

INTRODUCTION

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What is the Best Practice Guidance for Mental Health Services?

There is increased expectation by mental health service staff, service users, families and carers that services are based on scientific evidence, knowledge gained from clinical experience, and service users' values and preferences.

The aim of the HSE Best Practice Guidance is to inform mental health services in Ireland of best mental health care practices. The principles within the guidance document are reflective of the current mental health quality and safety agenda, mental health legislation and service user expectations. When fully implemented and adopted, the Guidance will significantly contribute towards ensuring that children and adults who use Irish mental health services receive a high quality, recovery oriented, safe service that is responsive to their needs.

The document provides a basis for better governance in planning and managing services, measuring improvement, identifying and addressing gaps, areas of concern or deterioration in the quality and safety of the services provided. It consists of best practice guidance, checklists and a self assessment framework, which are intended to support and guide further quality improvement within mental health services. The document should not sit apart from other quality developments, but should be seen as a part of the ongoing quality improvement reforms within mental health services and the wider health services.

This Best Practice Guidance is a practical tool and is based on legislation and best available evidence. It has been developed in consultation with staff, service users, families and carers. It is one composite document that includes:

- The *Mental Health Act (2001)* as amended, Statutory Instruments, Rules, Regulations and Codes of Practice.
- The Mental Health Commission Quality Framework (2007).
- The Mental Health Commission Judgement Support Framework (2017 Version 4).
- Other National legislation and HSE policies and procedures.
- National and International Best Practice.

It sets out the key principles of quality and safety that should be applied in any mental health setting. It is informed and underpinned by the principles of recovery, which encompasses personal recovery as something worked towards and experienced by the person with mental illness and, clinical recovery, which is the contribution made by healthcare staff in supporting and facilitating the person in their journey towards recovery.

Mental health services are now being asked to self assess against this guidance in order to identify both good practice and areas where improvements can be made. The result of the self assessment will provide an opportunity for mental health services to acquire a shared understanding of the quality of care being provided and the further improvements that need to occur in providing a quality, safe and effective service.

Direct components of the *Mental Health Commission Judgement Support Framework*, *Mental Health Act 2001* and relevant rules and Codes of Practice have been taken from these documents to support services to meet the regulatory requirements.

Why was the Best Practice Guidance developed?

There is an increased expectation on performance of services in relation to legislation, rules and codes of practice. This can prove challenging as it is often difficult for all involved in mental health services to gain clarity and understanding of all the legislative and best practice requirements in existence. This Best Practice Guidance has been developed with the intention of bringing together key mental health legislative and best practice requirements into one user friendly guide. The Guidance will assist the mental health service to improve its overall performance, and further develop a culture of continuous quality improvement with a focus on service users and on quality outcomes.

As information and measurement are central to improving the quality of care, this guidance document provides practical tools and checklists. Furthermore, a self assessment framework has also been developed to enable mental health services to self-assess their services against the Best Practice Guidance. This will contribute to ensuring compliance with legislative regulations, rules and requirements. Additionally, services will have the ability to recognise what is working well and what requires improvement in a systematic, structured way. The implementation of the Best Practice Guidance will complement and support existing processes in mental health services and give a shared voice to the expectations of service users, service providers and the public.

How was the Best Practice Guidance developed?

This national project was instigated by the National Director for Mental Health and forms part of the Mental Health Division Operational Plan for 2016 and 2017. The Best Practice Guidance was developed by the Quality Service User Safety (QSUS) department within the HSE National Mental Health Division, in collaboration with the National Steering and Project groups, who were instrumental in the development and approval of this Guidance. The QSUS team works strategically at national level to support service users, managers and clinicians across the country to ensure Ireland's Mental Health Services are safe and of the highest possible quality.

The development of this Guidance commenced in May 2016 in consultation with service users, carers, families, advocacy groups and staff from mental health services. The aim of this collaborative approach was to identify what was required and subsequently enable the smooth introduction of the Guidance into all mental health services.

An initial draft Guidance document 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, Galway** – The Psychiatry of Later Life team (Sector 2)
- **Cork** – The Approved Centre at Cork University Hospital

Each pilot site had a self assessment team; who tested their services against the draft Guidance, using the draft self assessment framework. The self assessment teams included a Consultant Psychiatrist, Management Staff, relevant members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (including, where possible Social Workers, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Nurses) service users and carers.

The learning from the pilot sites enabled the Best Practice Guidance and the self assessment framework to be further refined. The pilot project was extremely beneficial in that it also resulted in identifying factors that would support the roll out of the Best Practice Guidance nationally.

