



Patient Information Policy

Printed copies must not be considered the definitive version

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Working together to deliver better health, better healthcare”

Contributors:

Key individuals involved in developing the document

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Contents:	Page No.
1. Purpose and Scope	4
1.1 Principles	4
2. Policy Aims	4
2.1 Who is this policy for?	4
2.2 What information does this policy cover?	4
2.3 Why is good patient information important?	5
2.4 Which type of information?	5
3. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements	5
3.1 Our purpose, principles and aims	5 - 6
3.2 Patient information principles	6
3.3 General guidance on writing information for patients	6
3.4 What needs to be included	6 - 7
3.5 Checklist	7 - 10
3.6 Assurance	10
4. Monitoring	11
5. Equality and Diversity	11
6. References and Contact Details for further information	12
7. Document Control Sheet	13
Appendix 1 – Writing information for specific situations	14 – 17
Appendix 2 – Patient information submission form	18

* In the absence of the Patient Information Co-ordinator or if they are not available please contact the Patient Services Manager.

1. Purpose and Scope

Information is an important element of the patient pathway and central to the overall quality of each patient's experience of the NHS in Scotland. Improving information for patients was a commitment in *Delivering for Health*. Any information produced by NHS Dumfries and Galloway must meet the requirements of *The Equality Act (2010)*.

1.1 Principles

- This policy should ensure all patient information produced by staff is of a consistent high standard and easily understood by patients.
- The health board's identity and how it is presented is important. This affects how people think and feel about our organisation and about the NHS in Scotland. Across all media and materials our communications need to be consistent with our core values. Quality information is critical to a positive patient experience. Through high quality information resources patients can be reassured that services are being delivered in line with our values and the NHS Scotland Quality Strategy.
- The health board needs reassurance that patient information has been produced via an approved process and there is an easily accessed record of what information is available to patients.

2. Aim

This policy will:

- Ensure an acceptable standard of all written information for patients, their carers and people who access our services. It will make sure that the material we produce is clear, concise, relevant, accurate and in everyday language, and meets NHS Scotland standards.
- Raise the confidence of patients, their carers and people who use NHS Dumfries and Galloway services as good information allows patients to make well informed choices about their care.
- Make it easier for staff to produce information that takes account of the NHS Scotland guidelines and principles of best practice.
- Make sure information for patients supports the organisation's principles and aims.

2.1 Who is this policy for?

This policy is for every member of staff who wishes to produce written information for colleagues, patients, their carers and the public.

2.2 What information does this policy cover?

This policy deals with written information about conditions, treatments, procedures, examinations, surgery, services and developments. This can be in the form of leaflets, booklets, single sheets or posters. The policy contains practical steps on writing information for different situations - not 'what to write'.

2.3 Why is good patient information important?

Good patient information should:

- Give patients confidence so their overall experience as a patient is improved;
- Remind patients what their doctor, nurse or other member of clinical staff told them if, due to stress or unfamiliar language, they have forgotten what they were told;
- Allow people to make informed decisions - giving 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; and
- Involve patients and their carers in their treatment and condition.

2.4 Which type of information?

Written information is not always the best form of communication for some people.

Not everyone can see, read or understand written information. See Appendix 1 for suggestions on other forms of communication for different patient groups.

Before you start producing information, check what other relevant material already exists.

Rather than developing your own material it may be possible to use existing publications, such as those produced by charities or other appropriate organisations.

It is always worthwhile checking through your networks and with colleagues in other boards if they have a suitable leaflet that could be used.

NOTE: If a suitable alternative exists that has either been nationally or locally ratified you may not be able to simply decide to produce your own leaflet. Written information for patients needs to bring quality and equality to our services.

3. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

3.1 Our purpose, principles and aims

Our Purpose:

- To deliver excellent care that is safe, effective, efficient and reliable.
- To reduce health inequalities across Dumfries and Galloway.

Our principles are aligned to:

- Best Value
- Involving People Improving Quality

- Partnership Working

Our aims are to achieve:

- Improved outcomes for patients.
- Improved working environment for staff leading to improved job satisfaction.
- Efficiencies to support continuous quality improvement and sustainability.

