

Revision to the food, fluid and nutritional care standards

Draft scope

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1. Introduction

Healthcare Improvement Scotland is the national health and social care improvement organisation for Scotland and is part of NHS Scotland. It provides the expertise and resources to coproduce standards which are developed, informed and shaped by people who plan, deliver and use health and/or social care services. It uses well established and robust methodology to underpin standards development. Our approach to developing standards is outlined in [Appendix 1](#).

Standards are informed by:

- people with lived and living experience and their representatives or care partners
- formally collected patient-reported outcomes
- current national policy and legislation
- evidence relating to effective clinical practice, feasibility and service provision.

Background to the standards

In October 2025, Healthcare Improvement Scotland undertook a review process of the extant 2014 *food, fluid and nutritional care standards*. The process identified areas where evidence, policy and practice have evolved since the publication of the standards. Participants in this process included representatives from across health and social care and brought a range of professional, organisational and lived experience perspectives.

The review highlighted significant developments in service delivery, evidence and policy related to food, fluid and nutritional care. This includes developments in integrated health and social care, person-centred approaches and community-based support.

The review found that the standards continue to provide an important foundation for high-quality care. To maintain their relevance and effectiveness, they should be reviewed and updated to reflect evolving evidence, policy priorities and expectations.

Feedback from the review has informed the development of the proposed themes for the revised food, fluid and nutritional care standards.

2. How to feedback on the scope

This document outlines the proposed scope for national food, fluid and nutritional care standards. We are looking for feedback on any potential gaps or additions to be considered in relation to the proposed:

- areas in scope
- areas outwith scope
- standards development group membership.

Please submit your comments and feedback using the online survey by 5pm Thursday 15 October 2026.

Please note, comments will not be accepted after the closing date, or in an alternative format, unless previously agreed with the project team. Please contact the project team on his.standardsandindicators@nhs.scot.

Feedback on the draft scope will be reviewed and themed by the project team and used to further develop the scope of the standards, where applicable. A summary of the responses to scope engagement will be made available on request from the project team.

The standards development group will formally agree the scope at its first meeting.

3. Scope of food, fluid and nutritional care standards

Title of the standards

The proposed title is 'food, fluid and nutritional care standards'.

Purpose of the standards

The standards set out best practice for all staff and services involved in the planning, commissioning or delivery of food, fluid and nutritional care in Scotland.

This includes contracted staff, volunteers, locum staff, those covered by reciprocal work arrangements and students on placement.

The standards will be aligned with national policy, guidance and standards, including Healthcare Improvement Scotland's [clinical governance standards](#).

Healthcare Improvement Scotland may use these standards in a range of assurance and inspection activities. They may be used to review the quality and registration, where appropriate, of health and social care services.

Who the standards will apply to

The standards will apply to all adults, children and young people receiving care, treatment, support or assessment within NHS Scotland services and integrated health and social care services.

The standards will apply in all settings across the health and social care system, including:

- acute healthcare services planned, delivered or commissioned by NHS Scotland
- care homes and other residential care settings
- care-at-home services
- community healthcare services delegated to Integration Joint Boards or Health and Social Care Partnerships
- independent healthcare providers, including third sector providers
- independent social care providers
- primary care.

Definitions will be provided in the standards.

Overarching principles

These standards aim to support and promote access to high-quality food, fluid and nutritional care. The standards will be developed in line with the principles of [Realistic Medicine](#) and value-based health and care, with a focus on person-centred, safe, effective and sustainable services that optimise outcomes and experiences for people.

Themes covered in the standards

The standards are structured around a number of high-level themes that reflect the key components of safe, effective and person-centred care. Further information on each theme is provided below.

Principles of person-centred, rights-based and equitable food, fluid and nutritional care

Description:

This theme describes the values, rights and expectations that underpin the delivery of food, fluid and nutritional care.

Key areas to be covered:

- person-centred care
- dignity and respect
- rights-based approaches
- communication and accessible information
- cultural, religious and dietary preferences
- therapeutic dietary needs
- reducing inequalities, including those experienced by people living with frailty, dementia, cognitive impairment, disability, mental health conditions and other conditions associated with increased nutritional risk
- addressing the needs of people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, including food poverty
- shared decision-making, coproduction and participation
- independence and wellbeing
- trauma-informed approaches, where appropriate
- collaborative and partnership working with families, unpaid carers and care partners
- engagement, involvement, feedback and service improvement.

