



Lexicon for Social Care



The first of its kind

A live, ever-evolving resource available on www.hiqa.ie



Background

- ▶ The use of **consistent** language is important when communicating information.
 - It can sometimes cause confusion if people use multiple different terms or phrases when referring to the same thing.
 - Similarly, words and phrases that are deemed appropriate can change over time. This may occur if a word or phrase is seen as offensive or outdated to some people.

- ▶ Fields such as medicine have standardised the use of language by developing **lexicons** or terminology lists.
 - For example, the Systemized Nomenclature of Medicine – Clinical Terms (SNOMED-CT; <https://www.snomed.org/>) is a list of words and definitions that have been developed by experts in the field.
 - Clinical practitioners are then encouraged to use the accepted SNOMED-CT terms in their documentation and records. This provides for consistent use of language and also allows for information to be processed more readily for reporting or research purposes.

Background

- ▶ Prior to 2024, no lexicon for social care existed for use in Ireland.
- ▶ As a regulatory authority receiving statutory notifications for more than 10 years, HIQA observed the [need for more standardised language](#) when describing incidents that occur in designated centres.



What is a Lexicon?

- ▶ Vocabulary of a person, profession, branch of knowledge.
- ▶ Different from a dictionary:
 - Focus on the term (lexeme)
 - Description is there for guidance not explicit interpretation
- ▶ Lexicons include the words that **are being used**.
 - They are not comprehensive by design but can be extensive.

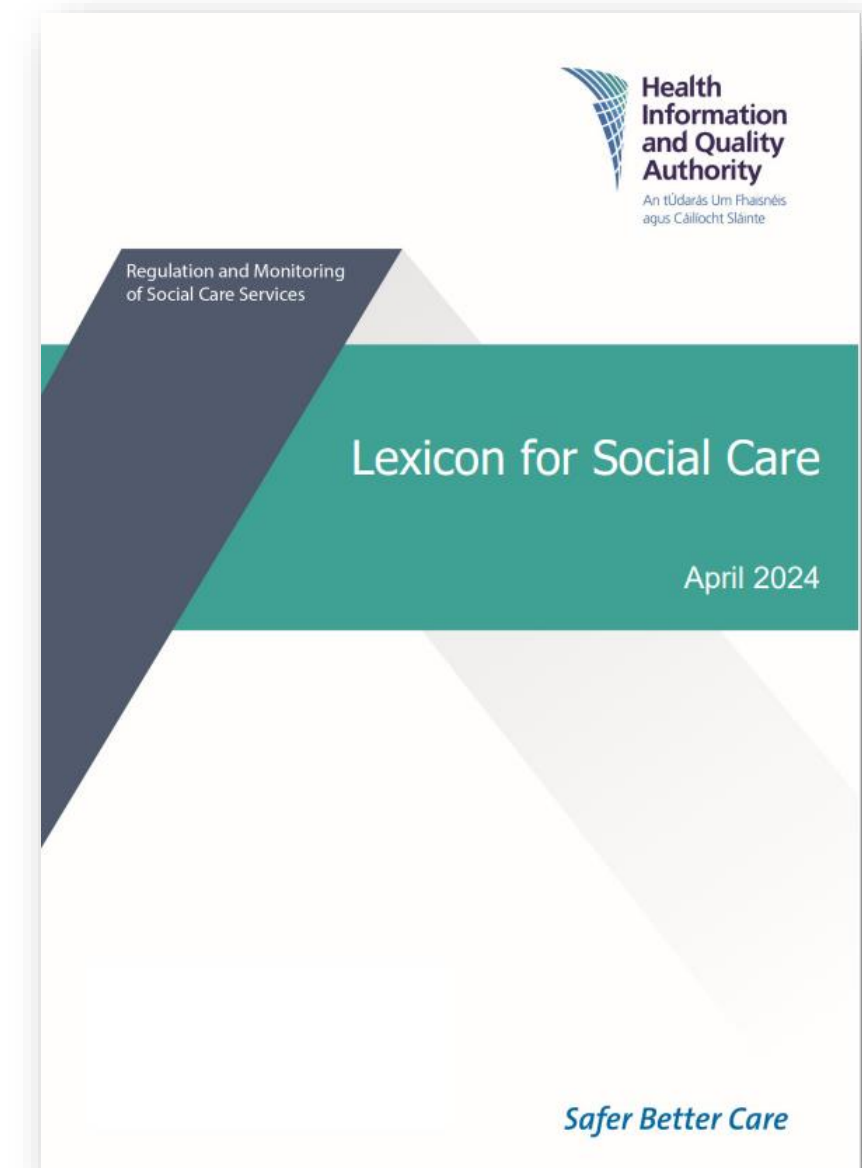
Benefits of a Lexicon

- Standardises use of words
- Limits communication errors
- Reduces time seeking clarification
- Improves searchability of files
- Supports analysis
- Facilitates research
- Essential in building digital systems
- Can lead to more person-centred language



Lexicon for Social Care

- The Lexicon for Social Care is an initiative by HIQA's Chief Inspector of Social Services. The Lexicon provides a list of commonly-used words relevant to social care, along with a description of the term.
- Launched in April 2024 on www.hiqa.ie
 - It is anticipated that the lexicon will expand further over time to include terms for all aspects of social care.



