

NHS

Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Care Services

NHS

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THE NHS
CONSTITUTION
the NHS belongs to us all

A Guide for Patients and the Public



What is the NHS Constitution?

The [NHS Constitution](#) is all about letting staff, patients and the general public know about what they can expect from the NHS.

Published in 2009, the Constitution encourages us to work together in order to get the best from the NHS. It also identifies that everyone will play a role in the success of the NHS.

The Constitution states the purpose, principles and values of the NHS. It also states some of the key rights, pledges and responsibilities for staff and patients. These rights and responsibilities are about what is important to patients and the public. They were created after thorough discussion and consultation with staff, patients and the general public.

All NHS bodies are required by law to consider the Constitution when making decisions and taking action so it's important we know what this means.

There is also [The Handbook](#) to the NHS Constitution (updated at least every three years). This provides details of the rights and pledges summarised in the Constitution and what you can do and expect if things go wrong.

This guide provides you with a summary of the NHS Constitution and also sets out some of the things we are doing to improve patient care and access to services and listen to your ideas and concerns.

Patients and the Public: your rights and the NHS pledges to you

Rights and pledges are set out in seven areas:

- Access to health services
- Quality of care and environment
- Nationally approved drugs and treatment programmes
- Respect, consent and confidentiality
- Informed choice
- Involvement in your healthcare and in the NHS
- Complaint and redress.

Access to health services:

You have the right to receive NHS services free of charge, except when sanctioned by Parliament, and without discrimination.

You have the right to access local NHS services, and not to be refused on unreasonable grounds.

You have the right to expect your local NHS to put in place the services that are necessary to meet the needs of the local community.

You have the right to seek treatment elsewhere in Europe if you are entitled to NHS treatment, but face undue delay in receiving NHS treatment.

The NHS will strive to provide convenient and easy access to services within the waiting times set out in the Handbook to the NHS Constitution (pledge)

The NHS will strive to make decisions in a clear and transparent way, so that patients and the public can understand how services are planned and delivered (pledge)

The NHS will strive to make the transition as smooth as possible when you are referred between services, and to include you in relevant discussions (pledge)

Case Study: Accessing local health services

Gloucester Health Access Centre is now up and running in newly refurbished premises at Eastgate House in Gloucester.

The Centre provides a wide range of NHS services to both registered and non registered patients and is open from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

A walk in service is also available for minor ailments and injuries such as minor cuts, bites, stings, and allergies.

Case Study: Providing convenient and easy access to services

Care Services staff have been making great progress and continuing to meet the 2 week average wait target for assessment for therapy services (occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy).

NHS Gloucestershire committed to the two week target as part of their NHS Offer conversations with local stakeholders in 2008/09.

The therapy and specialist nursing staff have also done extremely well on taking action to meet a target on Referral to Treatment for the benefit of patients. The target relates to patients beginning their treatment within 8 weeks of their initial referral.

NHS Gloucestershire is committed to expanding the range of outpatient and therapy services and upgrading diagnostic facilities at community hospitals across the county e.g. extending the outpatient department at Lydney and District Hospital, investing in a new children's therapy suite at Dilke Memorial Hospital, new x-ray facilities at Stroud General Hospital and a new endoscopy suite at Cirencester Hospital.

Quality of Care and Environment:

You have the right to be treated with a professional standard of care by appropriately qualified and experienced staff, in a properly approved or registered organisation.

You have the right to expect NHS organisations to monitor, and make efforts to improve, the quality of healthcare they provide, taking account of the applicable standards.

The NHS will strive to ensure that services are provided in a clean and safe environment that is fit for purpose, and for continuous improvement in the quality of services, based on national best practice (pledge)

Case Study: Improving the quality of healthcare – Community Cardiac Services

The Community based heart failure service supports patients from the heart scan that confirms the diagnosis right the way through their care.

This includes help to manage complex medication, education, self care advice and support to patients and their carers.

The specialist team of nurses and GPs with a specialist interest in heart failure, work with cardiologists at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and Cheltenham General Hospital and NHS staff who work in GP surgeries to ensure effective and timely care, helping to avoid unnecessary trips to hospital.

The Team see patients at their local community hospital or at home and are recognised as national leaders in community heart failure management.

Case Study: Services provided in a clean and safe environment that is fit for purpose

Gloucestershire Care Services has been building on the downward trend in healthcare associated infections within local Community Hospitals and has embraced the national 'Clean your Hands' campaign.

To support improved standards, Community Hospital matrons continue to carry out audits into hand hygiene to ensure procedures are being followed and 'spot checks' to encourage vigilance at all times.

Other 'Clean Your Hands' activity includes hand hygiene training and education sessions, installation of alcohol hand gel in clinical areas, the introduction of 'staff champions' to encourage good practice and wide distribution of patient and visitor information leaflets.

NHS Gloucestershire is also keen to ensure that NHS premises are fit for purpose and is investing in new community hospitals and facilities in Gloucester (Holly House), Berkeley Vale (Dursley), the North Cotswolds (Bourton-on-the-Water and Moreton-in-Marsh) and Tewkesbury.

Nationally approved drugs and treatment programmes:

You have the right to drugs and treatments that have been recommended by NICE for use in the NHS, if your doctor says that they are clinically appropriate for you.

The NHS will strive always to provide approved vaccination and screening programmes (pledge)

Respect, consent and confidentiality:

You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

You have the right to accept or refuse treatment that is offered to you, and not be given any physical examination or treatment unless you have given valid consent, from you or from your legal representative. If consent cannot be obtained, the treatment must be in your best interest.

You have the right to be given information about your proposed treatment in advance, including any significant risks and alternative treatments.

You have the right to privacy and confidentiality.

