

Creating Patient Information Leaflets Toolkit



Introduction

Information is an important part of the patient journey and central to the overall quality of each patient's experience of the NHS.

Worcester Acute Hospitals NHS Trust is committed to providing good quality information that is clear, concise, relevant, accurate and in everyday language.

We have therefore developed this toolkit, which includes guidance on how to produce written information and a series of templates.

We have designed this toolkit for anyone who produces written information for NHS patients, their carers and the public.

This toolkit deals with written information about conditions, treatments, procedures, examinations, surgery and services. This can be in the form of leaflets, booklets, single sheets or posters.

Please refer to the Trust's Policy for the development, approval and management of key documents (WAHT-CG-827) for more in depth information on the approval process for leaflets.

Good patient information is important as it can:

- Give patients confidence so their overall experience as a patient is improved
- Remind patients what their doctor or nurse told them if, due to stress or unfamiliar language, they forget what they were told
- Allow people to make informed decisions – it gives people time to go away, read the information and think about the issues involved
- Help to make sure patients arrive on time and are properly prepared for procedures or operations
- Involve patients and their carers in their treatment and condition

Patient information leaflets should be used to reinforce verbal communication and discussion.

Designing your patient information leaflet

Before you start a project, check what other relevant material exists. Rather than developing and printing your own material it may be possible to use existing publications, such as those produced by charities or other appropriate organisations.

In addition, contact the Key Documents Team as they hold a central database of leaflets available in the trust.

There is a standard template (Appendix 1) that must be used when developing patient information leaflets and this can be found either on the website or via the key documents team. This ensures all documents share the same branding and contain the essential information relevant to all leaflets.

When writing patient information, you should consider the following points:

- What is the leaflet about and who is it for?
- Give risks and benefits where appropriate
- Use everyday language-avoid acronyms and medical terminology
- Use patient-friendly text-use personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'you'. Do not use frightening language, for example 'electrodes will be put on your chest'. If it is difficult to avoid using some medical terminology, such as 'nuclear medicine', give an explanation
- Be relevant to individual patients
- Information should be in context with other information given to patients, for example, letters, leaflets and appointments
- Reinforce the information that patients have been told at the clinic
- Avoid instructions. For example, do not just say 'do not eat anything for six hours before an operation' – explain why
- Be helpful. Help people make decisions by giving them facts about the risks, side effects and benefits
- Do not confuse people by covering several treatments and conditions in the same leaflet
- Tell people what other information, resources and support are available
- Be up to date. Give the most recent practice and latest phone numbers
- Let people know if the information is available in other formats, for example, on audiotape

Operations, Treatments and Investigations

- What preparation do they need or not need?
- Do they need a general anaesthetic, sedation or local anaesthetic?
- What happens when they arrive at the hospital or clinic and who will they meet?
- Will they be asked to sign a consent form or is verbal consent needed?
- What does the procedure involve? How long does it last? What does it feel like?
- What happens after the procedure – pain control, nursing checks, stitches
- How long will they stay in hospital?
- Do they need someone with them or any special equipment when they go home?
- What care do they need at home?
- What follow-up care is needed? Do they need to visit their doctor?
- What can go wrong, what signs to look out for and what to do if something goes wrong
- When can they start their normal activities again, for example, driving, sport, sex or work?
- Who can they contact if they have any more questions?
- Where they can find more information, for example, support groups and websites

Conditions and treatments

- What condition is being described?
- What causes it? Or, if the cause is not known, say so
- Does anything increase the risk, for example, age, sex, ethnic origin or a family history of the condition?
- What are the signs and symptoms?
- Are there any tests or examinations needed to confirm the diagnosis?
- What treatments are available? Give brief descriptions
- What are the side effects and the risks of getting treatment or not getting treatment?
- What are the next steps?
- What can patients do for themselves?

- Are there any other implications, for example, infecting other people?
- Who can they contact if they have any more questions?
- Say where the patient can find more information, for example, support groups and websites

Services for example rehabilitations classes or clinics

- Describe the service
- Start at the beginning where the patient would start, for example, a leaflets about transport might start with how to book it within a phone number
- Who is eligible?
- Details of how to access the service
- Is equipment or special clothing needed?
- Where to go for it
- How to find it
- Are maps needed?
- When is a service available?
- Is there a waiting time?
- How often do they need to attend?
- Do they need to bring any documents?
- Who to contact if they cannot attend
- What is or not available, for example, transport
- Are interpreters needed?
- Are any costs involved?

Medication

- Explain that any information that is given in a leaflet should be read with any patient information leaflet provided by the manufacturer
- What medication are you describing and what is it for?
- How is it given?
- How often should it be given?
- What should be avoided or added when taking a particular medication, for example, certain foods
- What are the side effects? Make sure that you mention that everyone is different so may react differently to medication
- What to do if medication is not given properly
- Remind patients to tell the clinician who prescribes the medication about any other medication they are taking
- Advice on storing medication out of the reach and sight of children, in the fridge and out of the sunlight
- Advice on where to get repeat prescriptions
- A contact number (of the pharmacy, specialist nurse, doctor or NHS direct) for more information and to check on any concerns about side effects

To make text more inviting to read, use the following:

- Short sentences, in general no more than 15 to 20 words long
- Lower case letters, where possible, as they are easier to read. Exceptions to this are proper names and the first letter in a sentence
- Present and active tenses, where possible, for example, 'your appointment is on...' not 'your appointment has been made for....'

