

# Environmental Audit Tool for Acute In-patient Settings

Edition 1.5 November 2005



National Institute for  
Mental Health in England

NIMHE West Midlands

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Step by Step guidance on how to set up and carry out the Audit Tool is included in the tool itself, but this page may be useful to read before you first set up the audit. For a printed copy of these guidance notes you will need to have Adobe Reader installed on your computer.

## Step One Understanding the Scale of Risks

To begin with we suggest it is helpful to look at the "Scale of Risks" to help understand what is actually being audited with this tool.

For the purposes of this audit, "risks" are given a score ranging from 1 (a rare and insignificant risk) to 25 (a catastrophic risk that is almost certainly likely) which is arrived at by rating both severity and likelihood and multiplying the two.

$$\text{"likelihood"} \times \text{"severity"} = \text{"score"}$$

Figure 1 Likelihood and Severity Table

			Severity				
			Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
			1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood	Almost certain	5	5	10	15	20	25
	Likely	4	4	8	12	16	20
	Possible	3	3	6	9	12	15
	Unlikely	2	2	4	6	8	10
	Rare	1	1	2	3	4	5

### Severity

Severity is described in this audit tool by the following terms:

- **"Catastrophic"** Multiply life threatening. Long term catastrophic harm to the environment. More than 50 people may be involved. Extended service closure. International publicity. Litigation costs exceeding £1 million.
- **"Major"** Life threatening or major permanent personal harm. Long terms severe harm to the environment. 16 to 50 people may be involved. Temporary service closure.

National publicity. Average length of stay increased by over 15 days. Litigation costs between £500k and £1 million

- **"Moderate"** Semi Permanent Harm, critical impact on care. Moderate temporary personal harm. May involve 3 to 15 people. Loss of service affecting more than one department. Regional publicity. Average length of stay increased by 8 to 15 days. Litigation costs between £50k and £500k.
- **"Minor"** Manageable, non-permanent harm. No harm or trivial harm to the environment. Involves 1 to 2 people. Minor impact on service. Local publicity. Average length of stay increased by 1 to 7 days. Litigation costs between £50 and £50k.
- **"Insignificant"** No obvious harm. No impact on service. Litigation costs less than £50.

## Likelihood

The severity of hazardous events in terms of their consequences is common to all areas, meaning that the effects of any event are not really variable between one area and another. However, the likelihood of a hazardous event happening will vary from one area to another; therefore this audit will be primarily based on estimating local likelihood using the following scores.

- **"Almost certain"** Will most certainly happen again, possibly frequently
- **"Likely"** Will probably happen again but not persistently.
- **"Possible"** May happen occasionally
- **"Unlikely"** Is not expected to happen but is possible
- **"Rare"** Is not believed to happen again

## Actions Following the Audit

The Scale of Risks in Figure 1 shows that a catastrophic event which is not believed to happen again is scored at 5, (requiring action within one month of the audit), whilst an event of minor severity that is almost certain to happen is scored at 10 (requiring immediate action and an entry on the local risk register). For the purposes of providing a viable audit tool a threshold has been set that any risk that scores 10 or above requires immediate action (red) as there is at least a possibility of a "threat to life or major personal harm", whilst any risk that scores less than 10 requires action within one month of the audit, thus ensuring that even a rare possibility of a "catastrophic" risk is being given a high (amber) priority. This enables assessed risks to be prioritised across four thresholds each requiring a different level of urgency of action:

**Figure 2 Table of Recommended Response Times**

<b>Very low risk</b>	<b>Green</b>	Action to be taken in relation to green risks within 6 months of assessment
<b>Low risk</b>	<b>Yellow</b>	Action to be taken in relation to yellow risks within 3 months of assessment
<b>Moderate risk</b>	<b>Amber</b>	Action to be taken in relation to amber risks within 1 month of assessment
<b>High risk</b>	<b>Red</b>	Action to be taken in relation to red risks immediately and enter on local risk register.

