

Safety Information Message

Reference: SIM2502

Issued: 17 February 2025

Review Date: 17 February 2026

Informed Choices: Testing Guide for Products in Mental Health Facilities

Summary

This Safety Information Message supersedes and replaces *IM/2020/012 Informed Choices: Testing Guidance for Products in Mental Health Facilities*. The Informed Choices: Testing Guide for Products in Mental Health provides independent testing methodologies for materials, fixtures and hardware that have been specifically designed for use within mental healthcare facilities. It enables manufacturers to confidently declare the functional performance of their product and thus enables specifiers and procurers of healthcare to make safer and informed choices, appropriate for their service users or patients.

Action

1. Direct this notice to all appropriate managers, staff and users.
2. Procurement teams for vulnerable service users, such as NHS mental health in-patients, should download the Informed Choices: Guide, 'sign the pledge', then encourage or specify in their procurement, that future product suppliers to provide independent BRE Informed Choices: testing and certification.

Background Information

Manufactured products are typically relied upon by their purchasers to perform satisfactorily and safely. A key issue for those who are sourcing products for the facilities which house vulnerable service users or patients, is understanding whether a product is an appropriate one for the intended purpose(s), including both daily functionality and our safeguarding duty of care. Design in Mental Health Network (DIMHN), and partners Building Research Establishment (BRE), along with input from over 100 other contributors, have developed a testing protocol and publication on: '*Informed Choices: Testing Guidance for Products in Mental Health Facilities*'.

The Informed Choices: Testing Guide aims to:

- ensure an appropriate safeguarding duty for vulnerable service users, nor key daily functionality are compromised by inappropriate product selection
- communicate product-testing requirements to manufacturers to enable them to supply a product that is appropriate for the service users' vulnerabilities and their environments
- support clients and procurement teams to better evaluate manufacturers' trade literature
- discourage the proliferation of unique, unverifiable or inappropriate product testing methods by clients, procurers or suppliers, such as NHS Boards, contractors and other authorities
- set minimum and categorisations for, verifiable performance standards for products, ensuring they are within stringent NHS cost limits and NHS Guidance
- provide clear criteria for performance categorisations for products, that can easily be referred to by clinicians, contractors, specifiers, procurement teams and manufacturers
- improve the effectiveness, efficiency and design costs for specialist safety products

BRE Global Limited provides independent testing methodologies for materials, fixtures and hardware, that have been specifically designed for vulnerable users with complex needs, such as those in mental healthcare facilities. This testing brings together the many disparate requirements for these manufactured specialist products, into one 'Informed Choices: Guide', enabling their appropriate categorisation, specification and procurement to suit the service user or patient.

This testing enables experienced project teams or procurement teams, to make more confident and appropriate product selection for their specific service users, knowing it is based on verifiable and reliable independent testing. It is therefore recommended that NHS, and other procurer organisations, advocate their future suppliers undertake this BRE testing and certification. To encourage and demonstrate their support for this, it is recommended NHS, and other procurer organisations, sign the '[Informed Choices: Pledge](#)'.

Manufacturers supplying products designed for vulnerable service users, such as NHS mental health patients, have a safeguarding duty of care as well as general product safety legal duty. It is therefore recommended future suppliers provide BRE independent Products for Mental Health Safeguarding ([ProMHS](#)) certification, to evidence a suitability for safeguarding vulnerable users.

The Informed Choices: brief Guide can be downloaded [here](#), the full Guide [here](#) and Pledge [here](#). Further 'Informed Choices' information is available from [DiMHN](#) and [BRE Mental health product testing](#).

Suggested onward distribution (may not include all affected departments)

All NHS mental health directors/ leads, Health & Safety leads, and other staff (including Procurement teams) who may need to take action.

Information about IRIC

Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre (IRIC), Facilities Division, NHSScotland Assure NHS National Services Scotland, Tel: 0131 275 7575, email: nss.irc@nhs.scot

Accessibility: Please contact us using the above details if you are blind or have a sight impairment and would like to request this alert in a more suitable format.

IRIC remit: general information about adverse incidents, safety alerts and IRIC's role can be found in [CEL 43 \(2009\)](#), *Safety of Health, Social Care, Estates and Facilities Equipment: NHS Board and Local Authority Responsibilities*, issued 30 October 2009.

To find safety alerts: scan the QR code or [click this link to visit our website](#)



To report an incident: scan the QR code or [click this link to visit our website](#)



NHS National Services Scotland is the common name for the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/>