NHS
Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Information

How to produce patient information

Introduction

The information in this leaflet gives you helpful guidance to make sure that any patient information you are working on will be in keeping with Plain English standards and those of the Trust.

What is classed as 'patient information'?

Patient information is any leaflet, flyer, brochure or booklet, which provides information for patients, their families or carers and members of the public. The information could be about:

- Operations, treatments and tests
- Certain health conditions and illnesses
- Service, such as groups and classes
- Medicate for patients
- Information about the hospital and parking

Getting started

Before you spend any time on an item of patient information, please make sure that the information is not already available, either in-house or from other organisations. You also need to make sure that:

- Multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) have been asked for their input, where appropriate
- The content is evidence-based, which means it reflects national and local policy, as well as Trust practice
- The information is in keeping with the most up-to-date clinical, medical or social research
- The information you are providing is a true reflection of patients and carers' experience
- If the information is not just about one service, ward, or department, you will need to speak to experts from different areas, for their comments. An example would be if you were working on a general information leaflet

Reference No.

GHPI1024_05_15

Department

Patient Information

Review due

May 2021

Patient Information

Authors must complete a 'Self-auditing checklist' when thinking about creating a new item of patient information, or reviewing one that is existing.

To request a copy of this form, please email: ghn-tr.patient.information@nhs.net.

Preparing the content

Your content should be based on the best and most reliable knowledge.

There are 3 types of knowledge:

- From research, sometimes called evidence
- Information collected from audits, sometimes called statistics
- The experiences of patients, their carers, other service users and staff

There are often different views in collected evidence on any subject, so you need to be careful not to promote a single view as this would be a biased opinion.

You must get your information from a reputable source. The Trust's Library team will help you with searches if you need more evidence or information.

Guidance on language style

It is important that you use Plain English, as the information needs to be readable to a broad range of people with different abilities and reading ages. Below are some basic tips, but for further Plain English guidance please visit the website: www.plainenglish.co.uk

- Plain English does not mean using overly simple or patronising language, just everyday wording, which is clear and easy to read
- Avoid using acronyms, but if they are needed, put the words in full when you first use them, followed by the acronym in brackets
- Avoid using jargon, this just confuses and alienates people
- Keep to small paragraphs of understandable text

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- Use short sentences, usually no more than 15 to 20 words
- Be careful not to use language that could be read as discriminatory or stereotyping
- Avoid using all upper case letters, italics and underlining, use bold for emphasis
- Use active rather than passive sentences, addressing the reader personally using the words 'you', 'we' and 'your child', for example
- Use the registered trade mark logo (®) for drug names where appropriate
- Keep the main text to Arial, font size 14pt. All numbers should be stated as a digit, not spelt out (including numbers 1 to 10)
- Credit should be given to departments, teams, specialties, patients and other users, where relevant, but not named individuals. This information should be stated on the back page. The only department that uses acknowledgment is PMF, but apart from them we do not include acknowledgments
- Authors are accountable for the accuracy of the information they are providing
- If you use quotations, you must not take them out of context – use them in the sense they were intended. All quotations must be clearly referenced

The format of our patient information

Here is some helpful guidance to help you meet the Trust's patient information quality standards:

Title

The title should be clear and concise; you can always expand in the introduction if necessary.

Introduction
The introduction should explain the purpose of the leaflet and who it is aimed at.

The main body of the text

The leaflet should tell the reader what they can expect, perhaps by answering most commonly asked questions.

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It should also give information about:

- Possible treatment or care outcomes and should be stated in a clear and readable way
- The risks and benefits of the procedure/subject should be clearly described in a neutral, unbiased way
- Where there is choice, alternative treatment or care should be clearly stated, including any complementary therapies but only if they are offered by the Trust
- Give a realistic timeframe of the usual rate of recovery and when the patient can expect to get back to their normal activities
- Explain the problems that could happen after discharge from hospital, giving the reader telephone numbers to call if there are any questions or concerns

Contact information

Contact details are included in most of our leaflets, unless the author has a valid reason not to include them. These should always include the time frame for calls such as Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm.

Further information

Where appropriate, it is helpful to signpost patients to other items of patient information, including the full title and reference number. Rather than duplicating information about general anaesthetic or parking, for example, it would be much more efficient to direct patients to existing leaflets, which are written solely about these subjects. It is also helpful to list further information sources where relevant, such as trusted websites and charitable organisations.

Good practice guidance

Medical terminology

Due to the nature of our business, it is almost impossible to avoid using medical terminology all of the time. If you do have to use it, please make sure a Plain English explanation accompanies each medical term.

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You may choose to put the Plain English version in brackets after the medical term, or vice versa, but this should be consistent throughout your document.

Patients' responsibilities

You need to give clear guidance to the patient or carer explaining their responsibilities when preparing for treatment, such as fasting before an operation for example. You should also provide practical guidance about what the patient should expect, or do, at different stages of their treatment.

The patient information process

There are hundreds of items of patient information in circulation in the Trust and to manage them effectively we have a robust process:

- When a draft item of patient information has been created, you should complete a 'Self-auditing Checklist' and send this and the draft to the patient information office (ghn-tr.patient.information@nhs.net)
- The author needs to be certain that the proposed information is not duplicating existing trust patient information
- All new items of patient information are reviewed by a small number of staff and Foundation Trust members who volunteer their services as Patient Information reviewers. The reviewers are looking at the item's readability and whether it is in keeping with the Trust's patient information policy
- Existing items coming up to their 3 year review that need only minor changes are reviewed by the team, while those requiring major changes are reviewed by Patient Information reviewers
- Feedback will be put into a clear format and sent to you for consideration. You will need to review the content and accept or reject the changes and respond to any comments/queries made. When the content has been finalised, your item will be formatted into a Word document in line with the Trusts' patient information template
- The final PDF version will be sent to you for approval and when we have this, your item will be made available online for ordering and from the print company contracted to the Trust.

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- All items need to be reviewed within 3 years, before the review due date expires or sooner if there are any information changes

What you need to do when your item is ready

- The most important action you can take is to remove all out-of-date versions of your item from circulation, particularly in your ward or department. This includes any old stock, even if there is a large amount (please recycle)
- Make sure that all staff who may be giving out the leaflet are fully aware of the new item and its content
- No items of Patient Information should be photocopied, as the quality can be poor, resulting in important information being difficult to read
- All items of patient information will be uploaded onto the Trust website in A4 format, for ease of printing a copy when needed. To access this and to view the Patient Information leaflets, type the following text into your web browser: www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

There are rare occasions when due to the nature of the content, some items are not made widely available. Please let the Patient Information Office know if you do not wish your patient information item to be accessible via the website.
Please note that it is your responsibility to let the Patient Information office know when the leaflet is no longer being used and needs to be removed from website and order catalogue at the print company.

Contact information

Please email your enquiries in first instance to:
Email: ghn-tr.patient.information@nhs.net

You can get advice on how to get started from the:

NHS
Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Information

Patient Information Office
Flat 46, Robinswood House
Gloucestershire Royal Hospital
Great Western Road
Gloucester
GL1 3NN
Tel: 0300 422 5732
Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

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