And specifically in relation to information:

NHS Dumfries and Galloway endeavours to provide high quality information for the benefit of the whole community.

3.2 Patient information principles

Communication with patients, carers and the public must be:

- **clear** – in straightforward language that avoids jargon so the information can be easily understood
- **cost-effective** – full consideration must be given to value for money and a decision whether it is more appropriate to use commercial printing or departmental printers will be advised by the Patient Information Co-ordinator*
- **straightforward** - using as few words as possible and keeping to the necessary information
- **modern** - using everyday language and current images
- **accessible** - available to as many people as possible, in the right format
- **up to date** - and given to the patient at the appropriate time
- **honest and accurate** - information should be based on current evidence; and
- **respectful** – information should be sensitive to cultural needs and all people, avoiding stereotypes.

3.3 General guidance on writing information for patients

Information will vary depending on who it is for and what it is about.

This is a general guide for all written information. Appendix 1 contains more detailed guidance for specific types of information.

When writing information for patients, always write from the patient's point of view and put yourself in the place of someone who may have little knowledge of what you are talking about.

3.4 What needs to be included

All patient information must include the following:

- Correct NHS Dumfries and Galloway logo (other logo's and acknowledgements must be included if information is being produced in partnership)
- Date of publication and review date
- Reference Number (recorded in the Patient Information Register Database and allocated by the Patient Information Co-ordinator)
- Information on how to access the information in other languages or formats

NOTE: The NHS Logo is available on HIPPO via Links Page - NHS Dumfries and Galloway Corporate Identity.

NOTE: Advertising or sponsorship support for any patient information, training DVD or audio visual presentation should not be undertaken without agreement of Patient Information Co-ordinator or NHS Board."

3.5 Checklist

Plan

- Identify clear need for patient information – check that there are no existing products (produced nationally or locally) that contain relevant and current information.
- Discuss with the Patient Information Co-ordinator* what products could be produced to target the intended audience most effectively.
- Discuss with service lead/ line manager: How many leaflets will you need/ how will they be distributed/ is there a budget for production?

NOTE: As a general rule, for small quantities it is usually cheaper to use a colour printer rather than arrange printing from a commercial company but this can vary from leaflet to leaflet – **you must seek advice on the best method of printing prior to producing anything.**

Photocopying should be avoided if possible as the quality deteriorates and this does not send out the appropriate message to patients about the type of service on offer.

- Contact other people/patients who should be involved in producing the information.
- Identify a lead person to co-ordinate production.

Write

- Consult this guide and other resources during the writing stages.
- Produce a first draft of content in Word format.
- Pilot the wording with clinicians, interested parties and users.

- Produce a final draft of content in Word format.
- Present to service lead/line manager for approval.

Design in line with corporate image

- Once content is approved, fill in a **Patient Information Submission Form** (Appendix 2) and send this, along with your leaflet content, to the Patient Information Co-ordinator* who will design a leaflet for you in line with the corporate branding guidelines, before sending it back to you in PDF format for approval and production. Please note: all patient information relating to clinical practice will also be sent to the Clinical Guidelines Group for approval.
- In the majority of cases a PDF version of the leaflet will be on HIPPO for staff to access. However some specialist information leaflets may require to be sourced direct from specialist nurses or departments. The review date for any leaflet is 1 to 3 years after it's production and the Patient Information Co-ordinator* will contact you shortly before this time to arrange for the leaflet to be updated if necessary. If any changes are needed before then, contact the *Patient Information Co-ordinator.