Feedback from Pilot Sites

Some of the pilot participants included comments about their experience.

'involvement in the Draft HSE Best Practice Guidance process was very useful for the team as it gave us an opportunity to scrutinise our performance with regard to adherence to best practice. We were also pleased to discover that we do, in fact, already meet many of the aims in the areas we looked at. In our efforts towards continuous improvement, the experience gave us the target for the future'

'the guidelines were a great way of generating ideas for improvement'

'it's great that frontline staff are involved in the development of these guidelines. It was refreshing that the division asked working Multi Disciplinary Teams (MDT) to consider the practicalities of using the Guidance'

'the involvement of carers in the process was invaluable and the carer in our team appreciated the experience of being a respected member of the team'

'working through the Guidance really helped bring the team together'

'being involved in the pilot was an opportunity to join the dots for safer better healthcare in a Child Adolescent, Mental Health Service (CAMHS) setting'

Figure 1 – Comments from pilot participants.

Following the extensive pilot and consultation process, the document was approved and signed off by the Steering Group and Project Group

What is the scope of the Best Practice Guidance?

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

The Guidance is sponsored by the National Director Mental Health and the National Management Team.

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

What does the Best Practice Guidance mean to service users?

The Best Practice Guidance recognises that service user centricity is the cornerstone of service delivery. It describes high quality, safe and reliable mental health care.

The Guidance also: -

- Creates a basis for improving the quality and safety of mental health services in line with legislation, regulation, rules, codes of practice and best practice.
- Can be used by service users to understand what high quality, accessible, inclusive and safe mental health services look like.
- Can be used in day to day practice by staff to encourage a consistent level of quality and safety across all mental health services.
- Gives a voice to the service user and encourages collaboration. on service user's recovery journey.
- Seeks to involve service users, families and carers in assessing the quality of the mental health services.
- Enables more transparency to service users, families, carers and the public.



Overview of the Best Practice Guidance:

The Best Practice Guidance for Mental Health Services is divided into a suite of 5 themes.

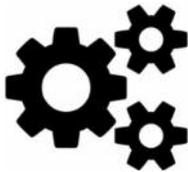
Theme	Description of Theme
<p>T1: Recovery Oriented Care and Support</p> 	<p>How mental health services place adults and children at the centre of what they do. This includes protecting service users' rights, respect for diversity, and promotion of access, advocacy, connections with family and community. It is about a partnership approach to recovery.</p>
<p>T2: Effective Care and Support</p> 	<p>How mental health services deliver the best possible service, to achieve the best possible outcome for service users in a meaningful and individualised way.</p>
<p>T3: Safe Care and Support</p> 	<p>How mental health services protect service users, staff and visitors from the risk of harm. This involves identifying, assessing and monitoring risk and taking appropriate action to learn from any adverse incidents.</p>
<p>T4: Leadership, Governance and Management</p> 	<p>How mental health services make decisions; how risks are managed; how the service is governed, led and managed; where accountability lies for the quality, safety and satisfaction of service users, for the care delivered; and how strategic, regulatory and financial obligations are met.</p>
<p>T5: Workforce</p> 	<p>How mental health services plan, organise, lead, train, develop, motivate and manage their workforce to achieve service objectives for high quality, safe and reliable mental health care.</p>

Figure 2: Key Themes contained within the Best Practice Guidance document.

How the Best Practice Guidance assists in identifying what is a high quality, recovery oriented, effective, safe and reliable Mental Health Service.

The Best Practice Guidance determines what constitutes a high quality, recovery oriented, effective, safe and reliable mental health service. The Best Practice Guidance is divided into five Themes.

Each of the five **Themes** are described in terms of **Aims**. The **Aims** are supported by a number of **Indicators** and **Features**.

Each mental health service establishes a self assessment team, which assesses themselves against the features in each **Indicator**. The self assessment team then makes a decision about their level of achievement with each **Indicator**.