Children and young people

Description:

This theme focuses on ensuring that food, fluid and nutritional care meets the specific needs of infants, children and young people and that it supports growth, development, health and wellbeing.

Key areas to be covered:

- growth and development monitoring
- infant feeding and early nutrition
- age-appropriate nutritional assessments and care planning
- family-centred approaches
- supporting participation and shared decision-making by children and young people
- nutritional support for children and young people with complex needs
- coordination with education, community and family services
- transition from children's to adult services
- reducing inequalities in nutritional health outcomes for children and young people.

Quality improvement and culture

Description:

This theme focuses on the quality management system required to support high-quality food, fluid and nutritional care.

Key areas to be covered:

- quality improvement and innovation
- use of data, indicators and audit
- organisational culture that supports person-centred food, fluid and nutritional care
- gathering and using feedback, experiences and outcomes.

Leadership and governance

Description:

This theme focuses on the leadership and governance arrangements required to support high-quality food, fluid and nutritional care.

Key areas to be covered:

- culture, strategic leadership and accountability
- operational leadership
- governance and oversight arrangements
- policies, procedures and quality assurance systems
- risk management and learning from incidents
- service planning and resource allocation
- concerns (whistleblowing, duty of candour), feedback and complaints
- sustainability, environmental considerations and waste management.

Staff education, support and wellbeing

Description:

This theme focuses on ensuring that the workforce has the knowledge, skills, capacity and support required to deliver safe and effective food, fluid and nutritional care.

Key areas to be covered:

- workforce planning
- education, training and competency
- role clarity and professional responsibilities
- access to specialist advice and expertise for staff
- multidisciplinary working
- supervision, support and continuing professional development
- workforce capability to meet changing and complex needs.

Food, fluid and nutritional assessment, care planning and delivery

Description:

This theme focuses on assessing, planning, delivering and reviewing nutritional and hydration care to meet individual needs, preferences and outcomes.

Key areas to be covered:

- nutrition and hydration assessment, including malnutrition risk screening if appropriate
- holistic assessment, which takes into account health and wellbeing needs, individual circumstances and the wider social determinants of health
- personalised care planning
- meeting assessed nutritional and hydration needs
- monitoring and review (risk assessment and escalation)
- support for safe eating and drinking
- management of complex nutritional care needs
- appropriate referral for specialist assessment and intervention
- monitoring and review of nutritional care and outcomes
- supporting choice, dignity, independence and wellbeing
- recognition and management of food allergies, intolerances and special dietary need
- assessment, support and referral for maintaining oral health.

Food and fluid provision

Description:

This theme focuses on the systems, environments and resources required to provide safe, nutritious, accessible and appropriate food, nutrition and fluids.

Key areas to be covered:

- organisation planning and coordination of food and fluid services
- safe provision of food and fluids
- nutritional quality of food and drink
- availability and accessibility of food and fluids
- provision of modified texture diets, therapeutic diets and other dietary adaptations
- mealtime environments
- equipment and resources that support eating and drinking
- cultural, religious and dietary requirements
- people's feedback and experience of food and fluid services
- technology and digital solutions supporting food and fluid provision.

Coordination and continuity of care

Description:

This theme focuses on ensuring that food, fluid and nutritional care is coordinated, communicated and maintained across services, settings and transitions in care.

Key areas to be covered:

- communication of information about a person's nutrition and hydration care needs
- transfers and transitions of care
- discharge planning
- multidisciplinary coordination
- continuity of care planning and delivery
- community-based nutritional support
- care-at-home support
- access to specialist services across care settings
- palliative and end of life care
- follow-up and review after transitions.

Areas out of scope of the standards

The standards will not include:

- condition-specific clinical treatment or pathways
- defined service models or service design
- dentistry and specialist oral health care
- development of specific workforce modelling or staffing tools
- development of quality indicators, performance targets or operational metrics or other data measurements or datasets
- development of national targets and flow pathways implementation of the standards
- inspection or assurance methodology or mechanisms.

These standards do not apply to universal food provision programmes or catering services that are not linked to an individual's assessed health or care needs, such as school meals. The standards apply to food, fluid and nutritional care delivered as part of healthcare or social care assessment, treatment and support.

