

# Best Practice Guidance for Mental Health Services

## A short guide

Supporting you to meet Regulatory Requirements and to  
work towards Continuous Quality Improvement



HSE Mental Health Services



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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## What is the Best Practice Guidance?

This Best Practice Guidance tells us what we need to do to make sure that children and adults in the care of our mental health services receive a high quality, safe service that meets their needs. This is a short guide. A full version is available on our website [www.hse.ie/mentalhealthguidance](http://www.hse.ie/mentalhealthguidance).

The Guidance document also describes reliable mental healthcare practices. We created the Guidance based on legislation. We also considered what has been shown to work well in mental health services. This is often called 'evidence-based practice'.

We did this in consultation with:

- staff,
- service users,
- families, and
- carers.

We are asking our mental health services to assess themselves against the Guidance.

The Best Practice Guidance will help services to identify:

- good practice, and
- areas where they can improve.

The Best Practice Guidance consists of:

- the Best Practice Guidance document, and
- a self-assessment IT tool called the GAIT – Guidance Assessment Improvement tool.

We intend that the Guidance will support and guide continuous quality improvement in Irish HSE mental health services.

## Why did we develop Best Practice Guidance?

We developed the Best Practice Guidance to deliver a framework that would identify and make clear:

- the legal requirements of HSE mental health services,
- the role of individual HSE mental health services in meeting these legal requirements, and
- how to improve quality.

The Guidance aims to clarify the role of our mental health services in providing high quality and safe mental health services. We follow this Guidance to make sure we are doing enough to meet the requirements of the law, meeting evidence based practices and achieving high quality outcomes for service users.

## How did we develop Best Practice Guidance?

The Best Practice Guidance is a national project which was initiated by the HSE National Director for Mental Health. It forms part of the Mental Health Division Operational Plan for 2016 and 2017.

The Quality Service User Safety (QSUS) department within the HSE Mental Health Division developed the Guidance.

The QSUS team works at national level to support service users, managers and clinicians across the country.

Their role is to make sure mental health services in Ireland are safe and of the highest quality.

We began developing this Guidance in May 2016 in consultation with:

- service users,
- families,
- carers,
- service user advocacy groups, and
- staff from HSE mental health services.

We used this collaborative approach to identify what was required, so that afterwards we could smoothly put the Guidance in place in all HSE mental health services throughout Ireland.

## Draft Guidance was tested in four sites

An initial draft Guidance and self assessment framework was developed and piloted in four services across Ireland.

The four pilot sites were:

- [Sligo](#) - A Community Adult Mental Health Team
- [Dublin](#) - The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in Linn Dara
- [Ballinasloe](#) - The Psychiatry of Later Life team (Sector 2)
- [Cork](#) - The Approved Centre at Cork University Hospital

The support of the people taking part in these pilots allowed us to test the documents and to make sure they were user friendly and the format was understandable. Then we could complete and launch the final Best Practice Guidance.

Each pilot site established a self-assessment team made up of a multidisciplinary team (including, where possible, social workers, consultant psychiatrist, psychologists, occupational therapists and nurses), service users and carers.

These teams tested their services against the draft Guidance, using the draft self-assessment framework. At the end of the pilot, the teams identified areas of good practice and where improvements could be made.

### Quotes from pilot sites

*“Being involved in the pilot was an opportunity to join the dots for safer better healthcare in a CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] setting.”*

*“It’s great that frontline staff are involved in the development of these Guidance. It was refreshing that the division asked working MDTs [multidisciplinary teams] to consider the practicalities of using the Guidance”.*

### Who does the Guidance apply to?

The Best Practice Guidance applies to all staff and management working in mental health services provided or funded by the HSE.

The Guidance is supported by the HSE National Director Mental Health and the National Management team.

Effective use of the Guidance requires the whole organisation to be committed to improving its performance. This is an essential element for success and it requires strong leadership.

