

THE GP PATIENT SURVEY

In Northern Ireland

**Give us your views
on local health services**



Information for GPs and Practice Staff

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) has commissioned a new survey to assess patients' experiences of their local health services. Survey specialist Ipsos MORI is conducting the GP Patient Survey in Northern Ireland on behalf of DHSSPS. Around 240,000 patients in Northern Ireland are invited to give their experiences.

Why is this happening?

The GP Patient Survey in Northern Ireland has been developed as part of the Government's commitment to making the Health Service more responsive to patients' needs. The survey will measure how well GP surgeries are meeting the standards agreed between DHSSPS and Health and Social Services Boards on patient access to care, consultations with healthcare professionals, the surgery environment and whether patients are satisfied with the outcome of their treatment. The findings of the GP Patient Survey in Northern Ireland will allow Health and Social Services Boards to reward the good service provided by the majority of practices by measuring performance against these standards, as well as providing valuable information about how patients feel about local health services.

How patients have been selected

A random sample of patients registered at your practice has been drawn from the CSA system by DHSSPS. The sample is being used by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Department, under the terms of a Data Processor Agreement the Department has put in place with Ipsos MORI.

The sample is being used for survey administration purposes only. Once Ipsos MORI has completed its analysis of the responses, all sample data will be securely destroyed.

The following personal data are being collected:

- Patients' HSC number: provides a unique identifier
- Name: for personalised letters

- Address: to conduct a postal survey
- Date of birth: to exclude patients under 18 years of age
- Gender: for data analysis and non response bias analysis, e.g. to ascertain if certain groups are less likely to respond to the survey

No other personal data will be collected from the CSA system. Ipsos MORI has not been given access to any Health Service systems, nor has it been provided with any clinical information about patients' health or consultations.

How sample sizes have been calculated

The sample size was determined for each practice to deliver a likely confidence interval of ± 7 percentage points (two-tailed, at the 95% level) for payment questions. This took account of small practice sizes and was calculated using the eligible population figures provided by CSA.

What happens next?

- Patients selected to take part in the survey will be sent a questionnaire in the week commencing 5 January 2009.
- Reminder questionnaires will be sent out in February and March to people who do not return a questionnaire, unless they have opted out following the initial questionnaire (see below).
- Analysis and reporting will be undertaken in April and May 2009.
- Payments will be made to practices by the end of the first quarter of the 2009/10 financial year.

Taking part in the survey is voluntary. If patients do not wish to take part, they do not need to return their questionnaire and can disregard the reminders. If there are patients who should not receive mailings to their address or those who have registered an objection with their GP to receiving mailings, practices should email the names and HSC numbers of these patients to GPPatientSurvey@dhsspsni.gov.uk by 28th November 2008.

As there is a possibility that some patients could receive a questionnaire at an inappropriate time, please note that it might still be possible for Ipsos MORI to withdraw those patients from the February and March reminders. To do so, please send the details to the above mailbox by 19 January 2009 (cut-off for February mailout) or 23 February 2009 (cut-off for March mailout).

Confidentiality

We are aware that the confidentiality of patient details will be a major concern for GPs. This has been taken very seriously and the administration of the survey will ensure that the survey is conducted within the law, and that the requirements under the Data Protection Act 1998 are upheld. For more information about this please see the website address below.

Accessibility

To assist patients who may find it difficult to complete the questionnaire, Ipsos MORI is putting in place various measures to help these respondents. These include:

- A website (www.gp-patient.hscni.net) with a detailed Frequently Asked Questions section. These will be available in English and in 10 other languages
- The website will be fully compatible with W3C Standards which means that users will be able to use Screen Reader software and it will be possible to change the font size of the text
- Alternative versions of the questionnaire, such as large print and Braille will be available on request
- It will be possible to complete the questionnaire online or over the telephone, including in 10 other languages
- There will be a telephone helpline which will be able to answer respondents' queries and help with completing the questionnaire if necessary

For more information

Please visit the following web page for more information about the survey, including a detailed Frequently Asked Questions section:

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hss/pc-primary-care.htm