



**What standards
to expect from
the regulation of
your NHS hospital**

An introduction to important changes
to the regulation of NHS hospitals

About this leaflet

This guide is for you if you need treatment, care and support in an NHS hospital. The guide does the following:

- Explains important changes to the way in which NHS hospitals are regulated.
- Provides a summary of new essential standards of quality and safety that NHS hospitals must keep to and how we, as the regulator, monitor these standards.
- Helps you understand what standards of care you can expect when you use NHS hospital services.



What's changing in NHS hospitals?

- There is a new law about regulating health and social care in England.
- Each NHS trust is now legally responsible for making sure that it meets new essential standards of quality and safety.
- We will license health care services if they meet essential standards and we will monitor them to make sure they continue to do so.
- We have a wide range of actions we can take if we find that NHS hospitals are not meeting essential standards.
- Over the next two pages you can read a summary of the essential standards of quality and safety you should expect when you receive NHS hospital care.

The essential standards of quality and safety you can expect



1 You can expect to be involved and told what's happening at every stage of your care

- You will always be involved in discussions about your care and treatment, and staff will respect your privacy, dignity and independence.
- Before you receive any examination, care, treatment or support, you will be asked if you agree to it.

One particular NHS hospital sensitively handles breast screening among women of a particular minority ethnic group. Because many of the women attending a screening don't speak English, and some have particular concerns about the procedure, the hospital makes sure that an interpreter is always available to check that everyone understands what to expect. Everyone is treated with dignity and is able to decide whether to give their permission.



2 You can expect care, treatment and support which meets your needs

- Your personal needs are assessed to make sure that you get care that is safe and supports your rights.
- You will get the food and drink you need to meet your dietary needs.
- You will get safe and co-ordinated care where more than one care provider is involved or if you are moved between services.

The care plan of an older patient shows that he is at risk of falling and that he needs to build up his strength through a high protein diet. When he is transferred from an acute hospital to his local community hospital for rehabilitation, the community hospital is told before he arrives about what he needs. They make sure that his bed is set up with protective rails and that he continues to get the special diet he needs.



3 You can expect to be safe

- You will be protected from abuse or the risk of abuse, and staff will respect your human rights.
- You will be cared for in a clean environment where you are protected from infection.
- You will get the medicines you need, when you need them, and in a safe way.
- You will be cared for in a safe and accessible place that will help you as you recover.
- You will not be harmed by unsafe or unsuitable equipment.

Another NHS hospital has a strict policy about keeping clean and controlling infection. All staff must be trained in controlling infection, particularly in how to handle equipment, such as air-masks, that are designed to be used once and then thrown away. People who use services and visitors are told about the policy and are asked to say what they think about how the hospital maintains its high standards. The hospital's infection control policy is regularly reviewed and updated as needed.



4 You can expect to be cared for by qualified staff

- Your health and welfare needs are met by staff who are properly qualified.
- There will always be enough members of staff available to keep you safe and meet your health and welfare needs.
- You will be looked after by staff who are well managed and have the chance to develop and improve their skills.

The managers at a large hospital encourage all their staff to keep up to date with developments in their field and to find out all the information they need to. All staff members have an individual 12-month training plan and there are enough staff at the hospital to make sure that they can attend training courses. The hospital has also introduced a mentoring programme where junior staff can learn from more senior staff to develop their skills and do their job better. People who use the hospital's services and their families say they are happy with the standard of care and support they receive.



5 You can expect your hospital to constantly check the quality of its services

- Your healthcare provider continuously monitors the quality of the services to make sure you are safe.
- You or someone acting on your behalf can complain and will be listened to. Your complaint will be acted upon properly.
- Your personal records, including medical records, will be accurate and kept safe and confidential.

A particular hospital's maternity unit has good clinical practice in place to make sure that mothers and their babies are protected from any risks of harm. When a serious incident happens, there is an immediate case review, chaired by a representative of the hospital's management board. An action plan is put in place as a result of this and all staff in the unit are told about it. The mother concerned is involved throughout the process.

We make an unannounced visit to the hospital, speak to pregnant women in the unit and independently review the hospital's action plan for improvement. Once we are happy that the hospital is meeting this essential standard of quality and safety, we share with the public what we have found by publishing a report.

How is the new system different?

- We look at the care you get rather than at systems and processes.
- We listen to what you've got to say about your treatment, care and support. We want you to have a bigger say in how we decide whether NHS hospitals are meeting essential standards.
- We check how NHS hospitals are meeting essential standards now, rather than in the past.
- We have a wide range of powers that allow us to act if we find that a hospital is not meeting essential standards.
- We update our website when there are changes to report about checks, improvements or concerns.





How to find out how well your NHS hospital is meeting the new essential standards

You can find out how well your NHS hospital is meeting the new essential standards of quality and safety by visiting our website at www.cqc.org.uk.

You can also read other reports and surveys about specific parts of the hospital's performance.

If you do not have access to the internet you can speak to our staff in your area. To find out how, you can phone us on **03000 616161**.

Sharing your experience with us

As regulator, we cannot resolve individual complaints. However, we do want to hear from you if you are not happy with the care you received.

You can tell our staff in your area about your experience. To find out how to contact them, phone our national call centre on **03000 616161** or email **enquiries@cqc.org.uk**.

You can also contact one of the following groups who can discuss your experiences with the hospital concerned on your behalf. They can also send information directly to us.

- Your Local Involvement Network or LINK representative. You can find out the name of your local representative at **www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/links**.
- Your foundation trust Board of Governors, if your hospital is a foundation trust.
- Your Patient Advice and Liaison Service or PALS. You can find out how to contact them at **www.pals.nhs.uk**.

If you have a complaint about an NHS hospital, you need to speak directly to that hospital. The NHS Constitution explains your rights at **www.nhs.uk/NHSConstitution**.



About the Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) makes sure people in England get better health and adult social care.

To do this, we do the following:

- License health and adult social care services as long as they meet essential standards of quality and safety.
- Continuously monitor health and adult social care providers to make sure they are meeting essential standards.
- Work together with you, with service providers and with other regulators to make sure care improves.
- Act quickly to improve poor quality care.
- Put people who use health and adult social care services at the centre of what we do.

We are accountable to the Government but we are not linked to any political party.



We regulate the following care services:

- Medical and clinical treatment given to people of all ages, including treatment given in hospitals, ambulance services, and mental health services. We will eventually include primary care such as GP and dental practices.
- Care provided in residential homes, in the community, in people's own homes for adults, and in residential care homes for children. We focus on people who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances, including those with mental health problems, learning disabilities, physical disabilities or long-term health conditions and older people.
- Services for people whose rights are restricted under the Mental Health Act.
- Care provided either by the NHS or independently.

How to contact us

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