The Guidance will help our mental health service to:

- improve its overall performance, and
- develop a culture of continuous quality improvement with a focus on service users, providers, and quality outcomes.



Every mental health service we provide will be supported to follow the Best Practice Guidance in carrying out a self assessment of their own service. In other words, each mental health service will set up a self assessment team before they start the assessment process.

## What Best Practice does the Guidance include?

The Best Practice Guidance for mental health services is divided into five themes.

Theme 1 – Recovery oriented care and support

Theme 2 – Effective care and support

Theme 3 – Safe care and support

Theme 4 – Leadership, governance and management

Theme 5 – Workforce

## Themes: a quick guide

### Theme 1: Recovery oriented care and support



Theme 1 looks at how our mental health services place adults and children at the centre of what we do.

This includes:

- protecting service users' rights, and
- respecting diversity.

It also includes promoting:

- access to services,
- advocacy, and
- connections with family and community.

This theme is about a partnership approach to recovery.

## Theme 2: Effective care and support

Theme 2 is about how our mental health services can deliver the best possible service and achieve the best possible outcome for our service users.



## Theme 3: Safe care and support



Theme 3 is about how mental health services protect service users, staff and visitors from the risk of harm. This means we identify and assess risk and take appropriate action to learn from any difficult incidents.

## Theme 4: Leadership, governance and management

Theme 4 is about how we make decisions in our mental health services. It is also about how we manage risks. It details how our services are:

- governed,
- lead, and
- managed.

This theme shows where accountability lies.

It also shows how we meet our obligations about:

- strategy,
- regulatory requirements, and
- financial obligations.



## Theme 5: Workforce



Theme 5 is about our mental health services workforce and how we plan, organise and lead them.

It is about how we do this to achieve our objectives for the service – which is to provide high quality, safe and reliable mental healthcare.



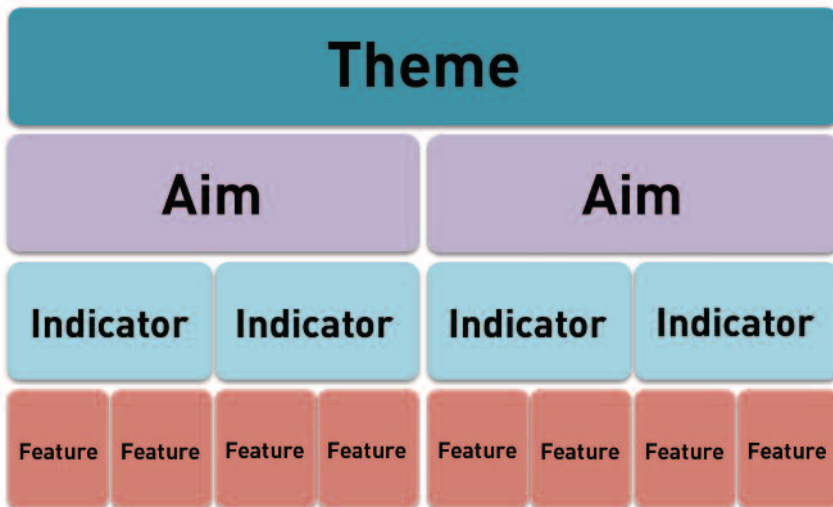
The Guidance will help you to identify what is a high quality, recovery oriented, effective, safe and reliable Mental Health Service.

Each of the **five themes** are described in terms of **aims** – statements of intent that reflect a high quality service.

Each aim is supported by a number of **indicators** which when met achieve the aim.

Finally, each indicator is further broken down into **features** which demonstrate achievement of that indicator.

The following image shows you how these elements interlink.



This structured process will assist the self-assessment team to identify and compare their service against the Best Practice Guidance and to rate their level of achievement.

## Where can I find out more?

You can find a full version of the HSE Best Practice Guidance for Mental Health Services and FAQs on our website at:

[Hse.ie/mentalhealthguidance.ie](https://hse.ie/mentalhealthguidance.ie)

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