Standards for Better Health

Core and developmental standards

Taken from 'The Annual Health Check in 2006/2007', Healthcare Commission, September 2006

First Domain - Safety

Domain Outcome
Patient safety is enhanced by the use of health care processes, working practices and systemic activities that prevent or reduce the risk of harm to patients.

Core standards

C1 Healthcare organisations protect patients through systems that

    a) identify and learn from all patient safety incidents and other reportable incidents, and make improvements in practice based on local and national experience and information derived from the analysis of incidents; and

    b) ensure that patient safety notices, alerts and other communications concerning patient safety which require action are acted upon within required time-scales.

C2 Healthcare organisations protect children by following national child protection guidance within their own activities and in their dealings with other.

C3 Healthcare organisations protect patients by following NICE Interventional Procedures guidance.

C4 Healthcare organisations keep patients, staff and visitors safe by having systems to ensure that

    a) the risk of health care acquired infection to patients is reduced, with particular emphasis on high standards of hygiene and cleanliness, achieving year-on-year reductions in MRSA;

    b) all risks associated with the acquisition and use of medical devices are minimised;

    c) all reusable medical devices are properly decontaminated prior to use and that the risks associated with decontamination facilities and processes are well managed;

    d) medicines are handled safely and securely; and

    e) the prevention, segregation, handling, transport and disposal of waste is properly managed so as to minimise the risks to the health and safety of staff, patients, the public and the safety of the environment.

Developmental standard

D1 Healthcare organisations continuously and systematically review and improve all aspects of their activities that directly affect patient safety and apply best practice in assessing and managing risks to patients, staff and others, particularly when patients move from the care of one organisation to another.

Second Domain – Clinical and Cost Effectiveness

Domain Outcome
Patients achieve health care benefits that meet their individual needs through health care decisions and services based on what assessed research evidence has shown provides effective clinical outcomes

Core standards
C5 Healthcare organisations ensure that

   a) they conform to NICE technology appraisals and, where it is available, take into account nationally agreed guidance when planning and delivering treatment and care;
   b) clinical care and treatment are carried out under supervision and leadership;
   c) clinicians continuously update skills and techniques relevant to their clinical work; and
   d) clinicians participate in regular clinical audit and reviews of clinical services.

C6 Healthcare organisations cooperate with each other and social care to ensure that patients' individual needs are properly managed and met.

Developmental standard
D2 Patients receive effective treatment and care that:

   a) conform to nationally agreed best practice, particularly as defined in National Service Frameworks, NICE guidance, national plans and agreed national guidance on service delivery;
   b) take into account their individual requirements and meet their physical, cultural, spiritual and psychological needs and preferences;
   c) are well co-ordinated to provide a seamless service across all that need to be involved, especially social care; and
   d) is delivered by health care professionals who make clinical decisions based on evidence-based practice.

Third Domain – Governance

Domain Outcome
Managerial and clinical leadership and accountability, as well as the organisation's culture, systems and working practices ensure that probity, quality assurance, quality improvement and patient safety are central components of all the activities of the health care organisation.

Core standards
C7 Healthcare organisations

   a) apply the principles of sound clinical and corporate governance;
   b) actively support all employees to promote openness, honesty, probity, accountability, and the economic, efficient and effective use of resources;
   c) undertake systematic risk assessment and risk management;
   d) ensure financial management achieves economy, effectiveness, efficiency, probity and accountability in the use of resources;
   e) challenge discrimination, promote equality and respect human rights; and
   f) meet the existing performance requirements set out in the annex.

C8 Healthcare organisations support their staff through

    a) having access to processes which permit them to raise, in confidence and without prejudicing their position, concerns over any aspect of service delivery, treatment or management that they consider to have a detrimental effect on patient care or on the delivery of services; and

    b) organisational and personal development programmes which recognise the contribution and value of staff, and address, where appropriate, under-representation of minority groups.

C9 Healthcare organisations have a systematic and planned approach to the management of records to ensure that, from the moment a record is created until its ultimate disposal, the organisation maintains information so that it serves the purpose it was collected for and disposes of the information appropriately when no longer required.

C10 Healthcare organisations

    a) undertake all appropriate employment checks and ensure that all employed or contracted professionally qualified staff are registered with the appropriate bodies; and

    b) require that all employed professionals abide by relevant published codes of professional practice.

C11 Healthcare organisations ensure that staff concerned with all aspects of the provision of health care

    a) are appropriately recruited, trained and qualified for the work they undertake;

    b) participate in mandatory training programmes; and

    c) participate in further professional and occupational development commensurate with their work throughout their working lives.

C12 Healthcare organisations which either lead or participate in research have systems in place to ensure that the principles and requirements of the research governance framework are consistently applied.

Developmental standards

D3 Integrated governance arrangements representing best practice are in place in all healthcare organisations and across all health communities and clinical networks.

D4 Healthcare organisations work together to

    a) ensure that the principles of clinical governance are underpinning the work of every clinical team and every clinical service;

    b) implement a cycle of continuous quality improvement; and

    c) ensure effective clinical and managerial leadership and accountability.

D5 Healthcare organisations work together and with social care to meet the changing health needs of their population by

    a) having an appropriately constituted workforce with appropriate skill mix across the community; and

    b) ensuring the continuous improvement of services through better ways of working.

D6 Healthcare organisations use effective and integrated information technology and information systems which support and enhance the quality and safety of patient care, choice and service planning.