When you are using the Audit Tool you can go to all the sheets by clicking on the titles in the left hand column.

## Step Two Review the Audit Standards

If this is the first time you are using this audit then we recommend that you briefly review the Audit Standards that describe the kinds of hazards you may find in an In-patient setting. You may also wish to add further standards that are agreed as outcomes or learning points from

**Audit Standards**

**Table 1 Environment Standards**  
You can add further audit standards by entering them in the white cells in this table. The audit tool will automatically copy them to the appropriate audit sheets.

	Can the standard be fully achieved?	Area the Standards apply to		
		Open access areas, i.e. all communal areas that are normally unblocked	Patients personal areas (can be locked)	Staff access areas (areas that are normally locked, and where use is supervised)
<b>Theme - General (all rooms on the Ward)</b>		(General)		
e1 All rooms with identified hazards (including en suite bathrooms) are locked when not in use	Yes			
<b>Theme - Self Strangulation</b>				
e2 There are no suspended ceilings in this room	Dependant			
e3 All rails in this room are collapsible	Yes			
e4 Vision panels are appropriately sized for this room	Yes			
e5 There are no blind spots in this room	Dependant			
e6 All potential "self hanging areas" that are accessible from this room areas are "self locking"	Yes			
e7 All door locks for this room have emergency overrides	Yes			
e8 Doors open subwardly from this room.	Yes			
e9 There is resuscitation equipment available on the ward.	Yes			
e10 Coat hangers in this room are of the fixed 'hotel type'	Yes			
e11 All fixtures in this room have a low weight bearing potential.	Yes			
e12 There are piano hinges on wardrobe doors in this room.	Yes			
e13 There are piano hinges on cupboard doors in this room.	Yes			
e14 There are no ligature points higher than 85 cm above floor level in this room	Yes			
e15 All doors for this room have anti-ligature hinges.	Yes			
e16				
<b>Theme - Asphyxia</b>				
e17 There are no plastic pillow case covers in use in this room.	Yes			
e18 There are non-removable plastic mattress covers in this room.	Yes			

any inquiries, national or local. To help you enter or change information throughout the Tool, those cells that are shaded a pale yellow are where you can enter or change the

information.

For example, if you want to add a new Audit Standard then click onto a shaded cell on the "Audit Standards" sheet and enter a new audit standard. (There are two cells for new standards under each of the headings on the sheet). This new standard is automatically copied into every audit sheet for the rooms that you will audit.

Once you have read the audit standards, and added to them if you need to, you can go to the next step. you don't have to read the standards every time you use the tool, in future you can go directly to the Local Audit Details.

**Figure 3** Screen shot of the Audit Standards Sheet

### Step Three Setting up the Audit Tool to fit your In-patient Ward

Once you have read the Audit Standards, and made any changes you need to, you should then go to the sheet for "Local Audit Details".

On this page you can confirm your local thresholds for responding to levels of risk. As the default the thresholds set in this audit tool are:

- a) Scores from 1 to 3 are 'low risk' and if any actions are required they should be taken within 6 months of completing this audit.
- b) Scores from 4 to 10 are 'moderate' and if any actions are required they should be taken within 1 month of completing this audit.
- c) Scores from 11 to 25 are 'high risk' and if any actions are required they should be taken within 1 day of completing this audit.

Adjusting these thresholds will change whether the identified risk are estimated as **low**, **moderate** or **high**, but will not change the recommended response time for taking actions to address any of the risks audited. To adjust these thresholds please use the drop down menu.

Further down the same page you will see the drop down menus used to select which rooms are applicable or not applicable to the ward being audited. This is an important step to make sure that the results of your audit accurately reflect the ward being audited and that "false results" are not included in your wards audit report.