- A question and answer format is helpful to divide up text
- Bulleted or numbered points to divide up complicated information
- Small blocks of text. Do not use long paragraphs – divide them up using headings and new paragraphs
- Numbers from one to nine are easier to read if they are written in words, and numbers from 10 can be represented as numbers
- Diagrams and pictures can be very effective. Where appropriate use them to illustrate the text, remember to label them and do not print over them. You should not use clip art as it does not add to the reputation of a professional organisation.

Publishing and printing of leaflets

Once a leaflet has been approved, this will need to be sent to the Key Documents Team who publish an A4 version on the internet.

Different sizes will be made available if required for printing requirements.

Once a leaflet has been approved and published on line by the key documents team, this can also be sent to Xerox for printing.

Information in this toolkit is taken either in full or part from the NHS Toolkit for producing patient information version 2.0

How to Develop a Clinical Patient Information Leaflet

Consider putting together a time limited working group, that includes patient representatives, to discuss and agree the information that needs to be included

Use the trust approved template to develop your leaflet. This can be obtained from the website or by contacting the Key Documents Team wah-tr.SYST-KeyDocs@nhs.net

If patients were not included at the start of the process, they should be included here

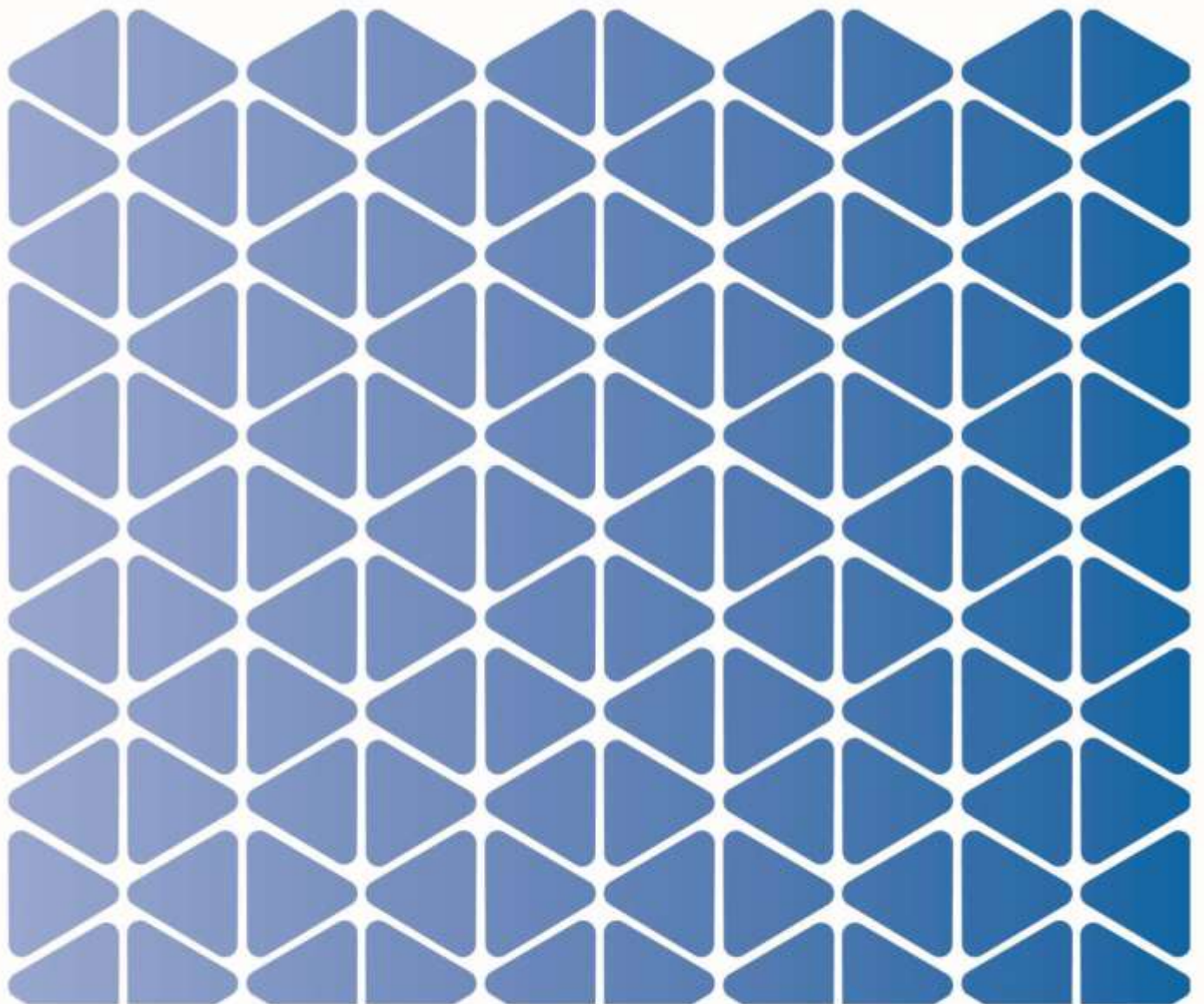
Once draft leaflet is prepared, send this out for consultation. This should be sent to all relevant staff for comments.

Once the consultation period has ended and all comments have been collated and considered, this leaflet will then need to be approved, at the relevant specialty/department governance group

The final approved leaflet then needs to be sent to the Key Documents team, along with evidence of approval i.e. meeting minutes, who will then assign a reference number and publish on the internet site.

Leaflets will need to be reviewed at least every 2 years, in line with the trust's key document policy.

PATIENT INFORMATION





Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PET@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.