D7 Healthcare organisations work to enhance patient care by adopting best practice in human resources management and continuously improving staff satisfaction.

Fourth Domain - Patient Focus

Domain Outcome
Healthcare is provided in partnership with patients, their carers and relatives, respecting their diverse needs, preferences and choices, and in partnership with other (especially social care) whose services impact on patient well-being.

Core standards
C13 Healthcare organisations have systems in place to ensure that
   a) staff treat patients, their relatives and carers with dignity and respect;
   b) appropriate consent is obtained when required for all contacts with patients and for the use of any patient confidential information; and
   c) staff treat patient information confidentially, except where authorised by legislation to the contrary.

C14 Healthcare organisations have systems in place to ensure that patients, their relatives and carers
   a) have suitable and accessible information about, and clear access to, procedures to register formal complaints and feedback on the quality of services;
   b) are not discriminated against when complaints are made; and
   c) are assured that organisations act appropriately on any concerns and, where appropriate, make changes to ensure improvements in service delivery.

C15 Where food is provided, healthcare organisations have systems in place to ensure that
   a) patients are provided with a choice and that it is prepared safely and provides a balanced diet; and
   b) patients' individual nutritional, personal and clinical dietary requirements are met, including any necessary help with feeding and access to food 24 hours a day.

C16 Healthcare organisations make information available to patients and the public on their services, provide patients with suitable and accessible information on the care and treatment they receive and, where appropriate, inform patients on what to expect during treatment, care and after-care.

Developmental standards
D8 Healthcare organisations continuously improve the patient experience, based on the feedback of patients, carers and relatives.

D9 Patients, service users and, where appropriate, carers receive timely and suitable information, when they need and want it, on treatment, care, services, prevention and health promotion and are
   a) encouraged to express their preferences; and
   b) supported to make choices and shared decisions about their own health care.

D10 Patients and service users, particularly those with long-term conditions, are helped to contribute to planning of their care and are provided with opportunities and resources to develop competence in self-care.

Fifth Domain - Accessible and Responsive Care

Domain Outcome
Patients receive services as promptly as possible, have choice in access to services and treatments, and do not experience unnecessary delay at any stage of service delivery or of the care pathway.

Core standards

C17 The views of patients, their carers and others are sought and taken into account in designing, planning, delivering and improving health care services.

C18 Healthcare organisations enable all members of the population to access services equally and offer choice in access to services and treatment equitably. access to services and treatment equitably.

C19 Healthcare organisations ensure that patients with emergency health needs are able to access care promptly and within nationally agreed timescales, and all patients are able to access services within national expectations on access to services.

Developmental standard

D11 Healthcare organisations plan and deliver health care which
   a) reflects the views and health needs of the population served and which is based on nationally agreed evidence or best practice;
   b) maximises patient choice;
   c) ensures access (including equality of access) to services through a range of providers and routes of access; and
   d) uses locally agreed guidance, guidelines or protocols for admission, referral and discharge that accord with the latest national expectations on access to services.

Sixth Domain - Care Environment and Amenities

Domain Outcome
Care is provided in environments that promote patient and staff well-being and respect for patients' needs and preferences in that they are designed for the effective and safe delivery of treatment, care or a specific function, provide as much privacy as possible, are well maintained and are cleaned to optimise health outcomes for patients.

Core standards

C20 Healthcare services are provided in environments which promote effective care and optimise health outcomes by being
   a) a safe and secure environment which protects patients, staff, visitors and their property, and the physical assets of the organisation; and
   b) supportive of patient privacy and confidentiality.

C21 Healthcare services are provided in environments which promote effective care and optimise health outcomes by being well designed and well maintained with cleanliness levels in clinical and non-clinical areas that meet the national specification for clean NHS premises.

Developmental standard

D12 Healthcare is provided in well-designed environments that

a) promote patient and staff well-being, and meet patients' needs and preferences, and staff concerns; and

b) are appropriate for the effective and safe delivery of treatment, care or a specific function, including the effective control of health care associated infections.

Seventh Domain - Public Health

Domain Outcome

Programmes and services are designed and delivered in collaboration with all relevant and communities to promote, protect and improve the health of the population served and reduce health inequalities between different population groups and areas.

Core standards

C22 Healthcare organisations promote, protect and demonstrably improve the health of the community served, and narrow health inequalities by

a) co-operating with each other and with local authorities and other organisations;

b) ensuring that the local Director of Public Health's Annual Report informs their policies and practices; and

c) making an appropriate and effective contribution to local partnership arrangements including Local Strategic Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

C23 Healthcare organisations have systematic and managed disease prevention and health promotion programmes which meet the requirements of the National Service Frameworks and national plans with particular regard to reducing obesity through action on nutrition and exercise, smoking, substance misuse and sexually transmitted infections.

C24 Healthcare organisations protect the public by having a planned, prepared and, where possible, practiced response to incidents and emergency situations which could affect the provision of normal services.

Developmental standard

D13 Healthcare organisations

a) identify and act upon significant public health problems and health inequality issues, with primary care trusts taking the leading role;

b) implement effective programmes to improve health and reduce health inequalities, conforming to nationally agreed best practice, particularly as defined in NICE guidance and agreed national guidance on public health;

c) protect their populations from identified current and new hazards to health; and d) take fully into account current and emerging policies and knowledge on public health issues in the development of their public health programmes, health promotion and prevention services for the public, and the commissioning and provision of services.