sometimes referred to as mood or affective disorder. Symptoms of depression include low mood such as prolonged sadness and a loss of interest and enjoyment in ordinary experiences. These symptoms can impair emotional and physical wellbeing, and may also include feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, irritability, low energy, pessimism, withdrawal, chronic physical pain, poor motivation, and poor concentration.

Diagnosis

The identification of a specific disorder, syndrome, or disease following a process of clinical assessment and information-gathering.

Disease

An illness caused by infection or a failure of health rather than by an accident.

Dressing

A covering put on an injury, esp. when there has been bleeding through the skin.

First aid

Basic medical treatment that is given to someone as soon as possible after they have been hurt or suddenly become ill.

Fracture

When a bone breaks or cracks.

Friction wound

An injury caused by skin rubbing against another object where the top layer of skin separates from the bottom layer.

Illness

A disease of the body or mind.

Infection

A condition in which bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites that cause disease have entered the body.

Injury

Physical harm or damage to someone's body caused by an accident or an attack.

Intravenous (IV)

Into or connected to a vein.

Isolation

The practice of locating a person away from the immediate vicinity of others in order to prevent the transmission of disease.

Medical procedure

A treatment or operation delivered by a health professional in the delivery of healthcare.

Medication-related intervention

A medical treatment which involves the use of medication.

Minor injury

Harm experienced by a person that is temporary in nature and does not require medical treatment.

Monitor

To watch and check a situation carefully for a period of time in order to discover something about it.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Observe

Neurological observations

Neurological observations are the collection of information that indicate the function and integrity of a person's central nervous system (brain and spinal cord).

Nil by mouth

Not allowed to have any form of food, drink or medications by mouth.

Notifiable disease

Diseases that health and social care services are required to inform to a designated authority when present in their service (country specific).

Nursing care

Nursing procedures or activities, other than personal care, that a registered nurse performs directly on, to or with a person.

Obvious sign of injury

Where it is clear from a brief observation that a person has sustained an injury.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Visible injury

Pain relief

The alleviation of pain, typically by means of medication.

Plaster

A small piece of sticky cloth or plastic that you use to cover and protect a cut in the skin.

Pressure sore

Injuries to the skin and/or underlying tissue caused by prolonged pressure on the skin.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Pressure ulcer; PU; bed sore

Psychiatric care

A branch of medicine dealing with the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders.

Seizure

Sudden, uncontrolled body movements and changes in behaviour that occur because of abnormal electrical activity in the brain.

Skin integrity

The skin being a sound and complete structure in unimpaired condition.

Social support

To provide assistance or comfort to others to help them manage psychosocial, social or similar stressors.

Support

To provide assistance, guidance or help to a person. This may include emotional, financial, physical, social, spiritual, practical, informational, amongst others.

Sutures

Used to sew up a cut in a person's body.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Stitches

Swelling

A part of your body that has become bigger because of illness or injury.

Syndrome

A combination of medical problems that shows the existence of a particular disease or mental condition.

Treatment

The use of drugs, exercises, etc. to cure a person of an illness or injury.

Urinary tract infection (UTI)

Common infections that happen when bacteria enter the urethra, and infect the urinary tract.

Wound

A damaged area of the body, such as a cut or hole in the skin or flesh.

Theme: Medication Management

Administration (medicine)

Procedure related to management of drug administration.

Analgesia

A type of drug that stops you from feeling pain.

Antibiotic

A medicine or chemical that can destroy harmful bacteria in the body or limit their growth.

Antipsychotic drugs

Used to treat psychotic and disturbing behavioural symptoms.

Antivirals

Medications that help your body fight off certain viruses that can cause disease.

Controlled drugs

Any substance, product or preparation specified in the schedule of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977.

Dispense

To prepare and give out medicine.

Dose

The amount of medicine that you should take at one time.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Dosage

Medical alert bracelet

A bracelet worn by a person containing important medical information.

Medication

A medicine, or a set of medicines or drugs, used to improve a particular condition or illness.

Medication error

Any preventable event that may cause or lead to inappropriate medication use or harm to a person while the medication is in the control of the healthcare professional, patient, or consumer.

Medication management

The precautions and actions taken to oversee the use of medicine.

Method of administration (medicine)

The means by which medicine enters a person's body.

