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Questions

1. How do you ensure that service users receive care which is appropriate, timely and based on their healthcare needs?
2. How do you ensure that service users have reasonable access to the most appropriate public health services regardless of physical, sensory or intellectual ability?
3. Do you ensure that service users are transferred to another public health or social care facility if a recommended medical treatment is not available at your care facility?
4. Do you provide clear information on appointment dates, times and locations?
5. Do you ensure that waiting periods for an appointment, test or a treatment will be kept as short as possible?
6. Do you send reminders of appointments to service users?
7. Do you explain to service users the importance of keeping appointments and letting you know if they cannot attend?
8. Does your service offer service users a choice of appointments?
9. Do you ensure that block booking of appointments doesn’t occur in your service and that service users are offer individual appointments?
10. Do you find out if service users have any special requirements, such as alternative methods of communication, or a requirement for interpretation services?
11. Do you provide information to service users in alternative formats if required, such as email, text, large print, audio or braille?

“Our services are organised to ensure equity of access to public health and social care services”
What service users can do to help

Waiting times
- Ensure to ask your healthcare professional how long you may expect to wait before receiving certain kinds of appointments, tests or treatments.

Using health services appropriately
- Only use emergency services in a real emergency.

Appointments
- Please be on time for all appointments. If late, please phone ahead to let staff know.
- Ask your healthcare professional how long you may expect to wait before receiving certain kinds of appointments, tests or treatments.
- If a member of staff (such as a public health nurse) is due to visit your home, please make sure that you are there at the agreed time.
- If a member of staff phones you to arrange an appointment, please keep it unless you are contacted again to change it.
- If you cannot keep an appointment, inform your healthcare provider in plenty of time so that your appointment can be given to someone else.
- If you have booked HSE transport and no longer need it, please tell the healthcare provider so that it can be cancelled.
- If you have any special requirements, such as alternative methods of communication (braille, audio or interpretive requirements), please let healthcare services know in advance of visits where possible.

Contact details
- Make sure that your GP surgery, dental surgery or any hospital or healthcare service you attend has up-to-date information about how to contact you. If you change address or phone number, please inform all relevant healthcare providers as soon as possible.

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Questions

1. Do all staff involved in providing healthcare services treat patients with respect, kindness, dignity, compassion, understanding, courtesy and honesty?
   - Do we respect the patient’s right to confidentiality?
   - Do we discuss the patient in their presence without involving them in the discussion?
   - Do we ask the patient how they wish to be addressed and ensure that their choice is respected and used?
2. Do we listen to and address any health beliefs, concerns and preferences that the patient has, and be aware that these affect how and whether they engage with treatment. Respect their views and offer support if needed to help them engage effectively with healthcare services and participate in self-management as appropriate?
3. Do we listen to and discuss any fears or concerns the patient has in a non-judgemental and sensitive manner?
4. Do we respect the beliefs and requirements of different religions when providing specific treatments?
5. Do we make assumptions about the patient based on their appearance or other personal characteristics?
6. Are we prepared to raise and discuss sensitive issues (such as sexual activity, continence or end-of-life care), as these are unlikely to be raised by some patients?

“We will treat you, your family and carers with dignity, respect and compassion. We respect diversity of culture, beliefs and values in line with clinical decision making”
7. Do we accept that the patient may have different views from healthcare professionals about the balance of risks, benefits and consequences of treatments?
8. Do we respect and support the patient in their choice of treatment, or if they decide to decline treatment?

What service users can expect

- Care that respects their culture, beliefs, values and other characteristics such as age and gender, sexual orientation, faith, political beliefs or disability and is in line with clinical decision making.
- Care that is provided in a sensitive, kind and compassionate way.
- End-of-life care that is dignified, comforting and supporting relief from suffering.

What service users can do to help

- Treat healthcare staff politely and with respect and consideration. Physical, racial, sexual or other kinds of harassment or abuse are unacceptable.
- Show consideration for patients in hospitals who may need time to rest and recover by adhering to hospital visiting hours. Find out about hospital visiting hours before planning to visit patients.

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Questions

1. Do we actively support service users in asking questions about their care?
2. Do we provide service users with information about how they can contribute to the safety and effectiveness of their care?
3. Do we provide continuity of care and smooth transitions for service users from or between services?
4. What mechanisms are in place to make sure that when a service user is referred from one service to another or to a different team all relevant details of his/her health and care plan are forwarded as appropriate?
5. Do we engage with service users in relation to the management and safety of their medications?
6. Do we have a process in place to ensure implementation of identified areas for patient safety improvement?
7. What processes have we engage service users in the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infection?

