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**Health  
Information  
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An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

# **Guide to the Draft Infection Prevention and Control Standards:**

A Consultation  
Document



# Introduction

The Health Information and Quality Authority (The Authority) is the first independent Authority working to assure that Ireland's health and social care services are delivered to world class standards.

The Authority is responsible for developing and monitoring standards in Ireland's health and social care services. Its aim is to drive improvements in quality, safety and accountability across the health and social care services.

A priority for the Authority is the development of national standards for Infection Prevention and Control (IPC).

Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAs), such as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and *Clostridium difficile* are a challenge in healthcare systems across the world. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that at any one time, 1.4 million people worldwide suffer from infections acquired in hospitals<sup>1</sup>. In Ireland in 2006 there were 588 cases of bloodstream infection caused by MRSA<sup>2</sup>.

Achieving reduced infection rates in health and social care services is a difficult and challenging task. It will take time and will require a co-ordinated approach across our healthcare system. It will also require the public and those using our healthcare services to become more informed and more vigilant.

The Authority has now developed draft national standards for the prevention and control of infections in health and social care settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes

1 *London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2005.*

2 *Health Protection Surveillance Centre, 2006.*

and hospices. The development of these national standards for Infection Prevention and Control is an important first step. The Standards will provide a framework for health and social care providers to prevent or minimise the occurrence of healthcare associated infections. This in turn will help maximise the safety and quality of care provided to all service users<sup>3</sup> in Ireland.

These standards have been developed in consultation with an advisory group which includes patient advocacy organisations, health and social care professionals, providers, people using the services and the Department of Health and Children. The group is chaired by Professor Geraldine McCarthy, Head of the Department of Nursing and Midwifery at University College Cork.

The standards complement existing legislation, policies and national strategies for the control of healthcare associated infections. They also reflect international best practice in the prevention and control of infection.

3 *'Service User' is used to describe users of health and social care services in Ireland.*

# Preventing and Controlling Infection

The Standards developed by the Authority are designed to:

- *Contribute to the delivery of safe health and social care services*
- *Promote a multidisciplinary approach to Infection Prevention and Control*
- *Provide an environment that ensures Quality, Safety and Accountability*
- *Encourage all staff involved in the delivery of health and social care to accept responsibility for their role in preventing and controlling infection*
- *Promote continuous quality improvement through regular monitoring and evaluation of Infection Prevention and Control services*
- *Encourage attainment of best practice in Infection Prevention and Control*

## Public Consultation

The Authority has published these draft standards for public consultation. The information collected from this consultation will be used to inform the development of the final set of standards that will be launched later this year.

Interested parties should make their views known to the Authority before the 18th of July. Submissions can be made online at **[www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie)** or by post to The Health Information and Quality Authority, Healthcare Quality Directorate, 13 - 15 The Mall, Beacon Court, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18.

A full set of the draft standards can be downloaded at **[www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie)** and are also available from the Authority.

## Monitoring Compliance

Once these standards are finalised and published later this year, health and social care providers will need to introduce processes for monitoring compliance with the standards and putting plans in place to improve where they need to. The Authority will then begin a programme of monitoring compliance against the standards in health and social care services. The Authority will advise the Minister for Health and Children, the Health Services Executive (HSE) and the public periodically on how well these standards are being met.

The Health Information and Quality Authority will publish the results of its reviews so that those working in, and those using, our healthcare system are informed.

The Authority is also committed to reviewing these standards in full within three years of publication to ensure they remain in line with best international practice.

# The Standards

There are twelve Infection Prevention and Control standards. These standards are outlined below;

## 1.0 Governance and Management

**This standard requires that Infection Prevention and Control is effectively and efficiently governed and managed within the health care system.**

Managers and clinicians are responsible for providing a safe, effective and clean environment which minimises and reduces the risk of infection among patients, staff and visitors.

Preventing and controlling infection is the responsibility of all staff. Staff must be made aware of this responsibility and they must also be made aware of how they can contribute to improving the service.

