



University Hospitals
of North Midlands

NHS Trust

It's OK to ask

Better communication, better
outcomes for our patients



Why do we need to improve communication with our patients?

The message from our patients remains loud and clear that they want to receive more information and have more involvement in their care. This may be how to take their medication, being able to choose which treatment path to follow, making healthy food choices or finding their way around a busy hospital.

Research tells us that patients who feel involved in decisions about their care and who understand their condition have better outcomes.

We want to really make a difference by giving our patients the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to maintain their own well-being in the way that is best for them.

We have a responsibility to make sure that our explanations are not only heard but most importantly understood. If we get it right and encourage our patients to feel confident asking questions to help them understand: it will reduce the need for repeat appointments and hospital admissions.

How do we achieve this?

- Provide clear answers to questions using diagrams when appropriate
- Provide an environment where patients feel comfortable asking questions
- Make sure they do not feel that we are too busy to listen
- Check patient understanding
- Encourage patient feedback about their experience



“It’s OK to ask” has been designed to encourage our patients to ask the questions that matter to them, be prepared before their consultation and have the confidence to say if they do not understand the information they are being given.

We all feel concerned when we don’t understand something, as things can become confusing and even frightening. We know that half of what a person is told is forgotten and half of what they remember is misunderstood. It is for this reason we want to encourage our patients to ask questions. Many people we care for need support to understand health information. This can be even more challenging when our patients have sensory difficulties or English is not their first language. Our aim is that our patients understand:

1 What is my main problem?

2 What do I need to do?

3 Why is it important I do this?

We know there are a number of reasons why our patients are reluctant to ask questions:

- They don’t want to take up a busy health professionals time
- They don’t want to appear “difficult”
- They are too embarrassed

This is important because we know that helping our patients to understand their condition and treatment means they are more likely to:

- Survive and recover
- Take medication
- Attend for appointments and diagnostic tests
- Have fewer long term conditions
- Be less limited by their long term conditions
- Engage with disease prevention such as cancer screening and immunisation

If you have any questions or comments please contact the Patient Experience Team on 01782 676450 or email patientadvice.uhnm@nhs.net