Psychotropic

Drugs or other substances that affect a person's mind.

Theme: People

Advocate

A person who takes action to empower another person and takes many forms and includes taking action to help communicate wants, secure rights, represent interests or obtain services needed.

Co-decision maker

A person who has the authority to make certain decisions together with another person if they need support to make decisions.

Decision-making assistant

A person who has the authority to help another person when they are making certain decisions for themselves.

Decision-making representative

A person appointed by the court to make certain decisions on a person's behalf if they are unable to make them for yourself.

Designated Adult Safeguarding Officer(s)

Staff member(s) nominated by providers to undertake additional safeguarding duties within services.

Designated liaison person (DLP)

A person nominated by an organisation providing services to children to receive allegations of abuse or safeguarding concerns.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Designated officer

Expert by experience

People who have recent personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses health, mental health and/or social care services.

Family

A member of a resident's family and includes a carer of a resident or a person involved in promoting the health, welfare or wellbeing of a person.

Friend

A person who you know well and who you like a lot, but who is usually not a member of your family.

Guardian ad litem

A person who supports children to have their voice heard in certain types of legal proceedings, and makes an independent assessment of the child's interests.

Inspector

A person appointed as an inspector of social services under section 43 of the Health act.

Parent

A mother or father of a person.

Peer

A person with similar status and interests typically used to refer to services users.

Relative

A member of a person's family.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Relation

Representative

In relation to a service user, means a person acting on behalf of that service user for the purpose of representing the will and preferences of the service user and may include a child's Tusla child and family social worker, a carer of the service user or a person involved in promoting the health, welfare or wellbeing of the service user.

Resident

An adult or a child being provided with residential services.

Visitor

A person visiting a residential care facility.

Volunteer

Someone who works for an organisation without being paid.

Theme: Person-centred Care

Accessible

Able to be entered or used by everyone, including people who use a wheelchair, people who are blind.

Capacity

The ability to make decisions.

Consultation

Seeking the views of service users and/or other interested parties in the running of a care service.

Independent

Being able to manage on one's own without assistance or support.

Intensive interaction

An approach that can be used by everyone involved in supporting a child or adult to interact with other people and develop communication skills in a natural, relaxed and enjoyable way.

Normalisation

Making available to all people with disabilities patterns of life and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to the regular circumstances and ways of life or society.

Personal development

Activities designed to improve talents, potential, employability, and wealth.

Person-centred care and support

Care and support that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs and values, ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Person centred care; PCC; person-centred care

Social role valorisation

A dynamic set of ideas useful for making positive change in the lives of people disadvantaged because of their status in society.

Socialising

The activity of mixing socially with others.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Socialisation

Welfare

The wellbeing of individuals or groups and service provision related to their wellbeing such as education, health, housing, social security, and social services.

Wellbeing

The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.

Will and preference

A manifestation of a person's deeply held, reasonably stable and coherent personal beliefs, values, commitments and conception and their greater liking for one alternative over another.

Wishes

A greater liking for one alternative over another or others.

Theme: Place

Campus

A collection of buildings on one site that provide accommodation and recreational facilities.

Community

Usually seen as typified by social relationships based on commonality, either derived from living in a particular geographical location, such as a defined urban neighbourhood or a village, or sharing a particular interest(s) or goal(s), for example, on the basis of ethnicity, gender, religion, or membership of a professional association.

Congregated setting

Living arrangements where a large number of people share a single residence or where the living arrangements are campus-based.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Institution

Designated centre

A service that is registered to provide residential care and support in Ireland in accordance with the Health Act 2007.

Family home

A residence where one's close family members currently reside.

House

A type of residential building.

Premises

The land and buildings owned or leased by an organisation that provides care and support.

Residential care facility

A premises providing accommodation, personal assistance, supervision and other essential daily living activities for people who require it.

Theme: Regulation – Chief Inspector of Social Services

Compliance

The act of obeying an order, rule, or request.

Inspection

The act of looking at something carefully to check that everything is correct and legal, for example using a desktop review or an official visit to a building or organisation.

Line of enquiry

A question or prompt used by an inspector to determine whether a service is complying with a regulation or standard.

No incidents

No occurrences of a notifiable event in the notification period.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Nil to report

Person in charge (PIC)

A person appointed to manage a care service and who is legally responsible for the delivery of care and support within the service.