You have the right to access your own health records.

The NHS will strive to share with you any letters sent between clinicians about your care (pledge)

Case Study: Ensuing Dignity in Care

Simple measures from knocking before entering a patient's room to thinking about the ways in which we communicate with different groups of people can help ensure everybody is treated with respect when they are being cared for by the NHS.

In Gloucestershire the Dignity in Care campaign has spread across the health community with specially tailored training for staff in care homes and community hospitals.

We have Dignity Champions across the county who work with their colleagues to ensure dignity and respect are at the centre of patient care.

From delivering single sex wards to building new community facilities with single rooms for patients, NHS Gloucestershire is working hard to improve the patient experience.

Informed Choice:

You have the right to choose your GP practice, and not to be refused on unreasonable grounds.

You have the right to express a preference for using a particular doctor, and for the practice to try and comply.

The NHS will strive to inform you about what healthcare services are available to you, locally and nationally.

You have the right to make choices about your NHS care. The options available to you will develop over time and depend on your individual needs. Details are set out in the Handbook to the NHS Constitution.

The NHS will strive to offer you easily accessible information to enable you to participate fully in your own healthcare decisions and to support you in making choices (pledge).

Case Study: Informing you about the healthcare services available

NHS Gloucestershire produces an annual 'Your Guide to Local Health Services' which provides information on the range of health services available locally, new developments and health and well-being advice, support and services.

The guide is available at www.nhsglos.nhs.uk (Publications section).

Case Study: Making choices about your NHS care

NHS Gloucestershire is helping to promote Patient Choice across the county.

If your GP needs to refer you to a hospital for planned care/treatment, you can now choose to go to any hospital in England which provides that treatment, including private hospitals that provide NHS funded care.

This means you have greater choice on the date and time of your appointment.

The new NHS Treatment Centres at Emersons Green, near Bristol for inpatient surgery and Cirencester for day cases, has increased the number of locations in the area that patients can consider when deciding where to go for treatment.

More information on hospitals, their facilities and information on cleanliness and MRSA rates can be found at www.nhs.uk/choices.

Involvement in your healthcare and in the NHS:

You have the right to be involved in discussions and decisions about your healthcare, and to be given information to enable you to do this.

You have the right to be involved in the planning, development and proposals for changes in healthcare services and their operation.

The NHS will strive to work in partnership with you, your family and carers (pledge)

The NHS will strive to provide you with information that you need to effectively influence the planning and delivery of NHS services (pledge).

Case Study: Involving you in the planning, development and proposals for changes in healthcare services

NHS Gloucestershire holds annual NHS Offer conversations with NHS staff, community partners and members of the public to develop health priorities to meet the needs of local people.

This has resulted in action to radically reduce waiting times for community therapy services and audiology services, improve the way podiatry services are provided and increase access to NHS dental services right across the county with the commissioning and opening of new dental centres.

Complaints and redress:

You have the right to make a complaint about your NHS services, to have your complaint dealt with efficiently and investigated appropriately; to know the outcome; and to compensation when harmed by negligent treatment.

You have the right to take your complaint to the Health Service Ombudsman, or to make a claim for Judicial Review, if you have exhausted other rights of appeal.

The NHS will strive to ensure that if you make a complaint, you are treated with respect and courtesy, you receive a timely and appropriate response, any harm that you suffered is corrected and any necessary changes are put in place (pledge).

Case Study: Your experience counts - the 4Cs – Compliments, Comments, Concerns, Complaints

Delivering the best quality care for people at the right time and in the right place depends upon listening to feedback and learning from experience. To do this, we need to work in ways that encourage staff and patients to contribute their views on the services we provide and commission.

The NHS and Social Care Complaints Reforms came into effect on 1 April 2009. People had told us that they did not always want to make a formal complaint – they often simply want to let us know about their experience and be listened to.

Sometimes they wanted to say 'thank you' to staff. Therefore, NHS Gloucestershire's response to the Reforms (and that of other NHS and Social Care Organisations in Gloucestershire) was to redefine patient experience feedback against the 4Cs headings: Compliments, Comments, Concerns, Complaints and put in place a new process to handle feedback from patients.

The 4Cs can:

- Tell us what's working
- Help us to identify potential service problems
- Help us to identify risks and prevent things from getting worse
- Highlight opportunities for staff improvements
- Provide information we need to review our services and procedures effectively.

Patients and the Public: your responsibilities

The NHS belongs to all of us

As well as abiding by the law – where, for instance, physical or verbal abuse or causing an unlawful disturbance, could result in prosecution – there are things that we can all do to help the NHS work effectively and to ensure that resources are used responsibly.

You should recognise that you can make a significant contribution to your own and your family's good health, and take some personal responsibility for it.

You should register with a GP practice – the main point of access to NHS care.

You should treat NHS staff and other patients with respect – if you abuse people you may be prosecuted.

You should provide relevant and accurate information about your health, condition and status.

You should keep appointments, or cancel within reasonable time. If you don't, you may lose your place in the queue.

You should follow the course of treatment that you have agreed with your clinician.

You should take part in important public health programmes, like vaccinations.

You should make sure that those closest to you are aware of your wishes about organ donation.

You should tell us what you think about the treatment and care you have received, including good and bad experiences.

To discuss receiving this information in large print or Braille please ring 0845 658 3888.

To discuss receiving this information in other formats please contact:

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FREEPOST RRYY-KSGT-AGBR, GUIDE & PALS,

NHS Gloucestershire, Sanger House, 5220 Valiant Court, Gloucester Business Park,
Gloucester GL3 4FE

0845 658 3888



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Published by: The NHS Gloucestershire Communications Service, Tel: **08454 221515**.

Publication Date: Winter 2010.