## 2.0 Infection Prevention and Control Structures, Systems and Processes

**This Standard requires that structures are in place to effectively implement the Infection Prevention and Control service.**

A fully resourced Infection Prevention and Control service results in significant cost savings for healthcare facilities. This service should be structured to improve the quality of care delivered to patients. The service should also support a broad based approach to the management of risk.

### 3.0 Environment and Facilities Management

**This standard states that the physical environment, facilities and resources are managed to minimise the risk of infection to patients, staff and visitors.**

It is vital that the physical environment is planned and maintained to maximise patient safety and the needs of the community the healthcare facility serves. It is also essential that high levels of cleanliness and hygiene are maintained to ensure the safety and well being of patients and staff.

### 4.0 Human Resource Management

**This standard states that all staff should be selected, recruited, trained, educated and managed in order to prevent and control the spread of infection.**

Infection rates can be reduced when staffing levels are at a rate that provides the highest levels of safety for the patient.

This standard recommends that these staffing levels meet national and international best practice. For example, there should be one Infection Prevention and Control Nurse for every 115 acute care beds or one for every 250 long stay beds.

The standard requires ongoing education for all staff to increase awareness of Infection Prevention and Control issues and to improve patient safety.

Staff health and safety should also be protected; occupational incidents should be dealt with in a prompt and effective manner.

## 5.0 Information and Communication Management

**This standard states that Infection Prevention and Control data and information is collected, sorted, processed, monitored, responded to and reported in a timely, efficient and accurate manner.**

The effective and timely recording and management of all Infection Prevention and Control information can improve the quality of patient care by informing patients, visitors and staff on how to prevent and control the spread of infection.

## 6.0 Hand Hygiene

**This standard states that hand hygiene practices that prevent, control and reduce the risk of the spread of Healthcare Associated Infections must be in place.**

Hand hygiene is recognised internationally as the single most important way to prevent infection, particularly in health and social care facilities. It is essential that a culture of Hand Hygiene is embedded in the facility.

## 7.0 Communicable/Transmissible Disease Control

**This standard requires that the spread of communicable/transmissible diseases is prevented, managed and controlled.**

Policies, procedures and systems are essential for the prevention and control of the spread of communicable/transmissible diseases.

It is essential that specific high risk areas, such as intensive care units, neonatal intensive care units, oncology units etc. have their own Infection Prevention and Control policies, procedures and systems, as the risk associated with procedures in these departments can be relatively high.

## 8.0 Device Related Infections

**This standard requires that device related infections are prevented / reduced.**

Nearly a quarter of all healthcare associated infections are device related. Therefore, systems are required to prevent micro-organisms from entering devices and / or the bloodstream.

## 9.0 Microbiological Services

**This standard requires that microbiological services are available in a timely and effective manner to support Infection Prevention and Control Services.**

Microbiological services are required to support the functions of an effective Infection Prevention and Control service.

## 10.0 Outbreak Management

**This standard requires that infection outbreaks are detected, managed and controlled in a timely, efficient and effective manner.**

The efficient detection and management of infection outbreaks is essential to minimise the impact of an outbreak and to reduce and control the spread of infection.

## 11.0 Surveillance Programme

**This standard requires that Healthcare Associated Infections and antimicrobial resistance are monitored, audited and reported through a systematic Surveillance Programme.**

A Surveillance Programme provides useful data which can be used to determine the effectiveness of Infection Prevention and Control practices. Surveillance can also help identify preventative practices and risk factors for the future.

Surveillance, followed by a programme of action for improvement, can have a significant impact on rates of Healthcare Associated Infections.

## 12.0 Antimicrobial Resistance

**This standard requires that there are systems in place to reduce and control Antimicrobial Resistance.**

Inappropriate use of antimicrobials (antibiotics) is associated with the emergence of diseases resistant to antibiotics. Rising levels of Antimicrobial Resistance is a concern but it can be controlled through the implementation of an antimicrobial stewardship programme which monitors and measures the use of antibiotics.







