

# 2012/13 Choice Framework

Prepared by the Department of Health

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## My NHS care: what choices do I have?

The NHS is changing, to give you more choices about your healthcare.

This is a guide to your choices about your NHS care and treatment. It explains:

- when you have choices about your healthcare
- where to get more information to help you choose
- how to complain if you are not offered a choice

For some healthcare services, you have the legal right to choose. You must be given these choices by law.

For other healthcare services, you do not have a legal right to choose but you should be offered these choices, depending on what's available locally. This is what the Government has asked healthcare professionals to do.

### **This guide covers:**

- Choosing your care and treatment:
  - your GP practice
  - where to go for your first appointment as an outpatient
  - which consultant will be in charge of your treatment
  - asking to change hospital if you have to wait longer than the maximum waiting times (18 weeks, or two weeks to see a specialist for cancer)
  - who carries out a specialist test if you need one
  - maternity services
  - services provided in the community
  - to take part in health research
- Where can I get more information to help me choose?
- How do I complain if I am not offered these choices?
- How do I get in touch with my local Primary Care Trust?

## Choosing your care and treatment

Choosing your GP practice	
What choices do I have?	<p>You have a right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choose which GP practice you register with</li> <li>• ask to see a particular doctor or nurse at the GP practice. Your practice must try to make sure this happens</li> </ul>
Is this a legal right?	Yes, but there are times when you cannot choose to do this. These are set out next.
When am I not able to make a choice?	A GP practice must accept you unless it has reasonable grounds for not doing so. For example, you might live outside its catchment area or it may not be taking on any new patients.
Who is responsible for offering me this choice?	<p>First, contact the GP practice where you want to register.</p> <p>If you are having difficulty registering with a GP practice, contact your Primary Care Trust.</p>
Where can I get information and support to help me choose?	Your Primary Care Trust will provide information to help you make decisions and, if necessary, find a GP practice for you.

Choosing where to go for your first appointment as an outpatient	
What choices do I have?	If you need to see a consultant or specialist as an outpatient, you can choose to go to any hospital or clinic in England that offers NHS services for your first appointment. (An 'outpatient' appointment means you do not need to stay overnight)
Is this a legal right?	Yes.
When am I not able to make a choice?	<p>You can only choose a hospital or clinic that offers the right treatment and care for your condition.</p> <p>If you need urgent or emergency treatment, you cannot choose who you see.</p> <p>You do not have the right to choose if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a prisoner</li> <li>• a serving member of the Armed Forces</li> <li>• detained under the Mental Health Act 1983</li> <li>• using mental health services</li> <li>• using maternity services (see: <i>Choosing maternity services</i>)</li> </ul>
Who is responsible for offering me this choice?	<p>First, speak to your GP or to the dentist or optometrist who is referring you.</p> <p>If they do not offer you a choice, contact your Primary Care Trust to discuss what choices you have. Your Primary Care Trust must make sure that you have this choice.</p>
Where can I get information and support to help me choose?	<p>You can find out information about the hospitals and clinics you can choose from on 'NHS Choices'. This is a national website for patients: <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a></p> <p>See also: <i>Where can I get more information to help me choose?</i></p>

<b>Choosing which consultant will be in charge of your treatment</b>	
<p>What choices do I have?</p>	<p>If you need to see a consultant as an outpatient, you can choose which consultant will be in charge of your treatment. You will be seen either by the consultant or by a doctor who works with the consultant in their team.</p>
<p>Is this a legal right?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>When am I not able to make a choice?</p>	<p>You can only choose a consultant whose team deals with your condition.</p> <p>If you need urgent or emergency treatment, you cannot choose who you see.</p> <p>You do not have the right to choose if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a prisoner</li> <li>• a serving member of the Armed Forces</li> <li>• detained under the Mental Health Act 1983</li> <li>• using mental health services</li> <li>• using maternity services (see: <i>Choosing maternity services</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>Who is responsible for offering me this choice?</p>	<p>First, speak to your GP or to the dentist or optometrist who is referring you.</p> <p>If they do not offer you a choice, contact your Primary Care Trust to discuss what choices you have. Your Primary Care Trust must make sure that you have this choice.</p>
<p>Where can I get information and support to help me choose?</p>	<p>You can talk to your GP or you can find out information about consultants at a hospital by visiting the hospital website.</p> <p>See also: <i>Where can I get more information to help me choose?</i></p>

