## Template Provider Board Paper: Adoption of the Pledge Supporting Informed Choices for Ligature Reduction and Robustness Testing Safety Standard

### Purpose

To present to the [Name of Provider] Board the proposal for adopting the pledge supporting the Informed Choices initiative, which focuses on the ligature reduction and robustness testing safety standard for products in the mental health built environment.

### Background

Ligature risks in mental health facilities pose significant safety concerns. In response, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Nursing Directorate have issued guidance emphasising the need for robust ligature reduction measures, published November 2023, which suggest a process for interdepartmental collaboration when specifying refurbishment or new builds. In addition, Informed Choices is a pioneering initiative that supports a standardised approach to testing and certifying products used in mental health settings for their effectiveness in ligature risk reduction and overall robustness. This is an independent test that is delivered by BRE (Buildings Research Establishment) and has been developed in collaboration with members of the Design in Mental Health Network (DIMHN).

### Proposal

The Provider aims to adopt the Informed Choices pledge to enhance the safety of our mental health facilities. This involves committing to purchasing and installing products that meet the Informed Choices ligature reduction and robustness testing safety standard. The pledge will be in effect until a sufficient number of products have undergone the testing cycle to ensure meaningful choices for our procurement processes.

### Overview of the Testing Standard

The Informed Choices testing standard involves rigorous assessments of products to determine their effectiveness in mitigating ligature risks and ensuring durability under challenging conditions typical in mental health environments. The standard is beneficial as it:

* Provides an objective, evidence-based framework for evaluating product safety.
* Reduces the potential risk of harm by enabling clinical and estate teams to collaboratively specify tested and certified products in conjunction with wider environmental risk assessments
* Promotes robustness, consistency and reliability in our design decisions and procurement processes
* Enhances patient safety and trust in our facilities.

It is important to note that the cost of testing is borne wholly by the product manufacturers, and that it is in their commercial interest.

### The Informed Choices Pledge

The Informed Choices Pledge is a commitment for Providers, Contractors and Specifiers to sign. It is a simple statement of intent. This is the entirety of the pledge:

*We will ask suppliers to provide DIMHN/BRE Informed Choices product performance assessment*

*going forward. Initially this will be encouraged with preferential consideration given for products*

*backed by independent performance assessment.*

*No minimum performance will be required, but performance of different products will be compared.*

*We commit to trialling the new standard with the intent that this will become a mandatory requirement for supply to our organisation by 2028, to allow time for all suppliers to test their products.*

**Why adopt the pledge**

1. **Strengthening rigour of specification process with manufacturers:** Find out how current products perform, and strengthen rigour of process
2. **Accord with recently published guidance as to best practice**: While the Informed Choices testing standard is not currently mandated, it aligns with and is referred to as example of emerging best practice in the following documents:

* CQC and Nursing Directorate's guidance on ligature reduction (Nov 23)
* supplement to HBN 03-01 (Nov 23)
* Supplement to HBN 03-02 (Nov 23)

Whilst the Supplements to HBN 03-01 and 03-02 are for Secure Services, it is anticipated that as and when the base Guidance documents HBN 03-01 and 03-02 are updated in the future, they will also make reference to Informed Choices Testing.

1. **Future proof Procurement and Installation**: Gradually replace existing products with those certified under the Informed Choices standard, prioritizing high-risk areas.
2. **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Regularly review the effectiveness of installed products and adjust procurement strategies based on feedback and incident reports.
3. **Joining with a growing consensus of opinion**: See DIMHN website as to who else has signed the pledge

### Interim Measures

Until a sufficient number of products have been tested and certified, the Provider will:

* Continue to use current products while closely monitoring their performance and safety.
* Inform manufacturers on the supplier list and any manufacturers intending to supply of their support of the standard with the intent that it is mandated by 2028
* Keep clinical, estates teams and other stakeholders in procurement abreast of best practice, sharing with other Trusts and organisations

See the table below for suggested procedures until the pledge date for mandatory testing.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Process | Responsible | Notes |
| Specifying new build products | Request Informed Choices test standard results from manufacturers, with preference given to tested products | Estates |  |
| Specifying new build tiers | Zone building into risk tiers in accordance with CQC guidance, collaborate on mapping zones onto Informed Choices performance considering relational and procedural safety | Clinical, Estates |  |
| Reviewing current build | Request that current product manufacturers and preferred list of suppliers produce Informed Choices testing standard results before 2028 | Estates |  |
| Patient Safety Group | Regularly convene a multidisciplinary Safety Group consisting of Estates, H&S, Clinicians, AHP’s and EbE’s in the first instance, to review safety requirements, assess built environment and monitor incidents. Ensure that this group is linked to external bodies and networks to compare best practice. | Estates, Clinicians, AHP, H&S, EbE. |  |

### Conclusion

The adoption of the Informed Choices pledge is a proactive step towards ensuring the safety and well-being of patients in our mental health facilities. It aligns with regulatory guidance, promotes best practices, and demonstrates our commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for recovery.

### Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

1. Approve the adoption of the Informed Choices pledge.
2. Endorse the proposed implementation process.
3. Authorize the necessary budget allocation for training, procurement, and installation of certified products.
4. Mandate regular updates on the progress and effectiveness of the initiative.
5. Authorise the use of the Trust’s name in support of the Informed Choices pledge

### Appendices

* + **Informed Choices Testing Standard Overview -** [Informed Choices Initiative](https://bregroup.com/services/testing-inspection-certification/mental-health)
  + **CQC and Nursing Directorate Ligature Reduction Guidance -** [Nursing Directorate Safety Standards3](https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/mhforum-ligature-guidance)
  + **Implementation Process – see below.**

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