**Figure 4 Screen shot of the "Local Audit Details" sheet**

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**Environmental Audit Details**  
The audits has collated all of the audit standards under three headings that reflect the type of environments in typical Acute Care Settings, they are:

<b>Open Access areas</b>	These include sitting rooms, dining rooms and other communal rooms where access to the use of these rooms does not normally require special supervision.
<b>Patient Personal Areas</b>	These include Patients individual bedrooms, including en suite where appropriate. These rooms may be locked as required by staff as well as patients. There may be use of enhanced levels of engagement or observation of patients in their rooms as determined by the team in meeting the needs of the patients.
<b>Staff Access Areas</b>	These include clinics, kitchens, bathrooms, interview rooms etc. where their use is normally with some level of supervision or knowledge from a staff member and they are normally kept locked when not in use.

**Step 3.2 Details of the Open Access Areas**  
Please complete the details in this table for Open Access Areas on the unit / ward being audited.  
**Note:** you can go directly to the audit sheet for each of these rooms by clicking on appropriate the number to the left of this table

	Please indicate whether or not each room is applicable to this ward	Brief Description of the location of each room	Number of "red" risks	Number of "amber"	Number of "green"
1	Dining Room 1 Applicable		0		
2	Dining Room 2 Applicable		0		
3	Sitting Room 1 Applicable		0		
4	Sitting Room 2 Applicable		0		
5	Sitting Room 3 Not applicable				
6	Sitting Room 4 Not applicable				
7	Visiting Room 1 Applicable		0		
8	Visiting Room 2 Not applicable				

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It is a good idea to give a brief description of the location of each room by clicking on the appropriate cell under the heading "Brief Description of the location of each room" and entering details of exactly where each room is. This will help other people know exactly which rooms are which when they read the report, this is particularly important if any new staff need to be informed of your audit findings, or if the local Estates Department are asked to make any alterations to any of the rooms. The notes that are entered in each cell are automatically copied into the appropriate Audit Sheet.

#### Technical tips for saving your Audit

- When you have set the audit up you will need to save the file using the normal method of saving.
- It is recommended that you use a file name that is based on the name of the ward you are auditing and the date of your audit, for example: Environmental audit Larches. 11.04.05
- When you repeat the audit in future and want to save it again, just alter the date in the file name, for example:  
Environmental audit Larches. 08.10.05. Naming your files this way will keep the first audit you completed and will save the latest audit as a separate file so that you can compare the two.
- You can save copies of as many audits as you require as long as they all have different filenames.

#### Step Four Carry out the Audit

Now that you have entered the details in Step 3 and saved the file, the audit sheets have been set up for all of the rooms you selected as applicable to your ward. To carry out an audit on any of these rooms just click on the number to the left of the room name and that will take

you to the Audit Sheet for that room, (there is a separate Audit Sheet for each room, which includes the audit standards, questions and a summary table).

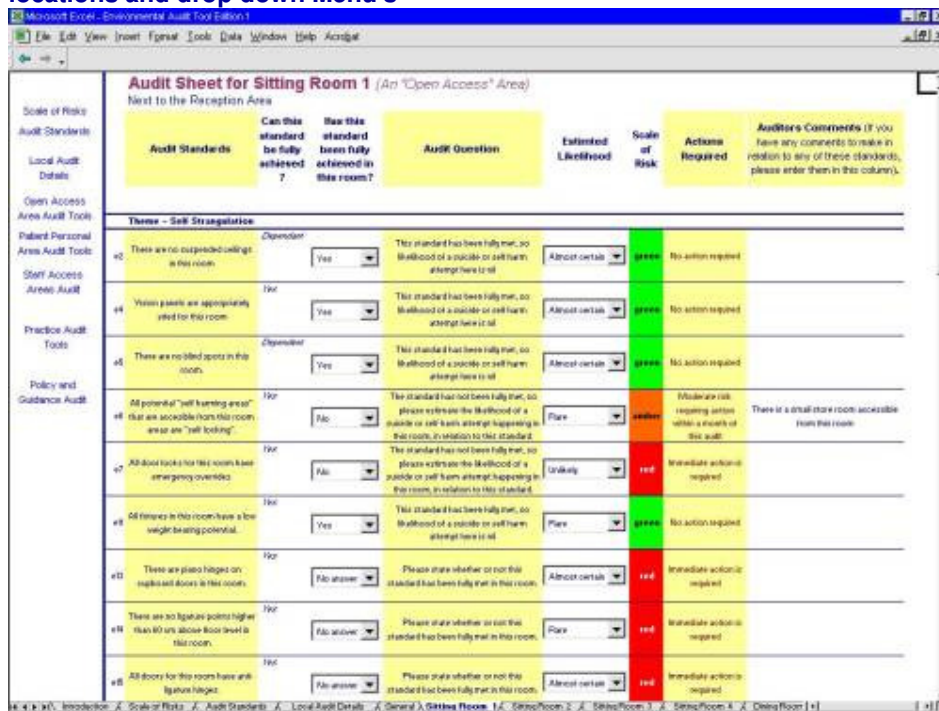
When you start to use an Audit Sheet you will see the title of the room, the name of the trust and ward and the room itself including the details of the location that you entered earlier.