Asking to change hospital if you have to wait longer than the maximum waiting times (18 weeks, or two weeks to see a specialist for cancer)	
What choices do I have?	<p>If you need to see a hospital consultant, you will be given an appointment to see the consultant or a doctor who works with that consultant in his or her team. You can ask to be referred to a different hospital if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have to wait more than 18 weeks before starting treatment, if your treatment is not urgent</li> <li>• have to wait more than two weeks before seeing a specialist, if your GP thinks it is possible you have cancer</li> </ul>
Is this a legal right?	<p>Yes, but there are times when you cannot choose to do this. These are set out next.</p>
When am I not able to ask to change hospital?	<p>You do not have these rights if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you choose to wait longer for your treatment to start</li> <li>• you choose to wait longer for your appointment with a specialist after being urgently referred with suspected cancer</li> <li>• delaying the start of your treatment is in your best interests. For example, this might be if you need to lose weight or stop smoking before starting treatment</li> <li>• there are medical reasons which means it is better for you to wait</li> <li>• you fail to attend appointments which you had chosen from a set of reasonable options</li> <li>• you are on the national transplant list</li> <li>• you are using maternity services (see: <i>Choosing maternity services</i>)</li> <li>• you refuse treatment</li> <li>• a doctor has decided that it is appropriate to monitor you for a time without treatment</li> <li>• you cannot start treatment for reasons not related to the hospital. (For example, you are a reservist posted abroad while waiting to start treatment.)</li> <li>• your treatment is no longer necessary</li> </ul>

<p>Who is responsible for offering me this choice?</p>	<p>The organisation responsible for arranging your treatment. This will usually be your Primary Care Trust, but if you have been referred to a highly specialised service it may be your Strategic Health Authority.</p> <p>They must take all reasonable steps to offer you a choice of other hospitals who can see or treat you more quickly.</p>
<p>Where can I get information and support to help me choose?</p>	<p>You can contact the hospital or clinic providing your treatment, or the organisation arranging your treatment (this is usually your Primary Care Trust).</p> <p>Primary Care Trusts must provide advice or assistance to patients who have waited or will wait longer than 18 weeks, or two weeks if your GP thinks it is possible you have cancer.</p>



<b>Choosing who carries out a specialist test if you need one</b>	
<p>What choices do I have?</p>	<p>If your GP decides you need a specialist test, you can choose to have this done by anyone providing that service in England.</p>
<p>Is this a legal right?</p>	<p>Yes, if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the test has been ordered by your GP and</li> <li>• will be your first appointment as an outpatient with a consultant or a doctor in the consultant's team</li> </ul> <p>No, if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the test is not part of a first appointment as an outpatient with a consultant or a doctor in the consultant's team</li> </ul> <p>If you are already at your first appointment as an outpatient, your doctor may decide you need a test. You may be offered a choice about who carries out that test. But you do not have a legal right to choose once you are being seen as an outpatient.</p>
<p>When am I not able to make a choice?</p>	<p>You can only choose from organisations which carry out the test you need in a proper and safe way.</p> <p>You cannot choose who carries out the test if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you need a test urgently</li> <li>• you have been admitted to hospital</li> </ul>
<p>Where can I get information and support to help me choose?</p>	<p>Speak to your GP or the doctor who has asked for your test.</p> <p>You can find out information about the hospitals and clinics you can choose from on 'NHS Choices'. This is a national website for patients: <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a></p> <p>See also: <i>Where can I get more information to help me choose?</i></p>

## Choosing maternity services

What choices do I have?

