

Guidance for the use of User Surveys in UKMI services

Background

When providing a service, it is important to get feedback from your users so that you know whether what you are providing meets your users' needs. Regularly collecting feedback using a standard feedback form allows you to compare your service to other services using the same tool, and look at changes in feedback on your own service over time.

The suggested questionnaire below has been used across many UKMI centres for several years, and has been designed to provide feedback on the aspects of a Medicines Information service that are important to enquirers. By completing the user survey, the data gained can assist in ensuring Medicines Information Centres meet the requirements of their users, and provide a high-quality, patient-centred enquiry answering service. Positive results will provide a valuable endorsement for the service, whilst any negative results can be used to identify areas that require improvement/investment.

Running a survey

Questions to ask

There is a suggested questionnaire included in appendix A. This has been validated and used widely by UK Medicines Information Centres. Locally, you might decide to ask a different selection of questions; however, if you are going to do this, make sure that they are clear to your intended audience, and that their responses will help you to know how your centre is doing. You may wish to test new questions on a sample of users before using them more widely. Consider asking closed questions ("yes/no" or "on a scale of 1 to 6") to get numerical data you can compare over time, alongside open questions ("Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve our service") to get richer, more nuanced data.

Sample size and frequency

Users should be surveyed throughout the year (at least every other month) in order to pick up any variations in service provision in a timely manner. The number of questionnaires should reflect the number of enquiries answered per month (see table below for suggested numbers). If you answer a large number of enquiries, you could consider stratifying your sample to ensure a representative number of queries from different types of enquirers and levels of complexity are chosen.

Number of relevant enquiries answered per month	% of enquiries surveyed	Number of questionnaires sent out per month
0-100	5%	1-5
100-200	4%	4-8
200-400	3%	6-12
400+	2%	12

Distribution of surveys

There are many different electronic survey tools that can be used to collect your responses. These are easily set up and many have free options that you can use. Be aware that some people may not have access to emails or other electronic communications, so you may also want to keep the ability to send out physical copies of your survey.

If you are sending out surveys frequently, you may want to maintain a list of people you have recently sent a copy to. This is to prevent you repeatedly surveying the same people, which will give you less valuable data as well as potentially annoying your frequent users.

Recording and evaluating returned surveys

If you have used an electronic survey tool to collect your data, it will also provide some functionality to store and evaluate the results. Alternatively, you could record responses in Excel, to allow you to conduct your own analyses on the data. Most electronic survey tools will also allow you to export your results into Excel or other formats.

Interpretation and use of the survey results

The user survey is designed to provide a positive or negative opinion on a number of aspects of your service. As well as adding to the information you have on the performance of your service overall, individual results can also provide an opportunity to reflect on that particular enquiry. Each survey returned should be individually evaluated in a timely manner.

A negative result on any question, or any negative comments, should provoke review of the enquiry involved. Any identified areas for concern should be addressed to minimise the risk of the same problems happening again. It may be appropriate to notify the enquirer of any actions taken to assure them that their concerns were taken seriously.

Positive results are also helpful in informing you on how your service is doing. It is important to share positive feedback with the people who have worked on particular enquiries. You may also wish to keep positive feedback in a specific file, as this may be useful for demonstrating the value of your service.

The overall results, and trends over time, are really helpful in describing the quality and value of your service. Consider ways that you might be able to periodically share the results outside of your service to help to demonstrate the value you add to patient care.

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Appendix A: Suggested Medicines Information User Survey

Enquiry number: _____

Summary of enquiry:

Your enquiry

1. Were you able to contact us easily by phone, email or in person? Yes / No
2. Did our staff interpret your needs correctly? Yes / No
3. Was a deadline agreed for a reply? Can't recall / N/A / Yes / No

Our response

4. Did you receive the answer by the agreed time? N/A / Yes / No
5. Did our response answer your question? Yes / No
6. Did we offer practical advice where appropriate? N/A / Yes / No
7. Did we give you the right amount of detail? Yes / Not enough / Too much
8. Were you confident in the answer we gave you? Yes / No

Outcome

9. Did our answer contribute to patient care? N/A / Yes / No
10. Would you use the service again? Yes / No

Overall rating

11. Overall, what is your opinion of the Medicines Information service provided at this centre? Please circle the number that most closely represents your view.

Poor

1	2	3	4	5	6
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Excellent

12. What can we do to improve the enquiry answering service? Please give us your ideas or any comments you may have below:
