

*To: Chief Executives of all trusts in England
Accountable Officers of all CCGs in England
Primary care professional bodies*

Neil Churchill
Experience, Participation &
Equalities Team
Nursing Directorate
NHS England
6th Floor, Skipton House
80 London Road
London
SE1 6LH

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Dear Colleague

Announcement of forthcoming changes to the Friends and Family Test

I am writing to let you know that, following extensive consultation and research, there will be several changes to the way the patient feedback tool, known as the NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT), is carried out across England. These changes are expected to take effect from 1 April 2020.

We are grateful to stakeholders – more than 1300 of them during our review - who told us how an updated FFT could more effectively support continuous improvement in the delivery of high-quality healthcare. Their views, underpinned by formal research and other evidence, have driven the changes we are now putting in place.

People told us that the mandatory question could be clearer and more accessible so we have formulated a new universal mandatory question – successfully tested with a broad range of people, including children down to the age of eight - that asks, in the context of each service, “Overall, how was your experience of our service?” There will be six new response options.

We are also responding to feedback on the current timing requirements that set out when people should be able to give feedback for maternity, A&E and inpatients services. Stakeholders said we should bring them into line with other NHS services, where patients can give feedback at any time they want to, though providers may also still prompt feedback at a stage that suits them. This increases local flexibility.

Following extensive discussion with ambulance services, we have agreed that alternative options should be on the table, given the context of their work. We will firm up what this looks like in the coming weeks.

We believe that continuous feedback from patients can play a key role in monitoring and delivering high quality care. The changes to the FFT are all about helping services and commissioners to use it as more than a quantitative measure of collection and move towards more active use of the feedback, alongside other patient experience data, to drive quality improvements.

NHS England and NHS Improvement



We aim to publish **revised guidance in September 2019** – along with supporting website content such as FAQs, case studies and advice on making the FFT more accessible – with implementation beginning around six months after the guidance is issued. This will help services to prepare, taking account of the need for any local changes to be put in place for supplier contracts, materials and ways of working.

The current FFT requirements and guidance will remain in place in the meantime and providers are expected to submit data collected under this process until the April 2020 submission of their March data. Assuming these timings do not change, implementation of the new guidance would commence from 1 April 2020, with this new response data submitted in May 2020 for publication nationally in June 2020. The **implementation timeline will be confirmed** when the guidance is published.

The wording of guidance on data submission processes is being reviewed, and may be revised if necessary, but there will be no substantive changes to the current requirements for monthly returns by providers.

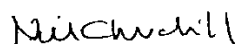
We will offer ongoing support during the preparation and implementation stages of implementing the new-look FFT. In the first instance, please direct any enquiries or requests to our FFT helpdesk at england.friendsandfamilytest@nhs.net.

We ask recipients in trusts and CCGs to share this correspondence with your **patient experience and quality leads** for cascade to other colleagues and partners who are involved in FFT and who might be affected by these requirements. In the case of primary care professional bodies, please cascade this information to your members.

We will write to you again to tell you when the revised guidance is published. In the meantime, updates about the FFT Development Project will continue to be available on our website: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/fft/friends-and-family-test-development-project-2018-19/>

Finally, just for clarification, the Staff Friends and Family Test is unaffected by the changes set out in this email and the pending revised guidance, which will continue to run under the current arrangements for the foreseeable future.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Neil Churchill

Director of Experience, Participation and Equalities

Nursing Directorate

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