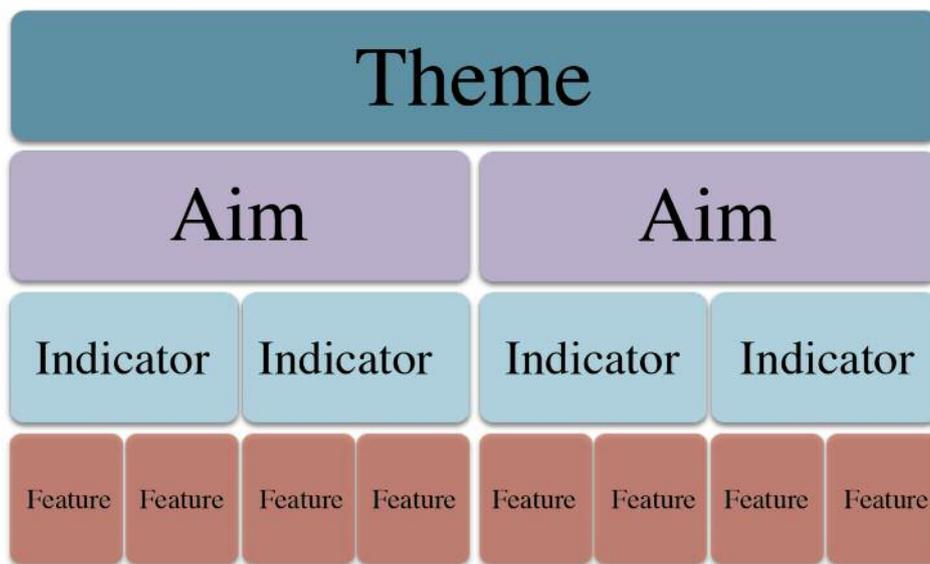


Figure 3: Hierarchy of Themes, Aims, Indicators and features.

Layout of the Best Practice Guidance

- Each of the 5 themes contains a number of Aims which are statements of intent reflective of a high quality mental health service.
- Each Aim has a number of Indicators which when met, achieve this Aim.
- Each Indicator is broken down further into a number of features, which if met, demonstrate achievement with the Indicator.
- Within the indicators there are boxes which broadly summarise, at a minimum, what the policies and procedures need to include, to meet regulatory and best practice requirements.

In Theme 2 – *Effective Care and Support*, it is notable that in addition to the above, the Guidance includes six supporting checklists (*Appendices 1-6*) – three of the checklists (*Electro Convulsive Therapy, Mechanical Means of Bodily Restraint and Physical Restraint and Seclusion*) are developed in accordance with the Mental Health Commission Rules and Codes of Practice, and the other three checklists (*Medication Management, Environment and Infection Control*), are based on best practice.