Regulation (regulate)

To check that the activities of a business or organization are legal and follow official rules or laws.

Regulator

An independent authority established to inspect and monitor the provision of health and social services.

Restrictive conditions

Any environmental condition which could limit a person's actions, movements or choices.

Statutory notification

A report of a prescribed incident that is sent from a service provider to a regulatory authority.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Notification

Theme: Resident Status

Acute

Symptoms or signs with a sudden onset that worsen quickly.

Aware (consciousness)

When a person is responsive to prompts and is conscious of the environment around them.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Alert

Convalescing

Resting in order to get better after an illness or injury.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Recovering

Delirium

A state of mental confusion that starts suddenly.

Deterioration

The fact or process of becoming worse.

Extrapyramidal symptoms

A variety of movement disorders such as tardive dyskinesia, akathisia, or bradykinesia, suffered as a result of taking dopamine antagonists, usually antipsychotic (neuroleptic) drugs, which are often used to control psychosis, especially schizophrenia.

Improvement

The process of making something better or of getting better.

Informed

A process in which people are given important information, including possible risks and benefits, about for example, a medical procedure or treatment.

Mobility

The degree to which a person is capable of moving about their environment.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Physically mobile

Person at risk

A person, who is potentially at risk due to ill-health, injury, disability, age or socio-economic circumstances.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Vulnerable resident; vulnerable person; VP

Physically well

Where a person can perform tasks without any physical discomfort.

Pupils equal and reacting to light (PEARL)

An assessment of a person's pupillary reaction in relation to head injuries or brain function.

Sick

Physically or mentally ill; not well or healthy.

Stable

A term used in describing a patient's status. It indicates that the patient's disease process has not changed precipitously or significantly.

Symptomatic

Showing symptoms of a particular disease.

Understand

To know why or how something happens or works.

Unresponsive

Not reacting to a stimulus because of being unconscious or very ill.

Vital signs

Routine measures of clinical indicators used to monitor a person's condition.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Obs; observations; vitals

Theme: Restrictive Practices

Chemical restraint

Is the intentional use of medication to control or modify a person's behaviour or to ensure a patient is compliant or not capable of resistance, when no medically identified condition is being treated; where the treatment is not necessary for the condition; or the intended effect of the drug is to sedate the person for convenience or for disciplinary purposes.

Environmental restraint

The intentional restriction of a person's normal access to their environment, with the intention of stopping them from leaving, or denying a resident their normal means of independent mobility, means of communicating, or the intentional taking away of ability to exercise civil and religious liberties.

Last resort (Restrictive practice)

The use of a restrictive practice when all other measures were unsuccessful.

Least restrictive procedure

The restrictive practice which incurs the minimal limitation on a person, in the safest manner possible, for the shortest duration.

Physical restraint

Any manual method or physical or mechanical device, material or equipment attached or adjacent to a person's body that the individual cannot easily remove that restricts freedom of movement or normal access to one's body.

Psychological restraint

Using psychological means to deprive a person of choices, control them through not permitting them to do something, or making them do something or setting limits on what they can do.

Restriction

Limiting a person's actions, movement or choices.

Restrictive practice

The intentional restriction of a person's voluntary movement, behaviour or choices.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Restraint; restrictive procedure; RP

Seclusion

The placing or leaving of a person in any room alone, at any time, day or night, with the exit door locked or fastened or held in such a way as to prevent the person from leaving.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Isolation

Single separation

A brief seclusion of a child for their own safety and the safety of others.

Note

See entry for "seclusion"

Standing hold

Where an individual is physically restrained by one or more people in a standing position.

Theme: Risk Management

Absence management plan

The process to be followed to locate a person in the event that they are absent from the service without the knowledge of staff.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Absconding

Control measure

The action(s) which have been identified in a risk assessment as necessary to mitigate or prevent harm.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Control

Emergency planning

The process of determining what actions are to be taken should certain incidents occur in a service.

Falls assessment

A process used to determine the risk a person will experience a fall.

Fire drill

A practice of the emergency procedures to be used in case of fire.

Fire safety

The various measures in place to guard against fire and fire-related injuries or damage.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Fire precautions

Health and safety

A general term referring to the practices and processes that are in place to reduce the risk of harm.

