

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the National Standards for Information Management in Health and Social Care

1. What is information management?

Information management refers to all processes during the data and information lifecycle relating to the collection, storage, management and maintenance of information in all forms. Health data and information is found in many different sources, such as health records, medical images, prescriptions, laboratory reports, claims and reimbursement data, data from wellness devices, registries and other data collections. When data is analysed or presented to make it more meaningful or useful, it is then often referred to as information. The data and information lifecycle refers to the stages which data goes through to become information, from the point of data collection through to its use.

2. What is the purpose of national standards?

National standards are a set of high-level outcomes that describe how organisations and services can improve practices to achieve safer better care. They are informed by evidence and engagement with those who use and provide our health and social care services. The aim of the *National Standards for Information Management in Health and Social Care* is to contribute to safer better care by improving the management of health and social care information. They complement other health and social care standards which have been developed by HIQA.

3. Who do these standards they apply to?

These standards have been approved by the Minister for Health and apply to all organisations and services within HIQA's legislative remit,⁺ including services provided by the HSE, Tusla, and relevant service providers with the exception of designated centres* registered and inspected by the Chief Inspector of Social Services in HIQA under Part 8 of the Health Act 2007. The standards can also be used by services and organisations not within HIQA's legislative remit to inform best practice for information management.

4. What principles underpin these standards?

HIQA uses a principles-based framework for the development of all national standards. Accordingly, these standards are presented under the four principles:

⁺ Under the Patient Safety (Notifiable Incidents and Open Disclosure) Act 2023, HIQA's functions to set standards and monitor compliance with standards are extended to private hospitals and prescribed private health services.

* Designated centres are defined in Section 2 of the Health Act 2007 as residential services for older persons, children and adults with disabilities and special care units for children.

a human rights-based approach, safety and wellbeing, responsiveness, and accountability. Together, these four principles place the person using health and social care services at the centre of their care and support.

5. How were these standards developed?

The national standards were developed in line with HIQA's standards development process. The standard statements and features were informed by an evidence synthesis, consultation with an advisory group, targeted consultation with people working across the health and social care sector and a six-week public consultation. Further information on the standards development process can be found on our website.

6. How will these standards be monitored?

The national standards have been set under Section 8(1)(b) of the Health Act 2007 (and amendments). HIQA will monitor compliance with the standards as per Section 8(1)(c) of the Health Act 2007 (and amendments). HIQA will use these standards to review information management practices in national data collections** and eHealth services*** that fall within its remit. HIQA will also use the standards to review information management practices at a national level within the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). The standards may also be used for statutory investigations or to perform thematic inspections in organisations and services that fall within the scope of the standards.

7. How will these standards complement legislative developments at a European level?

Legislative developments at a European level, such as the establishment of a European Health Data Space (EHDS), place a strong emphasis on the easier exchange and re-use of health information for the public good. These standards will help organisations to develop and embed good information management practices that are fundamental to the safe exchange of information while balancing human rights and privacy. This is key to developing data and information maturity at a system level and achieving the required developments for Ireland's health information system.

8. How will these standards align with future health information policy and legislative developments in Ireland?

These standards have been developed at a time of significant policy and legislative changes in Ireland. They will support services in complying with forthcoming policy changes, including the Health Information Bill and the EHDS

** National data collections are national repositories of routinely collected health and social care data.

*** eHealth services are the technology, people and processes which facilitates the sharing of electronic patient-specific information between health and social care services across organisations and or care settings.

regulation. The standards will also support the system to implement the Department of Health's strategy *Digital for Care: A Digital Health Framework for Ireland 2024-2030* and act as overarching standards for a programme of work currently being progressed by HIQA to adopt, adapt, revise or develop health information standards.

9. How are these standards aligned with established good practice in information management?

These standards are informed by international evidence and aligned to established best practice in the management of information. For example, the Five Safes Framework can be used in conjunction with these standards to assess and manage risk associated with information sharing. The standards also highlight the importance of the FAIR principles of findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability, when optimising the accessibility of information.

10. How will HIQA support services to implement these standards?

To support organisations to meet these standards, HIQA has published three guidance documents: The Assessment Judgment Framework, Guide to the Assessment Judgment Framework and Self-Assessment Tool. Together, the national standards and guidance will help to drive improvements across the health information system by setting out what is expected of services managing data and information as Ireland advances its system-wide transition to digital health. HIQA's online learning course on data quality can also be completed via the HSE Learning and Development portal, HSELand. In addition, as part of its future work, HIQA will take an implementation science approach to the development of further support tools to enhance the implementation of the standards.

11. Where can I find a copy of the national standards?

A full copy of the national standards, along with support tools to aid you in implementing the standards, can be found on our website, www.hiqa.ie. For further information about the national standards or for hard copies of the national standards, please contact us at healthinformation@hiqa.ie.