The standards are presented in a column with a drop down menu for each standard that allows you to enter whether or not standard has been met in this room. The default answer on the menus when you first use them is "No answer", which means that that standard cannot be said to have been met in that room therefore a "red" score is given.

For each standard that you answer has been fully met, the audit tool automatically score a **green**.

For each standard that has not been answered the audit tool automatically scores a **red**. For each standard where you answer that the standard has not been met, then you are prompted to estimate the likelihood of a suicide or self harm attempt happening in this room in relation to its standard. If you estimate it as "rare" (that is "not believed to happen again") then that tool gives a score of **amber**. If you estimate the likelihood as being "unlikely, possible, likely" or "almost certain" then the tool gives a score of **red** given the potential severity of even an unlikely attempt as described in the Scale of Risks above.

**Figure 5** Screen shot of the top of the Audit Sheet showing the titles, details of locations and drop down Menu's



As you continue through the audit sheet providing answers for all the standards, the tool automatically summarises the total of scores in the table at the bottom. In the table there is also a cell to enter the name of the person auditing the room and a cell to enter a date. When you enter the date that the audit was completed the table will tell you when the actions should be carried out for addressing the red amber and green standards for that room.

**Figure 6** Screen shot of the bottom of the Audit Sheet showing the Summary Table of Score and dates for Action

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#68	No answer	Please state whether or not the standard has been fully met in this room.	Almost certain	Immediate action is required
<b>Theme - Traffic control on</b>				
#71	No answer	Please state whether or not the standard has been fully met in this room.	Almost certain	Immediate action is required
#72	No answer	Please state whether or not the standard has been fully met in this room.	None	Immediate action is required
<b>Audit Details</b>				
Name of Auditor			Nick Adams	
Date of Audit (You can enter today's date by pressing the "Control" key and the "*" keys at the same time on your keyboard).			12-Apr-05	
<b>Summary of Audit for Sitting Room 1</b>				
Number of criteria that are <b>Green</b> in this room that need <b>no action</b>			16	
Number of criteria that are <b>Amber</b> in this room that need <b>action within one</b>			1	10-May-05
Number of criteria that are <b>Red</b> in this room that need <b>immediate action</b>			7	13-Apr-05
<b>Comments</b>				
The risks identified in this room have been recorded in the Local Risk Register and request for immediate environmental changes have been made. All staff who work on or visit the ward have been informed and the wards operational Policy and practice guidance policies will be reviewed in the light of this audit. This audit on this room will be repeated in two weeks time. A copy will be forwarded to the Clinical Governance Committee and Senior Managers.				
<b>Note!</b> When you save out the audit you will need to save the file. It is recommended that you use a file name that is based on the name of the ward you are auditing.				
 <b>National Institute for Mental Health in England</b> West Midlands Mental Health Development Centre				

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As each room on the ward is audited the score for each room is then summarised back onto the "Local Audit Details" sheet, thus giving you a ward Environmental Audit Report.

Every page of the tool can be printed to provide a paper copy of the tool and its summary reports.