

# Sharing letters with service users

Patient information leaflet



## Sharing letters with service users

As part of the NHS Plan, you are able to receive a copy of any letters written by health professionals about you, if you wish.

This service is provided by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust.

In many cases, healthcare professionals write directly to service users, copying the letter to the General Practitioner (GP) or others as necessary. This demonstrates good practice and should be encouraged.

Your letter can be copied to carers or family member if this would be useful and you give consent to do so.

Sharing letters in this way is part of increasing your involvement with your care and treatment.

### **We need to ensure that:**

- You are aware of your right to receive copies of letters, and your right to refuse
- You are asked if you would like a copy of any letter about you; and
- You receive a copy of any letter about you if you wish to

This means the health professional will ask you if you would like to receive a copy of the letters about you.

All you have to do is tell them whether you would like to receive letters or not.

Occasionally, a health professional may decide not to copy a letter to you. This may be where a letter contains information about other people, or it is felt that it could cause you harm.

## Consent

You will be asked to sign a consent form before copies of letters are sent to you.

## Choice

The choice about whether you want to receive copies of letters written about you is entirely yours and does not affect any part of the treatment or care you are receiving.

Important issues and test results will be discussed with you before you receive a letter about them.

You can change your mind at any time.

## If you have any questions about the letter, you should contact:

## References

- Copying Letters to Patients Good Practice Guidelines (2004) Department of Health
- The NHS Plan, paragraph 10.3 (2000) Department of Health
- Policy CNTW(O)22 - Sharing letters with service users

Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL, or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre  
Tel: 0191 246 7288

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