Infection prevention and control (IPC)

A suite of practices and processes designed to minimise the risk of infections and limit the spread of infections.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Infection control

Means of escape

The method by which people can exit a building in the event of an emergency.

Mitigate

To make something less harmful, unpleasant, or bad.

Precaution

An action that is taken to prevent something unpleasant or dangerous happening.

Risk

The possibility of something bad happening.

Risk assessment

Identifying what can cause harm to people, if measures are adequate, or additional measures are required, to reduce injury and ill health.

Risk management

Recognising risks and having systems and processes to reduce the risk of these occurring or if they do, to minimise their impact.

Risk management plan

A plan that comprises the clinical and administrative systems, processes, and reports employed to detect, monitor, assess, mitigate, and prevent risks.

Risk register

A list commonly used to manage the risks throughout a service.

Theme: Safeguarding

Abuse

Mistreatment of any kind and includes the physical, financial or material, psychological, sexual or discriminatory mistreatment or neglect of a person.

Allegation

A statement, made without giving proof, that someone has done something wrong or illegal.

Concern

Information provided by a person which describes circumstances where a person may be at risk.

Retrospective allegation

A claim or assertion that someone has done something illegal or wrong in the past.

Safeguarding

Encompasses a range of activities undertaken by professionals and agencies that are focused on the protection of people from maltreatment.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Protection

Safeguarding plan

The agreed set of actions and strategies that are designed to support and manage ongoing risk of abuse or neglect for an adult with care and support needs.

Vetting disclosure

A statement of the particulars of the criminal record (if any) relating to the person, and of the specified information (if any) relating to the person or a statement that there is no criminal record or specified information, in relation to the person.

Theme: Services

Adoption

The act of legally taking a child to be taken care of as your own.

Day services

Services provided with no overnight provision. Encompass a range of public, private, and voluntary provision, covering a wide spectrum of service user groups (older people, people with mental health issues, people with learning/intellectual disabilities, people with physical disabilities, people who are terminally ill, pre-school children).

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Day care

Foster

To take care of a child, usually for a limited time, without being the child's legal parent.

Healthcare

The activity or business of providing medical services that support physical and mental wellbeing.

Alternative term(s) not to be used

Health care

Palliative care

A holistic approach to the prevention and relief of suffering for people with advanced progressive illnesses that emphasizes identification, assessment, and treatment of pain and responsiveness to psychosocial issues.

Religious services

Events or meetings where a person can participate in communal worship.

Residential service

Accommodation that provides in-house support for personal and social care needs for any groups of service users.

Respite

A short-term placement of a child or adult away from where they usually live in order to give parents or carers a break, for example, as part of a support programme to families, for children with disabilities, or for older people.

Social care

The provision of care, protection, psychosocial support and advocacy in partnership with individuals and groups who experience marginalisation, disadvantage or special needs.

Theme: Staffing

Agency staff

An individual employed by an employment agency under a contract of employment by virtue of which the individual may be assigned to work for, and under the direction and supervision of, a person other than the employment agency.

Assistant director of nursing (ADON)

A senior nurse manager that reports to the director of nursing.

Care manager

A senior manager responsible for the care and welfare of service users.

Director of nursing (DON)

A senior nurse manager with overall responsibility for nursing care in a service.

Whole-time equivalent

A numeric value which represents the proportion of full-time staff in a service.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Full-time equivalent

Healthcare assistant (HCA)

A specific role in health and social care services which involves assisting with general duties and basic care.

Manager on call

A manager designated to be available by telephone should their services be required.

Nurse on duty

A nurse nominated to oversee clinical care, attend to complex health care and co-ordinate staff.

Persons participating in management

A person or people who are actively engaged in and responsible for the operational management of a designated centre.

Relief staff

Persons employed by the employer to replace employees during a short-term absence such as but not limited to vacation or sick leave.

Alternative term(s) not to be used
Temporary staff

Skill mix

The mix of posts, grades or occupations in an organisation or team.

Sleepover staff

When employees remain in the residential care facility overnight and are permitted to sleep.

Staff to resident ratio (staff ratio)

The number of people using a service divided by the number of staff.

Suspension

Where an employee is temporarily not allowed to work due to an investigation.

Verbal warning

A disciplinary measure where an employer speaks to an employee about an issue involving their behaviour, conduct, or job performance.

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