

Tell me more.....

.....about the NHS national patient survey programme

What is the NHS national patient survey programme?

The NHS national patient survey programme has been established as a result of the Government's commitment to ensuring that patients and the public have a real say in how NHS services are planned and developed. Getting feedback from patients and listening to their views and priorities is vital for improving services.

All NHS trusts in England are legally required to carry out local surveys asking patients their views on their recent health care experiences. One main purpose of these surveys is to provide organisations with detailed patient feedback on standards of service and care in order to help set priorities for delivering a better service for patients.

Why do we need a national programme?

By asking organisations to carry out patient surveys in a consistent and systematic way, it is possible to build up a detailed picture across the country of patients' experiences. This approach not only allows organisations to compare their performance with others but, by repeating the same type of survey on a regular basis, progress and improvements over time can be monitored.

As well as providing important information for each trust, the survey results are used by the Care Quality Commission to measure and monitor performance at both a local and national level.

About the Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission is the health watchdog. It exists to promote improvements in the quality of health and social care in England. It is legally obliged to assess the performance of healthcare organisations in the NHS and award annual ratings of performance as well as co-ordinate inspections and reviews of healthcare organisations carried out by others.

What type of questions do the surveys ask?

Patients are asked specific questions about what happened to them during their recent health care experience. These 'report' style questions provide useful information because they highlight where the problems are and where improvements are needed. Patients often rate their overall health care experience quite positively, but asking specific questions offers a much more detailed and factual account of what actually happened to them.

Surveys are carried out for many types of patient groups, such as inpatients, outpatients, cancer care, stroke, maternity, emergency care and mental health. As well as the quality of patients' recent health care experience, the surveys also include some questions regarding age, gender and ethnic group to help identify any inequalities of treatment across the country.

Every questionnaire also has a 'free text' section which provides patients with an opportunity to comment on any aspects of their care if they choose to do so.

How long has this programme been running?

The first surveys were carried out in 2002. This means that a lot of information now exists that has been collected directly from patients about how NHS trusts perform.

Am I likely to receive a questionnaire?

If you have used NHS services, there is a chance you may be selected to receive a questionnaire to fill out. All questionnaires are sent out by post and each one that is returned is treated as confidential. If we do not receive a reply from you within a certain period, you may receive a reminder about the survey.

Where can I find out more?

More information on the patient survey programme and how it was developed can be found by visiting www.nhssurveys.org

How can I find out about results of surveys in my local area?

The results of surveys carried out by your local trust can be found by visiting the Care Quality Commission's website at www.cqc.org.uk. If you go to the 'Find care services' section and then select 'Healthcare' followed by 'Overall performance', you will be able to select your chosen trust or geographical location. From there you can obtain an overview of how well the trust is rated overall, as well as the survey results themselves in the 'how patients rate this trust' section.