Related sources and work programmes

The project team will undertake a literature review to support the development of the standards. This section highlights key resources. To note, this is not an exhaustive list.

- [Food in Hospitals \(2025\) Specification – Consultation draft](#)
- [Good Food Nation Plan and related legislation](#)
- [Population Health Framework](#)
- [Diet and Healthy Weight Plan \(2018\)](#)
- [Care and treatment of eating disorders: national specifications](#)
- [Public Health Scotland Obesity Standards](#)
- [Complex Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition Standards](#)

Healthcare Improvement Scotland:

- [Ageing and frailty standards](#)
- [Clinical governance standards](#)
- [Excellence in Care](#)
- [Healthcare Staffing Programme](#)
- [Quality of care review guidance](#)
- [Scottish Approach to Change](#)

4. Standards development group

The standards development group is the body that is responsible for providing the content and scope of the standards. It will be chaired by Jacqueline Walker, Professional Lead for Dietetics in NHS Grampian. The group will convene in December 2026 and will meet approximately four times over a 12-month period.

The standards development group is composed of experts and stakeholders in the relevant field and led by the Chair. We expect the standards development group for the updated food, fluid and nutritional care standards to include:

Organisational representation

- British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
- British Dietetic Association Scotland
- Care Inspectorate
- Community Pharmacy
- Public Services Delivery Scotland
- Relevant third sector organisations
- Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland
- Royal College of Nursing
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists.
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- Scottish Nutrition and Hydration Network
- Scottish Prescribing Dietitians Network

Professional and clinical representation

- Acute dietetics
- Allied health professions leadership
- Care home managers
- Community dietetics
- Dentistry and oral health
- Diabetes nursing
- Food, fluid and nutritional care leads
- Gastroenterology
- General Practitioners
- Healthcare support assistants
- Home care staff
- Learning disability nursing
- Medical and nursing leadership
- Mental health nutrition
- Occupational therapy
- Older people and frailty services
- Oncology
- Paediatrics and neonatal services
- Professional catering services
- Public health nutrition
- Speech and language therapy
- Weight management services.

Further information

If you would like to find out more about the food, fluid and nutritional care standards project or be added to our distribution list for any of our consultation activities or project updates, please contact:

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Appendix 1: Standards development methodology

Healthcare Improvement Scotland has established a robust process for developing standards, which is informed by international standards development methodology. This ensures the standards:

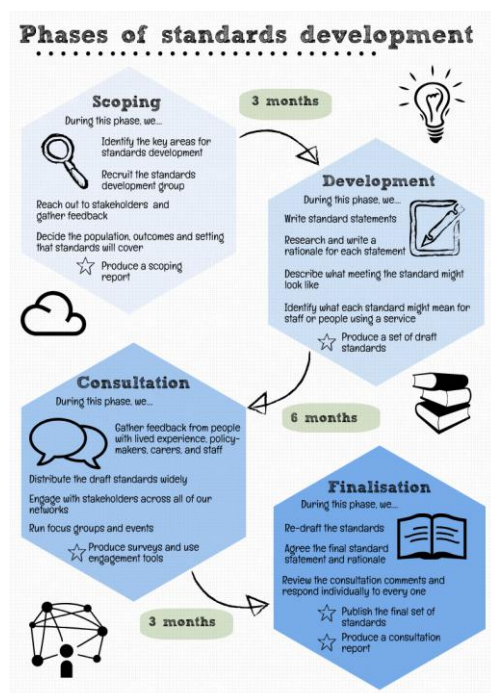
- are fit for purpose and informed by current evidence and practice
- set out clearly what people who use services can expect to experience
- are an effective quality assurance tool.

All Healthcare Improvement Scotland standards are mapped to key national legislation, policy and standards. They support the implementation of person-centred and trauma-informed principles as well as human rights and equality legislation.

As part of the standards development process, the standards will take into account and consider relevant legislation, national policy, quality improvement and assurance programmes.

The standards will use terminology aligned with the relevant legislation, policy and Healthcare Improvement Scotland style guide.

The phasing of all Healthcare Improvement Scotland standards development is illustrated in the figure below. For further information, please visit our [website](https://www.his.scot.nhs.uk/standardsandindicators) or contact the standards team at his.standardsandindicators@nhs.scot.



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