You can expect a range of choices over maternity services, although these depend on what is best for you and your baby, and what is available locally:

*When you find out you are pregnant*

You can:

- go to your GP and ask them to refer you to a midwifery service of your choice
- go directly to a midwifery service of your choice. You do not have to ask your GP to refer you first

*While you are pregnant*

You can choose to receive 'antenatal' care from:

- a midwife
- a team of maternity health professionals, including midwives and obstetricians. (This will be safer for some women and their babies)

*When you give birth*

You can choose to give birth:

- at home, with the support of a midwife
- in a midwifery facility (for example, a local midwifery unit or birth centre), with the support of a midwife
- in any available hospital in England, with the support of a maternity team. This type of care will be the safest option for some women and their babies. If this is the case for you, you should still have a choice of hospital

*After going home*

After you go home, you can choose to receive 'postnatal' care:

- at home
- in a community setting, such as a Sure Start Children's Centre

Depending where you live, you may have other choices about your maternity care. Contact your local Primary Care Trust for information.

<p>Is this a legal right?</p>	<p>No. It depends what is best for you and your baby, and what is available locally. Every pregnancy is different.</p>
<p>When am I not able to make a choice?</p>	<p>You can choose where to give birth, but this may mean you cannot have some kinds of pain relief during the birth. Some kinds of pain relief are only available in hospitals.</p> <p>If you need urgent or emergency treatment, you cannot choose who you see and may not be able to choose where you give birth.</p>
<p>Who is responsible for offering me this choice?</p>	<p>Your midwife will tell you about the choices available locally.</p> <p>You can also contact your Primary Care Trust to discuss what choices you have.</p>
<p>Where can I get information and support to help me choose?</p>	<p>Your midwife will be able to give you information, advice and support to help you decide.</p> <p>A number of charitable and voluntary organisations can also help you decide what to do. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Childcare Trust, the UK's largest charity for parents. Visit <a href="http://www.nct.org.uk">www.nct.org.uk</a> or call their Helpline: 0300 330 0700</li> <li>• Birth Choice UK, helping women choose maternity care. Visit <a href="http://www.birthchoiceuk.com">www.birthchoiceuk.com</a></li> <li>• AIMS - Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services. Visit <a href="http://www.aims.org.uk">www.aims.org.uk</a>, or email <a href="mailto:helpline@aims.org.uk">helpline@aims.org.uk</a> or call the Helpline: 0300 365 0663 for advice from volunteers</li> <li>• Information Service for Parents. Visit <a href="http://www.nhs.uk/InformationServiceForParents">www.nhs.uk/InformationServiceForParents</a> for information and advice right for your baby's age</li> </ul>

<b>Choosing services provided in the community</b>	
<p>What choices do I have?</p>	<p>The choices you have will depend on where you live.</p> <p>You may be able to choose whom you see for services provided in the community, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical therapy such as physiotherapy</li> <li>• adult hearing assessment services</li> <li>• psychological therapies such as counselling</li> <li>• podiatry (foot) services</li> </ul> <p>Different choices are available in different areas. All Primary Care Trusts have chosen three services where GP practices will offer patients a choice of registered professionals providing that service. In future, the number of services where this choice is available is expected to increase.</p>
<p>Is this a legal right?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>When am I not able to make a choice?</p>	<p>Your choice of services will depend on what your Primary Care Trust, local GP practices and patients think are priorities for your community.</p>
<p>Who is responsible for offering me this choice?</p>	<p>Your GP or the health professional who referred you to the service.</p>
<p>Where can I get information and support to help me choose?</p>	<p>You can find out which services there is a choice for in your area by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• asking at your GP practice</li> <li>• contacting your Primary Care Trust. They will also provide information to help you make decisions</li> <li>• looking at the 'Any Qualified Provider' online map: <a href="https://www.supply2health.nhs.uk/AQPResourceCentre/AQPMap/">https://www.supply2health.nhs.uk/AQPResourceCentre/AQPMap/</a></li> </ul>