Available online [here](http://www.hiqa.ie)

How was it developed?

- ▶ A systematic review to identify existing lexicons for social care was undertaken:
 - Identified lexicons for nursing terms and two dictionaries
 - No lexicon for social care identified

- ▶ A systematic review to develop a methodology was undertaken:
 - Use a top down, bottom-up approach
 - Convene a working group
 - Convene an expert advisory group
 - Conduct a validation exercise

How was it developed?

- ▶ Expert Advisory Group convened (inspectors, academics, service providers, advocacy groups, health information specialists, **service users**).
- ▶ Tasks: Agreement of inclusion of the terms
 Suggestion of alternative terms to replace identified terms
 Suggestion of additional terms for inclusion
- ▶ When a term reached 80% agreement it was included.
Iterative rounds of feedback and update until a list was agreed.
Process repeated for descriptions.

Aims of Lexicon for Social Care



Support people's understanding of key words and terms

It is crucial that people using social care services are aware of key phrases which are commonly used. The Lexicon will guide all those using, working or interested in social care to learn and better understand the language framework used within these settings.



Standardise frequently used words and terms in social care

By standardising terms in social care, everyone will use the same words and terms within the sector. This will help to limit miscommunications and allow for more comprehensive collection of data for research and audit purposes.



Build confidence in applying terminology

Having universal and consistent terms will improve communication channels between those working in social care and those using a designated centre.

Aims of Lexicon for Social Care



Assist in streamlining documentation and reports

The Lexicon can assist providers of designated centres to compile records, such as incident or inspection reports, ensuring they are using the most appropriate terminology.



Act as a guidance document

For education providers, academics, students and health and social care professionals, this resource can be utilised as a learning tool in an education or work setting. The Lexicon exists to guide and encourage open communication between those working in, learning about or involved with a social care service.

Using the Lexicon

- The Lexicon is organised according to 24 themes, each of which contains a varying number of terms. Underneath each term entry there is a description.

Theme: Abuse

Theme: Adverse Event

Theme: Behaviour.....

Theme: Care Management

Theme: Disability/Care and Support Needs

Theme: Emergency

Theme: Equipment and resources

Theme: Facilities

Theme: Governance

Theme: Health and Social Care Professionals

Theme: Human Rights

Theme: Information

Theme: Behaviour

Aggression

Hostile behaviour and/or attitude towards an individual or group that results in verbal and/or physical attacks.

Agitation

Worry and anxiety that make a person feel uneasy.

Using the Lexicon

- ▶ Some terms included in the Lexicon also list other terms or phrases which are sometimes used. Consider restrictive practices by way of example.
 - There are many words and phrases which can be used to refer to broadly the same thing such as ‘restraint’ or ‘restrictive procedure’.
 - In such cases, the term included in the Lexicon is the preferred term and use of words or phrases in ‘Alternative term(s) not to be used’ should be avoided.
- ▶ Below is an example of an entry in the Lexicon:

Healthcare assistant (HCA)

A specific role in health and social care services which involves assisting with general duties and basic care.

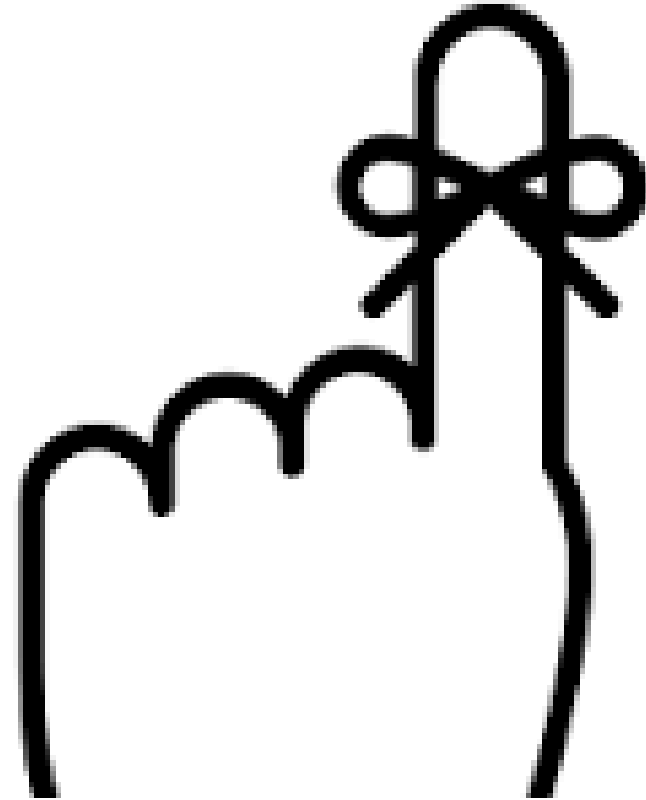
Alternative term(s) not to be used

HCA; care assistant

Going forward

- ▶ The Lexicon is a living document and is updated periodically
- ▶ Use of terms changes over time
- ▶ Suggest terms for future inclusion in the Lexicon
(https://hiqa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6nhko5QSJgKZM1M)
- ▶ The Lexicon was initially developed with a focus on statutory notifications, with further expansion to other social care areas planned.

Remember



Lexicons are **about the terms** and are not dictionaries. The descriptors do not supersede definitions in legislation, regulatory documents or other similar sources.



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