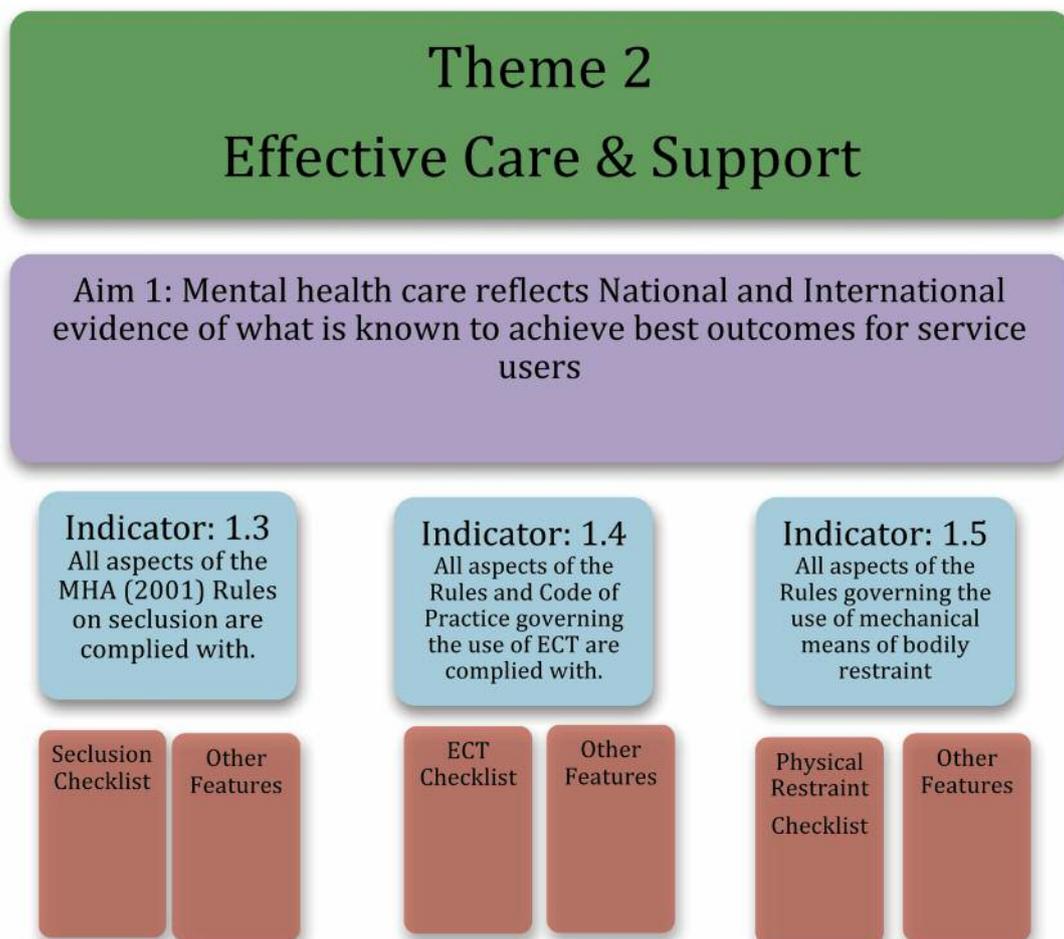


Figure 4: Break down of Theme 2 (Aim 1) –Effective Care and Support



The 5 Themes contained within the Best Practice Guidance:

Theme 1 : Recovery Oriented Care and Support

Aims

1. The planning, design and delivery of services are informed by service users' identified needs.
2. Admissions, transfers and discharges are timely and appropriate and based on service users assessed needs.
3. Service users experience care which values them, respects his/her diversity and protects his/her rights.
4. Service users are enabled to participate in making informed decisions about their care.
5. Service users' informed consent to care and treatment is obtained in accordance with legislation and best available evidence.
6. Service users' dignity, privacy and autonomy are respected and promoted at all times.
7. Service users complaints are responded to promptly, openly and effectively with clear communication and support provided throughout this process.
8. Mental health service users are supported in maintaining and improving their own health and well-being.

Theme 2 : Effective Care and Support

Aims

1. Mental health care reflects national and international evidence of what is known to achieve best clinical outcomes for service users.
2. Care is planned and delivered to meet the individual service user's initial and on-going assessed mental healthcare needs, while taking account of the needs of other service users.
3. Service users receive integrated care which is coordinated effectively within and between services.
4. All information necessary to support the provision of effective care, including information provided by the service user, is available at the point of decision making.
5. The mental health service is provided in a physical environment which supports the delivery of high quality, safe, reliable service provision and protects the health and welfare of service users, staff and visitors.
6. The effectiveness of mental health care outcomes is systematically monitored, evaluated and continuously improved.
7. Service users' health and well-being is supported by the mental health service's policies and procedures for medication management.

Theme 3 : Safe Care and Support

Aims

1. The mental health service takes all reasonable measures to protect service users, staff and others from the risk of harm associated with the design and delivery of mental health services.
2. The mental health service gathers, monitors, and learns from information relevant to the provision of safe services and actively promotes learning both internally and externally.
3. The mental health service effectively identifies, manages, responds to and reports on service user safety incidents.
4. The mental health service ensures all reasonable measures are taken to protect service users from all forms of abuse.
5. Effective Fire Safety Management Systems are in place and in accordance with legislative requirements including Fire Services Acts, 1981 & 2003; Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 and Building Control Acts 1990 & 2007 and other relevant legislation.

Theme 4 : Leadership, Governance and Management

Aims

1. The mental health service has clear accountability arrangements in place to achieve the delivery of high quality, safe and reliable services.
2. The mental health service has formalised governance arrangements for assuring the planning and delivery of high quality, recovery oriented, safe and reliable services.
3. Each mental health service/ team maintains a publicly available Statement of Purpose that accurately describes the services provided, including how and where they are provided. The statement of purpose is communicated in an accessible format to all stakeholders, including service users.
4. The mental health service has systematic monitoring arrangements for identifying and acting on opportunities to continually improve the quality, safety and reliability of mental health services, which are in compliance with relevant legislation, national standards, best practice and any service level arrangements.
5. The mental health service has effective management arrangements to support and promote the delivery of high quality, safe, reliable and recovery oriented services.
6. Managers at all levels in the mental health service promote and strengthen a culture of quality and safety throughout the service.

Theme 5 : Workforce

Aims

1. The mental health service plans, organises and manages its workforce to achieve its objectives for high quality, recovery oriented, safe and reliable services.
2. The mental health service recruits staff with the required competencies to provide high quality, recovery oriented, safe and reliable services.
3. The mental health service ensures that its workforce has the competencies and capabilities required to deliver high quality, recovery oriented, safe and reliable services.
4. The mental health service supports its workforce in delivering high quality, recovery oriented, safe and reliable services.

