

# **NHS Patient Surveys**

# **Programme Plan**

January 2016

## Background

The NHS Patient Survey programme was established to support patients and the public to have a real say about the quality of NHS services and how they are developed. 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.

The NHS Patient Survey Programme is co-ordinated by the Patient Surveys Team, one of a number of teams within the Intelligence Division of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). CQC is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. Its purpose is to make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high quality care and to encourage care services to improve. To deliver this CQC monitor, inspect and regulate services to make sure they meet the required standards of quality and safety. Findings are published, including performance ratings, to help people make care choices.

## Program of activities

The NHS Patient Survey programme currently includes annual surveys of adult inpatients and community mental health service users from all NHS trusts across England. In 2014 CQC undertook a Children and Young People's Inpatient and Day Case survey which it also expects, subject to external consultation, to undertake again and on a more frequent basis. CQC also currently undertakes an additional acute survey each year from a rotating cycle of surveys, covering: maternity services, outpatients, and accident and emergency patients (See Table 1.). This cycle may change beyond 2016/17, based on the results of a wide scale consultation with statistics users and those who wish to share their views on the programme however.

Typically, the surveys are sent to a sample of 850 patients<sup>1</sup>, who meet specific eligibility criteria, per provider. The sample is drawn from people who have experienced care in a specified month, or months and, on average, between 30% and 50% of eligible patients respond.

The results of the most recent surveys, including national and benchmark reports are published on CQC's own [website](#), while the guidance and tools used to deliver the survey are published on a separate [NHS Surveys](#) website. NHS Surveys also houses results for older surveys. '[Finding your survey results](#)' is a guide to navigating the two sites to find the results you need.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure can range from 300 to 1,250 depending on the survey.

## Work plan and allocation of resources

The Patient Survey team at CQC provides the leadership and direction for the development and delivery of the NHS Patient Survey programme. We work closely with the 'Survey Co-ordination Centre', based at Picker Institute Europe, who deliver the programme, design and develop surveys and undertake analysis of the results.

To date, resources within both CQC and Picker Institute Europe have been allocated based on the work program of surveys that is outlined below. We publish this programme on the [CQC website](#) and .GOV.UK and would use these mechanisms to alert the public and providers of care to any changes to our work plan and resource allocation. This is always in addition to the targeted communications sent directly to NHS trusts to inform them of actions required to deliver surveys.

**Table 1. Survey timetable 2015/16 – 2016/17**

Lead sector	Survey	Fieldwork timing	Expected month of publication	Timing	Next survey
Acute Trusts	Inpatients	September to January	May	Annual	2015 survey publishes spring 2016. 2016 survey - fieldwork summer 2016
Acute Trusts	Children and young people	Subject to consultation	Subject to consultation	Subject to consultation	Subject to consultation
Mental Health Trusts	Community mental health	February to June	September	Annual	2016 survey - fieldwork spring 2016.
Acute Trusts	Accident and Emergency	Subject to consultation	Subject to consultation	3 year cycle	Subject to consultation
Acute Trusts	Maternity	April to August	December	3 year cycle	2015 due to publish December 2015. Next survey subject to consultation.
Acute trusts	Outpatient	Subject to consultation	Subject to consultation	3 year cycle	Subject to consultation

A detailed timetable for the current survey year is available at [www.cqc.org.uk/surveys](http://www.cqc.org.uk/surveys)

The current cycle of surveys was determined based on the needs of key stakeholders such as NHS England and CQC, as well as based on considerations around burden to NHS trusts and the value data would provide for local improvement purposes. The use made of survey data by these stakeholders is summarised [below](#) and reflects the need for annual surveys to feed into performance assessment and quality improvement processes. NHS providers are consulted prior to developing new surveys to ensure the data will provide value to them, for example, consultation was held with all ambulance trusts prior to the development of the 2013/14 ambulance survey.

## Future survey planning – consultation

In line with the new [Engagement Strategy](#) for the programme, we have committed to inviting input from a much wider group of stakeholders to help inform the frequency of surveys and priorities for development for the programme. We do this to help increase the public value of the surveys. The timetable in Table 1 will be revised on the basis of our first, large scale external consultation being held April 2016, and will represent the first opportunity for a greater number of users of the statistics to help shape the programme of surveys.

Options for developing the survey programme that need to be prioritised might include the following:

1. Should we continue to deliver the existing survey programme with the established frequency of surveys?

This would include asking people, for example, to share their views on whether we should:

- continue to deliver adult inpatients surveys and surveys of community mental health service users annually
  - increase the frequency of surveys undertaken every three years to once every two years (for example should we run maternity and accident and emergency surveys more frequently)
2. Should we develop further surveys to cover areas that are not included in the existing programme?
    - This could include asking if we should add surveys where information about people's experiences of care does not exist, for example, within community health services or integrated care.
  3. Should we develop the survey programme to maximise the usefulness of the data collected from surveys to support improvement?

- This would include, for example, recommendations to improve the reporting and websites that the survey is hosted on to ensure that data is more accessible and can be used to drive improvement.

Developments are contingent on the needs and views of wider stakeholders who share views during consultation, but in determining which can be taken forward, will be constrained by available budgets for both the regulator and the NHS Patient Survey Programme. The consultation will commence April 2015/16 with decisions made about whether proposals are to be accepted, and if so, which. Results will be published on [www.cqc.org.uk/surveys](http://www.cqc.org.uk/surveys) with the 2016/17 and 2017/18 programme confirmed post consultation.

Individuals who wish to be more involved in the work of the programme or in developing statistics, will also be able to [register](#) for frequent updates on developments and consultation opportunities.

As standard, CQC undertakes reviews of the content of each survey prior to it being undertaken in order to ensure that the questions and their coverage remain up to date. Typically, this results in a series of small changes relating to individual questions, though with an emphasis on comparability and consistency across time. Where there have been substantial shifts in the policy covering an area, this review may lead to more significant changes to a questionnaire and statistics users will be consulted to contribute to decisions around these substantive changes that would affect statistics.

## Feedback

If you wish to register for regular updates, join in consultation opportunities or get in touch, please contact: [patient.survey@cqc.org.uk](mailto:patient.survey@cqc.org.uk)