

Hospital Inspections driving up standards of cleanliness

✘ Inspectors are putting Scotland's hospitals under unprecedented levels of independent scrutiny and helping to drive up standards across the country.

That was the view of Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon as the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate (HEI) published its first annual report.

The report identified that most of the hospitals inspected were generally clean with good infection prevention and control practices in place. The report also notes that standards of cleanliness are improving.

Ms Sturgeon said:-“I set up the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate to put Scotland's hospitals under the microscope and I'm pleased that the inspectors have left no stone unturned.

“As a result of their efforts, health boards are sitting up and taking notice and making the improvements required. It's heartening that today's report reflects that, as a result of the inspections, standards are improving.

“Some of the reports have made uncomfortable reading but that was to be expected. Where hospitals have performed poorly, the inspectorate has ensured that improvements are put in place quickly. In addition, all the report's recommendations are already being addressed as part of our HAI Taskforce's programme.

“The challenge for NHS boards and staff now is to ensure that our hospitals are always ready for inspection. As well as planned visits, the HEI has increased the number of unannounced inspections. This isn't about trying to catch

hospitals out – it's about monitoring what patients see on a day-to-day basis.

“Today's report clearly shows that standards of cleanliness and infection control in our hospitals are improving. But more can always be done and I am confident the inspection process will continue to drive up standards.”

The [Healthcare Environment Inspectorate](#) was set up by the Health Secretary in March 2009 with a remit to undertake a rigorous inspection programme in Scottish hospitals. Operating independently of the Scottish Government and NHS boards, it carries out both planned and unannounced inspections of hospitals, and must visit every acute hospital at least once every three years.

The HEI Annual report concludes that hospitals are “generally clean and improving” but with more work to be done.

Scotland's acute hospitals are “generally clean and improving”, states the first annual report of the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate (HEI), but more work needs to be done in key areas, most notably in the cleaning of hospital equipment (including commodes and mattresses) and infection control policies being up to date on wards. Publication of the report coincides with HEI's announcement that it will strengthen its inspection strategy in its second year with a move towards more unannounced inspections.

HEI was established in 2009 to undertake rigorous inspections of every acute hospital in Scotland to help reduce the risk to patients of healthcare associated infections (HAIs). In its first year HEI carried out 36 inspections in 29 acute hospitals in all 14 NHS boards across Scotland. Where required, HEI returned to hospitals to carry out further inspections to ensure that progress was being made. Overall, HEI issued 172 requirements to acute hospitals and made 168 recommendations between September 2009 and September 2010. HEI

carries out both announced and unannounced inspections.

The following improvements by NHS boards in Scotland have been noted over the past year:

- Standards of cleanliness in acute hospitals in Scotland are improving
- Infection rates across Scotland are reducing
- Positive improvements have been seen when HEI returned to individual hospitals
- There has been evidence of good practice being passed from one hospital to another in advance of HEI inspections
- All NHS boards now have action plans setting out their commitment to reducing the risk of infections.

Key areas for improvement were highlighted by the following findings:

The cleaning of patient equipment needs to be improved, with current assurance systems often not being used correctly or effectively

- HEI found 12 hospitals where practice was poor with regard to staff taking precautions to prevent the spread of infection
- HEI found 11 hospitals where the policies on the ward were not up to date
- In 12 hospitals HEI found that infection control teams did not communicate effectively with staff and senior management
- HEI found little evidence of effective systems to record and manage maintenance and repairs to hospital buildings and grounds.

Susan Brimelow, Chief Inspector of HEI, said, "Patients deserve the highest standards from the NHS, wherever they live in Scotland. It is vital that they have absolute confidence in the care they receive if they need hospital treatment. They

want to be assured that their local hospital is clean, hygienic and they are not at risk of getting an infection. Overall, we have found most hospitals are generally clean and improving. However, there are still important areas for further improvement. In particular, we expect to see rapid and sustained improvements in the coming year that focus on improved cleaning of hospital equipment and ensuring that up-to-date policies are available and being followed on wards. To support these aims we'll be moving towards more unannounced inspections in the year ahead."

You can read the whole report for yourself by accessing the NHS website [here](#).