Production and distribution

General points to remember:

- **Use everyday language.** Avoid jargon and acronyms, and use plain language to make it easier to read. Many people (roughly one in five adults) in Scotland have difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy, but that does not mean you have to be patronising or use childish language.
- **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 as relevant to individual patients as possible.**
- **Information should be in context** with other information given to patients, for example, letters, leaflets and appointments.
- **Consider** what you are trying to achieve – is it awareness raising or is it education?
- **Reinforce** the information that patients have been told at the clinic.
- **Only use specific instructions where this is essential. Otherwise give an explanation.** 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 is available.
- **Be up to date.** Give the most current practice and up to date phone numbers.
- **If there is a specific request let people know if the information is available in other formats** for example, on audiotape. Include a website address, where possible. Please refer to NHS Dumfries and Galloway's *Interpreting and Translation Policy* for further information
- **To make text more inviting to read, use the following:**

Font. Use a medium-weight, sans serif typeface such as Arial.

Font size of between 12 point (minimum) and 14 point. However, if you are providing information for elderly people or people with sight difficulties, you should always use 14 point or larger.

Justify the text to the left only.

Leave space between the paragraphs and do not have too much text on the page.

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.

White space makes the information easier to read.

Large bold font emphasises text. Avoid UPPER CASE letters, *italics* and underlining as they make the text more difficult to read. See Resource List below for 'making text legible'.

Numbers from one to nine are easier to read if they are written in words, and numbers from 10 can be represented as numbers.

Colours can make a leaflet or poster more visually appealing but bear in mind the needs of those with visual impairment. There is an approved palette of

NHS Scotland Colours and the Patient Information Co-ordinator* will advise you on what can be used.

Also see: www.nhsscotlandci.scot.nhs.uk

Diagrams and pictures are very effective and should be in line with communication principles. 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.

Photos. The Communications Team has a digital camera for use for board business and can arrange for specific photographs to be taken. Remember written consent is required from patients and staff before photographs are taken.

Commercial photography or images from websites may be subject to royalty fees and copyright license. The NHS Scotland photo library contains an approved online bank of searchable royalty-free images for NHS Scotland use only. The Patient Information Co-ordinator* has ways of sourcing photographs and pictures should you need something specific.

Protocol for approving patient information produced by the health board

- It is important that all patient information produced by the board meets the guidance in this policy. Patient information produced and approved by the board will be recorded in a Patient Information Database, held by the Patient Information Co-ordinator* for at least six years after the leaflet has been superseded.
- Information from the Patient Information Submission Form will be used to populate the database.
- Following consultation with the department producing the information, the Patient Information Co-ordinator* will have the final say on the layout of the leaflet, using their knowledge and expertise.
- **Consistent features.** All patient information will include the following:
 - NHS Dumfries and Galloway logo
 - Website address: www.nhsdg.scot.nhs.uk
 - Date of publication and review date
 - Information on how to access the information in other languages or formats

3.6 Assurance

To ensure that this policy is being complied with, every 12 months the Patient Information Co-ordinator* will ask at random a selection of staff to send in examples of current departmental patient information to check against the policy requirements. Those departments whose information does not comply with the policy will be asked to re-do the information in line with corporate branding guidelines.

4. Monitoring

The Healthcare Governance Committee will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of this policy and its deployment across the Board and will receive a progress report annually.

Monitoring will include:

A review of approved patient information leaflets on the Board's intranet and an audit of the leaflets used to determine the extent of compliance with this policy.

Spot checks carried out by the Patient Information Co-ordinator to ensure that non-approved information leaflets are not in use.

5. Equality and Diversity

NHS Dumfries and Galloway is committed to equality and diversity in respect of the nine protected characteristics defined by age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, maternity & pregnancy and marriage & civil partnership. A rapid equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy.

6. References:

Delivering for Health - Published by the Scottish Executive, November, 2005

The Equality Act (2010).

NHS Dumfries and Galloway Corporate Objectives 1 & 5.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway Interpreting and Translation Policy and Procedures.

