

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**REPORT TO THE HEALTHCARE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE****HELD ON 16 MAY 2011**

Subject	Report on Customer Care Standards
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Status¹	N

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide information to the Healthcare Governance Committee (HGC) in relation to the development, launch and future monitoring of the new 'Commitment to Customer Care'.

KEY POINTS

- The 'Commitment to Customer Care' guide has been developed in partnership with patients, carers, governors and staff.
- The customer care initiative is a key part of the ongoing work to improve patient experience. The customer care standards will ensure a consistent professional and welcoming approach across all receptions.
- The standards were launched on 7th April by the Chief Executive at an event attended by over 80 Trust staff.
- The customer care standards will be implemented in June supported by training workshops taking place during May.
- The standards will be evaluated in December 2011; it is planned for them to be rolled out to other front line staff groups such as portering and domestic services in the future.

IMPLICATIONS²

Achieve Clinical Excellence	Clinical excellence requires the whole patient experience to be positive. Customer Care at reception is an important first impression.
Be Patient Focused	Standards will ensure a consistent professional approach across all receptions.
Engaged Staff	Staff have been involved in the development of the standards.
CQC Evidence	Outcome 17 – staff development in response to user feedback
CQC Concerns	Nil

RECOMMENDATIONS

The HGC are asked to note the developments of the customer care initiative.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Meeting	Presented	Approved	Date
TEG			27 April 2011
HGC			16 May 2011

**SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
A REPORT TO THE TRUST EXECUTIVE GROUP MEETING ON 27TH APRIL 2011:
CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**

1. Introduction and Background

The importance of providing excellent customer care is well researched and understood, particularly in private industry. Whilst using the term 'customers' to describe people who use health care services is met with mixed reaction, applying the principles of customer service widely adopted in other sectors to a healthcare setting has been proven to improve patient experience. First impressions are often lasting and play a key role in influencing a patient's overall view of our services. The first personal contact for many patients and visitors will often be at a reception desk and it is therefore vital that this encounter is a positive one which reflects the high quality of care the Trust provides.

A mystery shopping exercise carried out in reception areas across STH in 2009 showed that levels of customer service are inconsistent across the Trust. In addition patient feedback left on websites, contained in complaints and featured in mystery shopping audits suggests that the service offered by reception staff ranged from unacceptable to at best very good. Receptions were therefore identified as a pilot area for the development of customer care standards and staff training.

The initiative is part of a programme of projects and ongoing work which has a focus on improving the patient experience. This report will briefly outline the current programme of patient experience projects and how the customer service standards fit within that programme, before describing in more detail the development and implementation of the standards. The high profile programme of work promotes the patient experience focussed values and behaviours required from all our staff in a range of ways.

2. The Patient Experience Programme

The customer service initiative is a key part of ongoing work to improve the patient experience and needs to be viewed in the context of other work aimed at enhancing patient experience which includes:

- *Measuring patient experience:* tools to enable the patient experience to be measured, including the ongoing programme of Frequent Feedback surveys, mystery shopping and website feedback.
- *Reporting patient experience:* providing information to present a fair picture of the patient experience, including monthly reports analysing concerns and feedback and a new quarterly patient experience report bringing together all aspects of patient feedback to provide an overview of themes and trends.
- *Improving the patient experience:* ensuring actions are taken to improve services following patient feedback. To support this a new action planning process was introduced on 1st April 2011 to ensure a more proactive approach to improving services.
- *Putting things right:* taking actions to ensure explanation, action and redress when things go wrong. This includes improvements to the way in which complaints are managed and a more proactive approach to identifying patients who have had a poor experience, and making amends through offering explanation and apologies or other appropriate actions.

For example mystery shopping and complaints will help us to measure the impact which the standards should have on patient experience. In addition the recent

outpatient survey highlighted an issue which is now a key improvement target for the Trust. STH scored below the national average in respect of outpatients waiting for longer than they were told, or not being told how long their wait would be, the customer service standards will help tackle this issue.

3. Development of the Customer Care Standards

Creating a professional and welcoming first impression will make patients and visitors feel at ease and instil a feeling of reassurance during what is often an anxious time. To ensure delivery of excellent customer service consistently across the Trust it was identified that quality standards should be implemented in all reception areas. This proposal was supported by TEG in July 2009.

The customer care standards are the first piece of work completed in conjunction with the Institute of Customer Service as part of the Trusts 4 year membership. They were developed in partnership with patients, carers, governors and staff. Focus groups were held to identify the expectations that patients and their families have from a reception service, and encouraged views from staff on how services could improve and identify any potential barriers. Draft standards were then produced and a month long consultation took place where patients and staff were invited to comment on the standards. The feedback received during this period was positive and the standards have been welcomed by managers.

The 'Commitment to Customer Care' guide consists of the following 10 standards.

1. Be Welcoming
2. Be Respectful
3. Be Helpful
4. Be Informative
5. Be Understanding
6. Be Professional
7. Be Proud Of Our Environment
8. Work With Others
9. Keep Improving
10. Be Committed

An example standard 'Be Professional' is attached as appendix a.

4. Launching the Customer Care Standards

An event to launch the standards 'Commitment to Customer Care' took place on 7th April. The standards were launched by the Chief Executive, and guest speakers including the Institute of Customer Service presented to a group of over 80 Trust staff including receptionists and reception managers.

Training workshops to support the implementation of the standards for all reception staff have also been organised and will take place mid May, in preparation for the standards to be implemented across the Trust in June.

5. Next Steps

The mystery shopping exercise carried out prior to the development of the standards will be repeated 6 months after their launch to measure impact. In addition trends and themes from complaints, comments cards and website feedback will be reviewed.

It is planned to roll the standards out to other front line staff groups such as portering and domestic services. A customer service toolkit will also be produced and made available on the Patient Partnership intranet site consisting of a range of resources to support staff across all departments and directorates in delivering a high quality patient experience. The 'Annie's story' DVD purchased using charitable funding in 2010 is already used in central Trust inductions and highlights how effective communication, being polite and courteous, and giving timely accurate information can impact greatly on a patient's overall opinion of their experience. Other resources will include the staff factsheet on the concerns and complaints policy and patient stories featured in the DVD produced as part of the Better Outcomes for Older People Project (BOSOP).

6. Summary

The development of customer care standards has been completed as part of the customer service initiative. These customer care standards clearly set out the Trust's commitment to providing excellent customer service consistently across the organisation, and are presented to staff in a useful informative guide.

The standards will be implemented Trust wide in June supported by training workshops taking place during May. Evaluation of the standards will take place in December, when a mystery shopping exercise will be completed, supported by findings from a variety of feedback sources including complaints, website feedback and comments cards. The Healthcare Governance Committee and are asked to note the developments of the customer service initiative.



Be professional...

It is often the small things that influence a patient's view of our services. Often they will remember the person that they are speaking to rather than what is being said to them. It is important to act professionally at all times.

- Ensure you are easily identifiable, your appearance is professional and your name badge is visible at all times
- Do not eat or drink at the reception desk
- Do not read newspapers or magazines at the reception desk
- Deal with difficult situations professionally, remain calm, stay polite and show empathy
- Ensure confidential details are kept safe and that information is shared only on a 'need to know' basis
- Don't have private conversations with colleagues around patients or visitors

I was impressed by how professional everyone acted. It allows you to trust them and I felt the information I shared was safe

Staff need to realise when their conversations become unprofessional. I remember them talking about what they would order from the Avon book