“We will provide services with competence, skill and care in a safe environment, delivered by trusted professionals for everybody”
What service users can do to help

Patients and family members who are more informed and involved in their healthcare often experience safer and better care and have improved quality of life afterwards. To ensure that you or a member of your family receive the best care possible you should always:
- ask questions;
- talk to your healthcare team;
- listen and note down the information they give.

Medication safety
- Try to follow any advice or treatment that has been agreed with you. If you are worried about doing this, or do not fully understand what is required, discuss it with the person giving the advice or treatment, or contact your GP.
- Take care with medicines. Take any medicine given to you in line with instructions and finish the course of treatment.
- Please discuss with your doctor or pharmacist, before you decide to change or stop your medication, particularly if your prescription says that you should continue to take it.
- Give any out-of-date or unused medicine to your pharmacist to get rid of safely.
- Try to order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time.
- Store medicines safely and out of children's reach.
- If you go into hospital, let the staff know about any medicines you are already taking, for example by bringing a list of all the medicines and giving this to a member of staff, and tell staff about any allergies that you may have.
- If you feel that your condition has got worse, you should consult your GP, who can, if necessary, consult further with the hospital or relevant service.

Help prevent the spread of infection
- Hand washing is the best way to prevent germs spreading. Wash your hands after coughing/sneezing, after going to the toilet, after touching anything wet (e.g. ooze from your wounds, urine from your catheter, your blood stained dressings) and before mealtimes.
- If you can't get to a sink to wash your hands, ask your healthcare staff to provide you with a means to clean your hands (e.g. basin of water and soap/wipes/alcohol hand rub) so that you can keep your hands clean.
- Avoid touching any wounds or the area around drips, drains or catheters.
- Ask your doctor or nurse why you have a drip or catheter and how you can help prevent it getting infected. Let staff know if the area around the drip becomes sore or red or if the bandage falls off or looks wet or dirty.
- Understand that taking antibiotics will not help if you are diagnosed with a virus.
- If you have diarrhoea and are on an antibiotic or have recently been on one – let your doctor know.
- If you are given a prescription for antibiotics to take at home, it is very important to take all your antibiotics as prescribed (i.e. finish the course) even if you begin to feel better.
- Do not keep antibiotics at home for future use and do not share them with other people.
- If you think HSE premises are not as clean as they should be, let a member of staff know.
- If you think a staff member has forgotten to hand wash before examining you, give a reminder.
- Hygiene inspection reports for your hospital are available on www.hse.ie.

Support us in the delivery of safe and effective services. If you think that a member of a healthcare team has forgotten to wash their hands, please give them a gentle reminder.

When visiting a patient
- Do not sit on their bed and keep the number of visitors as low as possible at any time.
- Ask ward staff for advice before you bring the patient food or drink.
- Never touch dressings, drips or other equipment around the bed.
- Do not visit another patient in hospital if you have been sick recently, for example sore throat, high temperature, diarrhoea or a cold or flu-like illness.
- Do not take a child to visit someone in hospital if they have been sick recently for example sore throat, high temperature, diarrhoea, vomiting, or if they have a cold or flu like illness.

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Questions

1. Do we provide as a service open and appropriate communication throughout our care in relation to the following?
   - a service users illness and what the treatment or care aims to do
   - results of any proposed tests
   - proposed treatment and medication, including the possible risks and alternatives
   - type of continuing healthcare a service user may need, including medication, continuing care in hospital, timely and appropriate referrals, convalescence or rehabilitation
   - what discharge arrangements are in place or when appropriate, what choices in relation to end-of-life care are available
   - when plans change or if something does not go according to plan.

2. A service user should be given:
   - the opportunity to ask questions and to receive answers that he/she can understand
   - advise on how to ask questions and how to make the most of consultations and obtain information about diagnosis, treatment and care from members of the healthcare team
   - Information in a language they can understand including access to interpretative services where possible

“We will listen to you carefully and communicate openly and honestly, and provide clear, comprehensive and understandable health information and advice”
• the name and role of everyone who cares for them, and the name of who is in charge of their care (staff should always introduce themselves and wear name badges)
• relevant information leaflets to help service users understand their illness

Do you agree? Which points do you consider more important and why?

