

NPSA definitions for grading patient safety incidents

Grade of patient safety incident	Definition
No harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident prevented – any patient safety incident that had the potential to cause harm but was prevented, and no harm was caused to patients receiving NHS-funded care. • Incident not prevented – any patient safety incident that occurred but no harm was caused to patients receiving NHS-funded care.
Low harm	<p>Any patient safety incident that required extra observation or minor treatment* and caused minimal harm to one or more patients receiving NHS-funded care.</p> <p>*Minor treatment is defined as first aid, additional therapy, or additional medication. It does not include any extra stay in hospital or any extra time as an outpatient, or continued treatment over and above the treatment already planned; nor does it include a return to surgery or readmission.</p>
Moderate harm	<p>Any patient safety incident that resulted in a moderate increase in treatment* and that caused significant but not permanent harm to one or more patients receiving NHS-funded care.</p> <p>*Moderate increase in treatment is defined as a return to surgery, an unplanned readmission, a prolonged episode of care, extra time in hospital or as an outpatient, cancelling of treatment, or transfer to another area such as intensive care as a result of the incident.</p>
Severe harm	<p>Any patient safety incident that appears to have resulted in permanent harm* to one or more patients receiving NHS-funded care.</p> <p>*Permanent harm directly related to the incident and not related to the natural course of the patient's illness or underlying condition is defined as permanent lessening of bodily functions, sensory, motor, physiologic or intellectual, including removal of the wrong limb or organ or brain damage.</p>
Death	<p>Any patient safety incident that directly resulted in the death* of one or more patients receiving NHS-funded care.</p> <p>*The death must be related to the incident rather than to the natural course of the patient's illness or underlying condition.</p>