

Patient Safety Champions

In December 2006 the Dept of Health published 'Safety First' a high profile report with 14 specific recommendations for improving patient safety. This project takes forward one of them recommendation 13:

'The active involvement of patients and their families should be promoted by establishing a national network of Patient Champions who will work in partnership with NHS organisations and other key players to improve patient safety; the network should also have strong links with WHO World Alliance for Patients Safety 'Patients for Patient Safety' initiative'

The project is being run in partnership between the National Patient Safety Agency, which is part of the NHS, and the independent charity, Action against Medical Harm (AvMA) which promotes Patient Safety and Justice. The project is linked to the World Health Organisation's world Alliance for Patient Safety's 'Patients for Patient Safety' project.

Overview:

This is a new initiative which aims to put patients at the centre of NHS work on Patient Safety. Patient Safety champions will 'champion' the cause of Patient Safety and of the Patients' role in helping improve safety. Champions will work with regional NHS 'Patient Safety Action Teams', but may also come together to look at national issues and/or work with local NHS organisations. Champions will be part of a national network, informing and supporting each other and they will be supported by staff dedicated to this project. There will be twenty two 'Patient Safety Champions' two for each SHA in England and two for Wales.

Champions will be the vanguard of helping shape how their role will develop and how the experience and perspective of patients will help bring about change in culture and practice in the NHS. A particular focus will be to challenge the culture of denial. Partnership must be a key theme: Patients, Health Professionals, Policymakers and Healthcare Leaders should be working together to prevent avoidable harm in Healthcare.

Role of Champions:

As this is a new initiative it is likely that the role will develop as the project itself does. The following are the roles currently envisaged:

- Meeting with staff members of 'Patient Safety Action Teams' to discuss regional priorities and plans for improving safety providing a Patient Perspective
- Taking part in specific project work on Patient Safety issues within the regions (for example, on a particular kind of treatment or in a particular part of the NHS)
- Helping individual NHS organisations with their systems and plans for improving safety, and the way in which they involve patients in their work
- Acting as a contact point and source of support for other patients who are involved or wish to be involved in their local NHS work on Patient Safety

- Occasional meetings with ‘Champions’ from around the country and with the ‘project manager’ to share experiences and ideas for developing the patients role in Patient Safety
- Giving talks or presentations, or helping with them

Desired Qualities of ‘Champions’:

The successful applicants for Patient Safety Champions have demonstrated:

- Passion and commitment to improving Patient Safety and ensuring that patient experience and voice is heard (this may have been gained as a result of personal or family experience of medical harm, or as a patient activist and change agent)
- A commitment and ability to work in partnership with NHS Staff and agreement with the ‘London Declaration’ of the World Health Organisation Alliance for Patient Safety
- Each champion has undergone the residential induction workshop 20 -21 May 2008
- The ability to commit a reasonable amount of time to this work.