3. How can we as a team make sure that a service user knows how to look after himself/herself and prevent further illness?
   Have we got services and sources of help (such as further information and self-help groups)? How can we provide support in managing a chronic (long-term) condition?

4. How do we communicate to a service user what is going to happen to them on the day of any intervention/procedure?
   Please discuss.

What service users can do to help

• If there is something that they do not understand about a condition or treatment, let your healthcare professional know. Never be afraid to ask.
• If he/she is able, they should provide information about their history, current treatment, medication and alternative therapies directly. Otherwise, their family, carer or other nominated support person should provide the healthcare team with this information. It may be helpful for them to carry the information with them.
• As a service user, he/she should follow plans that have been agreed with his/her healthcare provider and report any changes in his/her condition.
• Have you made available to patients the leaflet entitled “It’s Safer to Ask”, this leaflet is designed to encourage patients to ask questions and get more involved in the decision making about their care plan.

Sample questions included in the leaflet:
– Can you please tell me more about my condition?
– Do you have any information that I can take away with me?
– Can you tell me where I can find out more information?
– Why do I need to have this particular test?
– What are the different treatments for this condition?
– How will this treatment help me?
– What does the treatment involve?
– What are the risks of this treatment?
– What is likely to happen if I do not have this treatment?
– What should I look out for?
– What can I do to help myself?
– When should I come back to see you?

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**Questions**

1. How can we as a team help patients to be involved in making informed decisions about treatment and care to the degree and extent that they choose? This includes where appropriate a service users family, carer or other nominated support people?
2. Are we confident that the process for obtaining informed consent conforms with best practice and policy? How can we demonstrate this?
3. Do we support our patients when they want to seek a second opinion at any time during their care?
4. How do we inform service users when student healthcare staff are involved in delivering their care? Do we seek their permission before medical examination or interview? Do you think it is important let them know? Why? Discuss.
5. Do we develop an understanding of the patient as an individual, including how the condition affects the person, and how the person’s circumstances and experiences affect their condition and treatment. Ask the patient about and take into account any factors, such as their domestic, social and work situation and their previous experience of healthcare, that may:
   - impact on their health condition and/or
   - affect their ability or willingness to engage with healthcare services and/or
   - affect their ability to manage their own care and make decisions about self-management and lifestyle choices.

“*We will involve you and your family and carers in decision making about your healthcare and will take account of your preferences and values*”
6. Do we ensure that factors such as physical or learning disabilities, sight, speech or hearing problems and difficulties with reading, understanding or speaking English are addressed so that the patient is able to participate as fully as possible in consultations and care.

7. Do you have this leaflet displayed in your service? This leaflet advises patients on questions and tips they should ask their healthcare team, to make them more informed and involved in their care. Patients and family members who are more informed and involved in their healthcare often experience safer and better care and have improved quality of life afterwards.

Shared decision making
When discussing decisions about investigations and treatment, do we, do so in a style and manner that enables the patient to express their personal needs and preferences? Do we give the patient the opportunity to discuss their diagnosis, prognosis and treatment options.

What service users can do to help
• Prepare a list of questions, concerns and symptoms to discuss with your GP or healthcare professional. Here are a few suggested questions to get him/her started:
  – Can you please tell me more about my condition?
  – Do you have any information that I can take away with me?
  – Can you tell me where I can find out more information?
  – Why do I need to have this particular test?
  – What are the different treatments for this condition?
  – How will this treatment help me?
  – What does the treatment involve?
  – What are the risks of this treatment?
  – What is likely to happen if I do not have this treatment?
  – What should I look out for?
  – What can I do to help myself?
  – When should I come back to see you?
• Ask what the treatment plan is before discharge and for it to be explained to you.
• Make sure you get the results of any tests or procedures.
• If having surgery, clarify with your surgeon that everyone is clear about exactly what is going to be done.

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Questions

1. Do you ensure that the environment is conducive to discussion and that the patient's privacy is respected, particularly when discussing sensitive, personal issues?
2. Do you position yourself at the same level as the patient when you are having a discussion with them?
3. Do you ensure that the patient is appropriately covered (if applicable)?
4. Do you speak discretely in a way that does not compromise patient privacy?
5. Are you aware of how loud you speak? Do other patients or members of the public overhear confidential information?
6. How can we provide enough personal space when service users are being examined, receiving treatment and/or when discussing their condition and treatment? Give examples.
7. What protocols are in place in your area of work to protect inappropriate access to a service users’ personal health information? Do you always follow them?
8. Are service users aware that healthcare records may be accessed for audit purposes to provide assurance about the quality of service provision?