<b>Choosing to take part in health research</b>	
<p>What choices do I have?</p>	<p>You can take part in approved health research (for example, clinical trials of medicines) relating to your circumstances or care.</p> <p>You are free to choose whether you take part in any research. You do not have to take part if you do not want to.</p>
<p>When am I not able to make a choice?</p>	<p>You cannot take part in research if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is currently no research relating to your circumstances or care</li> <li>• you do not meet the requirements for a particular study</li> </ul>
<p>Who is responsible for giving me choice?</p>	<p>The health professional who is providing your care, for example, your hospital doctor, your GP or nurse.</p> <p>Primary Care Trusts are required to promote patients' recruitment to and participation in research.</p>
<p>Where can I get information and support to help me choose?</p>	<p>For information to help you decide whether or not to take part in research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHS Choices explains why the NHS carries out research and what different types of research there are. Visit <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a> and search for 'Getting involved in research'</li> <li>• Healthtalkonline explains what clinical trials are and why we need them. Visit <a href="http://www.healthtalkonline.org">www.healthtalkonline.org</a> and search for 'clinical trials'</li> <li>• National Institute for Health Research explains how patients can help with research. Visit <a href="http://www.crncc.nihr.ac.uk">www.crncc.nihr.ac.uk</a> and click on 'Patients and public'</li> </ul> <p>For information on what research is currently under way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit the UK Clinical Trials Gateway: <a href="http://www.ukctg.nihr.ac.uk">www.ukctg.nihr.ac.uk</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Download iPhone, iPad and Android apps for the UK Clinical Trials Gateway</li><li>• Search for 'clinical trials' in the iTunes and Android stores</li></ul>
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## Where can I get more information to help me choose?

You can find advice on how to get information for particular health services in each section of this guide.

There are also lots of ways to get general information to help you make the right choice.

Visit **NHS Choices**: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) This website can help you make important health decisions, including which GP surgery you register with and which hospital you attend for treatment. It provides tools and resources that help you look at your options and make the right decision.

The **Care Quality Commission** checks all hospitals in England to ensure they are meeting national standards. They share their findings with the public. Visit [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk) or call their National Customer Service Centre: Tel: 03000 616161 (Mon to Fri, 8.30am - 5:30pm)

The **NHS Constitution** tells you what you can and should expect when using the NHS. Visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and search for 'NHS Constitution'. The NHS Constitution is also available in an EasyRead version for download. Audio and Braille versions are available on request.

## How do I complain if I am not offered these choices?

**First**, speak to your GP or health professional. If you want to complain about maternity services, speak to your GP, midwife or Head of Midwifery.

**Second**, if you are unhappy with the response from your health professional, complain to your local Primary Care Trust. Primary Care Trusts must publish their complaints procedure. If they agree with your complaint, the Primary Care Trust must make sure that you are offered a choice for that health service.

**Third**, if you are unhappy with the decision from the Primary Care Trust, you have the right to complain to the independent Health Service Ombudsman. To contact the Ombudsman:

- visit [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)
- call the Helpline: 0345 015 4033
- use the Textphone (Minicom) 0300 061 4298
- text 'call back' with your name and your mobile number to 07624 813 005; you will be called back within one working day during office hours (Mon to Fri, 8.30am - 5:30pm)

## How do I get in touch with my local Primary Care Trust?

- contact your GP practice; they can give you the telephone number and address of your local Primary Care Trust
- visit NHS Choices, [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). Click on the 'Health services near you' section on the homepage. You can search for your Primary Care Trust by your postcode or location

*This information is correct until April 2013.*

*After April 2013, the way the NHS is run is changing. Clinical Commissioning Groups managed by local GPs and health professionals will replace Primary Care Trusts. This will not affect the rights and choices explained here. It will affect who is responsible for giving you these choices and how you complain. Up to date information will be available after April 2013.*

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