For further information contact: -

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) - Scotland

Dunedin House
25 Ravelston Terrace
Edinburgh
EH4 3TP
Telephone 0131 311 8500
www.rnib.org.uk

Plain English Campaign

PO Box 3
New Mills
High Peak
SK22 4Q
Telephone 01663 744 409
www.plainenglish.co.uk

Centre for Health Information Quality

Highcroft
Romsey Road
Winchester
SO22 5DH
Telephone 01962 863511
www.hfht.org/chiq

University of Aberdeen – Health Service Research Unit

www.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/guide/guide

7. Document Control Sheet

1. Document Status

Title	Patient Information Policy
Author	Hazel Dykes
Approver	Healthcare Governance Committee
Document reference	
Version number	1.1

2 Document Amendment History

Version	Section(s)	Reason for update
1.1		

3. Distribution

Name	Responsibility	Version number
Agnes Somerville	Patient Information	1.1

4. Associated documents

E.g. national legislation, guidance or standards

5. Action Plan for Implementation

Action	Lead Officer	Timeframe
Update on Hippo	Hazel Dykes	November 2013

Writing information for specific situations

This section provides practical advice on writing information for different situations. The following checklists give a list of subheadings that you should consider when putting a leaflet or booklet together.

These are not a complete checklist and some things may not be appropriate for certain information leaflets. However, it will hopefully be relevant in most cases.

1. Checklist for information about conditions and treatments

- What is the leaflet about, and who is it for?
- 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 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 approved websites.

2. Checklist for writing information about services, for example, cardiac rehabilitation classes or a specialist clinic

- Describe the service.
- Start at the beginning where the patient would start, for example, a leaflet about transport might start with how to book it, with 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 is not available, for example, transport.
- Are interpreters needed?
- Are any costs involved?
- Are there any advantages or disadvantages that need to be explained?
- Who to contact (phone number) and when, for example, from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.
- Phone number, address and website of the board.

3. Checklist for writing information about medication for patients

- 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 24) for more information and to check on any concerns about side effects.

4. Checklist for writing information about operations, treatments and investigations

What is the leaflet about and who is it for?

- What is the procedure?
- Why are they having it? Give the benefits and alternatives where appropriate.
- What preparation do they need or not need?
- Do they need sedation or local anaesthetic?
- What happens when they arrive at the 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 etc.

- 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?
- Tell people where they can find more information, for example, support groups and websites.

Advice for writing information for different patient groups

This section gives some general advice on writing information for different patient groups. Bearing in mind that all patients should have equal access to services (Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA)), information may need to be presented differently in different formats.

Patients who are elderly

Use clear large print, at least 14 point or larger. Do not use patronising language.

Patients who are not 'ill'

It may be more appropriate to address patients who do not see themselves as 'ill' as clients or service users, for example, pregnant women or people using social services.

Patients who are children

Address children as individuals, use plenty of illustrations, try to adjust your language to the age and do not talk down to them. Avoid clip art.

Patients with learning difficulties

The text needs to be simplified a little, using more symbols and pictures. Use CD's and DVD's. Consult support groups and individuals for best advice.

Patients with hearing difficulties

Use written information. Use carers, text phones or British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters.

Patients with sight difficulties

Use large bold print, at least 14 point or larger. Use audiotapes, electronic text, the Internet or Braille. Do not use a lot of reversed-out text and make sure the contrast between text colour and background colour is easy to read.

Patients whose first language is not English

Use translated text from a guaranteed source where appropriate. Certain languages are often spoken and not read so it is important to check this. Where appropriate, use other media (CD's, DVD's and interpreters). Refer to *Interpreting and Translation Policy* for further information.

Patients who have reading problems

Use CD's and DVD's.

Expert patients

Patients who have long-term medical conditions, such as diabetes or eczema, will usually have a very good understanding of their condition. The information for these patients may need to be specially researched by experts or they may need guidance on where to find the latest reliable information.

Examples of some basic Plain English words are provided below.

For further words and more information please refer to the Plain English Campaign website: www.plainenglish.co.uk

Not plain English

amend
commence
comply
conduct
consequently
mandatory
participants
specified
subsequently
utilise

Plain English

change
start or begin
meet or follow
carry out
leading to or following on
required or necessary
members, users or those taking part
given, particular or detailed
afterwards or next
use

Patient information submission form

Contact Name	
Designation	
Department	
Telephone Number	
Email address	
Leaflet Title	
Target audience	
Number of leaflets required	
Additional information	