What service users can do to help

Support the health service in safeguarding service user confidentiality by respecting the privacy of fellow service users.

“We will do our best to ensure that you have adequate personal space and privacy when you use our health services. We maintain strict confidentiality of personal information”

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Questions

1. Do we provide advice to service users in relation to the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle? Do we give information and advice in relation to this? How else can we encourage service users to do so?
2. How can we provide information, advice and support to service users on how to best self-manage an existing health problem?
3. How can we encourage service users to take part in screening and immunisation programmes to prevent illness where available and appropriate? Could you give some examples? Are we doing enough in your opinion?
4. Do we provide advice to service users in relation to the availability of support groups appropriate to their needs?

“Our services are designed to promote your health, prevent disease and support and empower those with chronic conditions to self-manage their condition”
What service users can do to help

- Learn more about what they can do to improve their health (i.e. “ask your healthcare provider for information about healthy living and about the support services in your community, ask your healthcare professional to help you to set goals to improve your health”).
- Look after their own health and have a healthy lifestyle:
  - exercise more, more active lifestyle
  - eat a healthy diet
  - manage weight
  - stopping smoking
  - lower alcohol consumption
  - do not use drugs.
- Seek information and advice from any healthcare professional or other sources such as www.hse.ie on how to prevent disease, including immunisation, and on how to protect their health.
- Monitor their health and report any changes to your healthcare team.
- Seek assistance from support groups and people living with similar conditions.
- Talk to their healthcare team about self-management when living with a long-term condition.
- Help stop the spread of infection: “wash and dry your hands before preparing and or eating food”.

HSE provided services aim to be smoke free by 2015 – many are currently smoke free. Service Users should support services to achieve this goal by not smoking on health service premises.

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Questions

1. Do you have these leaflets displayed in your service?
   The patient feedback leaflet, includes three questions:
   1) name one thing that was good about your experience
   2) name one thing that could be improved upon
   3) name one thing that should always happen every time you or others use this service.

2. Do you have the resource materials for the National Healthcare Charter displayed in your service?
   We can improve patient’s experiences of services by learning from what works well and what we can improve upon. It is important to engage with staff about what patients say about our health services to ensure that all sides are heard and to ensure that patient feedback is an essential feature of everyday practice.

3. Have you and your colleagues adopted a proactive approach to understanding patient experience, do you ask as part of your consultation or discussion with patients if everything is ok if there is anything that could be improved upon and encourage patients to give feedback about their experience?

“We will welcome your complaints and feedback about your care and experience of services. We will investigate your complaints and work to address your concerns”
4. Do you and your colleagues take patient feedback seriously, investigate complaints promptly and deal with patient feedback in a welcoming manner?

5. Do you view patient feedback as an opportunity to learn and improve? Do you view patient experience feedback as an essential feature of everyday practice, as a key quality improvement tool?

6. Do you help to boost public confidence by letting staff and patients know that we make changes based on patient feedback? For further information see ‘You said, We did’ www.hse.ie.

What service users can do to help

Feedback Matters
They can help us to improve our services by giving us their views, including their comments, complaints and suggestions. They can do this by talking to staff or filling in surveys. Service Users can also give feedback under ‘Your Service, Your Say’, the Health Service Executive’s comments and complaints policy. They could contact the National Advocacy Unit and the Quality and Patient Safety Department, Nationally or Regionally.

Health Check

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is your organisation good at letting people know you are listening and want to know what they think?</td>
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<td>If you have a reception or waiting area, is there a poster or video that asks for people’s views?</td>
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<td>When someone first makes contact with your service, do you explain how they can offer feedback or make a complaint?</td>
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<td>Do you have a suggestions box with pens and forms for people to complete?</td>
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<td>Do you regularly ask people who use your service about their experiences of the care you provide?</td>
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<td>If anyone working in your service was asked about your complaints process, would they be able to explain the basic system and tell the service user where they could get more information and support?</td>
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<td>Is the information you provide accessible to all the people who use your services? For example, if someone does not speak English fluently, would they still be able to complain?</td>
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<td>Is it clear to everyone working in your service, and the people who use it, what changes you have made in light of ideas or comments you have received?</td>
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<td>Has your organisation ever run, or been part of, a campaign to get people to give their views?</td>
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<td>Do you use other sources of information about people’s experiences to help improve your service such as surveys and consultations?</td>
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