

14 December 2016

NHS Patient Survey Programme: 2017 Community Mental Health Survey

Dear **[CEO NAME]**

I am writing to inform you of the plans for the 2017 Community Mental Health Survey, and to take this opportunity to draw your attention to important issues around your participation.

We are expecting that your trust is eligible to participate in the survey again having previously undertaken the survey in 2016. However, if you have reason to believe that your eligibility may be affected by service changes or mergers, please inform us by emailing: patient.survey@cqc.org.uk.

We have sent a detailed letter to all trust 'survey leads' from the 2016 survey (there will be someone within your trust who has agreed to deliver the survey requirements). This sets out the key requirements for the survey, the importance of following the survey instruction manual and the implications of deviating from this. We have requested that survey leads share the information in this letter with the trust Caldicott Guardian, who will be required to sign off the sample for the survey in adherence to approvals received under [Section 251](#) of the NHS Act.

Section 251 Approval

The support under Section 251 provides a legal basis for the transfer of people's mailing information to a third party for the purposes of carrying out the **standardised survey only**, as specified in the survey instruction manual. Having this approval from the HRA means that you do not need to seek prior consent from people to include them in the survey.

We are obliged to report any breaches of this approval to the Confidentiality Advisory Group at the HRA, and to inform CQC inspectors for them to determine whether it constitutes a breach of regulation 20 (Records). Inspectors would then make a decision as to whether enforcement activity is required. Depending on the severity, breaches may also affect a trust's Information Governance Approval Toolkit (IGT) score. For these reasons relevant staff should be aware of the importance of such safeguards, and their responsibilities in ensuring this, not only for the benefit of each trust, but also to protect the likelihood of Section 251 support being given for future surveys.

Errors made when drawing samples

It is extremely important that the sampling guidance issued for the survey is adhered to. If data is later excluded because errors are detected in the way people have been selected for inclusion, this will impact on the assurances CQC, NHS England and the Department of

Health can have about the experiences of people who use your services. For this reason, it is important that the person drawing the sample is given appropriate support and time to undertake this task.

We have recently encountered incidences of historical errors having been made in previous surveys and unfortunately we have to respond to these errors by removing trust results. It would be extremely helpful if all trust staff involved in drawing samples are made aware of the importance of checking previously written codes and other historical arrangements, to minimise the risk of future cases being discovered.

We welcome any questions you might have about the survey and look forward to delivery of a successful 2017 survey.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "TWebster".

Tamatha Webster
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Care Quality Commission
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