

How HIW Inspect Mental Health Services

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) is responsible for inspecting NHS and independent mental health services across Wales. Our inspections check that people are receiving safe, high-quality care, and that services meet all relevant legal and professional standards.

We inspect to ensure:

- People's rights are protected under the Mental Health Act 1983, Mental Capacity Act 2005, and Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.
- Services meet the Health and Care Quality Standards (2023) for NHS, or the National Minimum Standards and Independent Health Care (Wales) Regulations 2011 for independent hospitals.
- Care is person-centred, safe, and effective.

How do we plan inspections?

- We use information about the quality of care, concerns, and feedback to decide when and where to inspect.
- All mental health inspections are unannounced with no advance warning, so we see services as they really operate.
- For Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs), inspections are announced, with up to 12 weeks' notice.



Who attends a Mental Health inspection?

- **HIW Healthcare Inspectors:** lead the inspection, review policies, and speak with staff and patients.
- **Clinical Peer Reviewers:** mental health professionals who bring up-to-date clinical experience.
- **Patient Experience Reviewers:** focus on hearing directly from people using the service.
- All CMHT inspections are conducted jointly with the [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) (CIW), so every CMHT inspection will also include CIW inspectors.



What happens during an inspection?

The inspection team meets with managers, tours the environment, observes care, and reviews records (including care plans, risk assessments, and use of restraint).

We ask staff to complete an anonymous survey to find out what it's like to work at the setting. We also ask patients to complete an anonymous survey to ask them about the quality of service they are receiving.

Inspectors focus on:

1. Quality of patient experience
2. Safe and effective care
3. Leadership and management

At the end of the visit, the inspection team gives verbal feedback on key findings.

What do we look for?

Are people's rights and dignity respected?

Is care safe, effective, and person-centred?

Are staff well-trained and supported?

Is the environment safe and therapeutic?

Are there robust systems for medicines, risk, and governance?

After an inspection:

- A draft report is sent to the service within six weeks for factual accuracy checks.
- If urgent risks are found, HIW issues an Immediate Assurance Letter (NHS) or Non-Compliance Notice (independent sector) within two days. Services must submit an Immediate Improvement Plan within 5-7 days.
- The final inspection report is published on the HIW website, usually within three months.
- Services must submit an Improvement Plan detailing actions and timelines to address any issues.

Recent themes from HIW reports:

HIW have published our [Mental Health, Learning Disability Services and Mental Health Act Monitoring Annual Report 2024-2025](#), which outlines themes of our work for mental health and learning disability services across Wales. This year's report examines the standard of care within NHS and independent settings between April 2024 and March 2025, drawing on evidence from 25 on-site inspections, including 14 of NHS services and 11 of independent providers. These included hospital-based services and community mental health teams, with a continued focus on legal compliance, patient safety, and the quality of care.

Key Themes Include:

- Workforce pressures and recruitment challenges
- Medicines management and patient safety
- Quality of care planning and risk assessments
- The importance of involving patients and families in their care.