

Minimum standards for planned patient care

Aim: to make patients' experiences:

- Smoother
- Easier to understand
- More supportive

Standard 1 : You will know when your referral is accepted

- Within 28 days of your referral being made, you will receive confirmation of the next steps in your care. This may be by NHS App, text, post or other methods.
- If you haven't received confirmation, first try to contact your provider then if unsuccessful, your G.P. practice.
- Aim: to reduce anxiety about whether your referral has been received or processed.

Standard 2: Communication will be clear and easy to understand.

- Information about appointments, treatment and next steps will be clear and easy to understand
- Clinical and technical language will only be used where necessary
- Information will be provided in a format that meets your needs
- You will be given the opportunity to state if you have alternative communication needs and preferences
- You can request your unpaid carer, family member, friend or a trusted person to support you
- You can say what information can be shared with them

Standard 3: When your referral is accepted, you will get information to help you while you wait

- Contact details for practical or administrative questions such as appointment times, how to get there, accessibility, additional needs such as largeprint, braille, audio formats, BSL interpreter.
- Who to contact if your condition changes or worsens
- Support while you are waiting eg. self-care advice, guidance on symptoms, or information about wellbeing support
- Clear and reliable ways to contact your provider

Standard 4: You will get regular updates on your wait

- You will get an update at least every 12 weeks to confirm you are still on the waiting list
- You may be asked to provide updates about your health

Standard 5: Before your appointments, you will be able to tell your provider of any additional needs and reasonable adjustments you require.

- You will be asked about additional needs when your referral is accepted and again before your appointment
- You will receive reasonable adjustments to help you attend appointments eg. help:-
- if you use a wheelchair,
- do not speak English as a first language,
- need access to assistive technology such as a hearing loop system.
- You will have clear information about who to contact if the adjustments are not in place.

Standard 6: You will receive clear information about your appointments in good time

- You will receive communications at least 21 days in advance of when your appointment is.
- This will set out what the appointment is for, where it will take place, and how to prepare.

Standard 7: If your appointment is cancelled, by either you or your provider, a new date will be arranged in good time.

- If your appointment is cancelled or needs to be rescheduled, clear information will be given on how to rearrange it
- A replacement appointment date will be given within 28 days although the appointment itself may take place later.

Standard 8: You will be told when your care is complete and what happens next.

- Where you and your clinician agree that you no longer require planned care, this will be clearly communicated
- You will be told if you need follow-up care. This might be:-
- A set follow-up appointment the service books for you
- A patient initiated follow-up (PIFU) where you contact the service if you need a follow-up.

The service should explain how PIFU works and how to get in touch.

Annex – Your rights as an NHS patient.

- In many cases you have a legal right to choose where you are referred for your first outpatient appointment for planned NHS care
- You have the right to be given information about your care in a way you can understand
- For most planned, non-urgent consultant-led NHS care, you have the right to start treatment within 18 weeks of being referred
- You have the legal right to be seen or treated by a different provider if you're likely to wait longer than the maximum waiting time specified for your treatment.

Raising concerns or asking for help

- Contact the service or hospital providing your care
- Ask for help from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) which offers confidential advice, support and information. If required PALS can assist with you making a formal complaint.