**Friends and Family Test**

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| **Version:** | **Review date:** | **Edited by:** | **Approved by:** | **Comments:** |
| v1 | 22/09/2021 | Sultan Mohamed | Nine Swift |  |
| v2 | 04/10/ 2023 | Sultan Mohamed | Munira Mohamed | Change of website address for feedback |
| v3 | 24/02/2025 | Sultan Mohamed | Munira Mohamed |  |
|  | August 2026 |  |  | Next review |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

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# Introduction

## Policy statement

The purpose of this document is to provide a detailed overview of the revised Friends and Family Test (FFT) following NHS England’s and NHS Improvement’s published revised FFT guidance on 2 September 2019 and how it applies to this practice.

The revised FFT will be implemented from the 1st April 2020 and practices must make arrangements to ensure the changes have been actioned by this date.

The NHS Friends and Family Test is a contractual requirement, aimed at providing service users with an opportunity to give feedback which may not have previously been heard.

## Status

This document and any procedures contained within it are contractual and therefore form part of your contract of employment. Employees will be consulted on any modifications or change to the document’s status.

## Training and support

The practice will provide guidance and support to help those to whom it applies to understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Additional support will be provided to managers and supervisors to enable them to deal more effectively with matters arising from this policy.

1. **Scope**

## Who it applies to

This document applies to all employees of the practice and other individuals performing functions in relation to the practice, such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

## Why and how it applies to them

This document has been produced to support the guidance issued by NHS England and NHS Improvement outlining the revision to the FFT requirement which is to be implemented by 1st April 2020. It is a contractual requirement for GP practices to adhere to the changes.

The practice aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have in regard to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

1. **Policy**

## Background

The FFT was introduced in April 2013 as a feedback tool to support the significance of providing service users with an opportunity to give feedback about their experience. Since its inception, the FFT has been rolled out across most NHS-funded services in England[[1]](#footnote-1) and became a contractual requirement for all GP practices to undertake on 1st December 2014.

## Aim of the FFT

The overarching aims of the FFT are to:[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Gather useful feedback from people who use services which can then be fed back to the staff providing their care together with commissioners and regulatory bodies
* Identify areas for improvement
* Inform current and prospective patients about experiences of other service users

To date, experience of the FFT has shown that the majority of issues identified by service users have been managed at practice level. Notwithstanding this, the feedback and subsequent actions have enhanced the overall patient experience. Furthermore, positive comments are also recorded and discussed, ensuring that staff at Sheerwater Health Centre are aware of the recognition given to them by patients.

NHS England recently conducted a [project](https://www.england.nhs.uk/fft/friends-and-family-test-development-project-2018-19/) to improve some areas of how FFT works. The intention is to make the FFT a more effective tool in gathering patient feedback that helps to drive local improvements in healthcare services.

This resulted in publication of revised FFT Guidance[[3]](#footnote-3), which will be implemented from 1 April 2020.

## FFT mandatory requirements

To comply with contractual obligations, practices must:

* Afford patients and service users the opportunity to provide feedback using the FFT
* Use the revised, standard FFT question and response wording
* Include a follow-up question, offering a response in free text format
* Submit the necessary data in the specified format to NHS England on a monthly basis
* Publish results locally, including free text comments (so long as the participant has not opted out of having their comment published)

## Principles of the FFT

The following principles apply to the FFT:

* The results are to be published to the general public and patients, enabling informed decisions and choices to be made
* Patients are to be given the opportunity to provide feedback using the FFT after each visit to the practice
* The process is simple for both the practice and the patient
* It is a continual process
* Responses are collected anonymously
* Individuals unable to complete the FFT are to be given the opportunity to do so with the help of carers or other support staff / volunteers
* Staff are to be mindful of those circumstances in which a patient may not be able to complete the FFT

Whilst it may seem opportune to ask patients to complete the FFT after every visit / appointment at Sheerwater Health Centre, it is not mandatory. There is no target response rate; however, NHS England will publish data that illustrates the response statistics on a monthly basis.

## The FFT question

The new, revised FFT question is designed to make the FFT more accessible for all patients by using an easier to understand question:

**“Overall, how was your experience of our service?”**

The new revised responses are:

* **Very good**
* **Good**
* **Neither good nor poor**
* **Poor**
* **Very poor**
* **Don’t know**

There are to be no deviations to the above; the wording must remain exactly as it is.

There is also new preceding text to make it clear which setting or service the feedback refers to:

Following the words “**Thinking about**”, practices can choose the most appropriate of the following options or use their own similar wording – this will help to ensure the feedback collected is related to the correct service and practices can also tailor the questions to include all patient groups:

* **Your GP Practice**
* **Your recent appointment**
* **Your recent visit**
* **Our recent home visit**
* **The services we provide**

For clarification, the FFT mandatory question should be:

Thinking about (example: your recent home visit), overall, how was your experience of our service? This is followed by the answer choices.

In addition to the mandatory question, Sheerwater Health Centre is to ask at least one further question. This question may target a specific area or focus on a recent development within the practice, which may enable the patient to provide more detailed feedback about their care.

NHS England recommended questions are as follows but practices are able to choose their own:

* Please can you tell us why you gave your answer?
* Please tell us about anything that we could have done better

Patients must be given the opportunity to opt out of having their free text comments publicised. This can be achieved by including the following statement:

“Please tick this box if you DO NOT wish your free text comments to be made public.”

It should be noted that for those practices that choose to include the FFT question within their local patient questionnaires or surveys, this new guidance allows practices to choose where, within the surveys, the question is placed

It no longer needs to be the first question asked, allowing it to make more sense to the target audience

## Feedback opportunities

All staff are to encourage feedback and patients should be able to provide feedback at any time. The following are realistic occasions when feedback can be requested:

* Consultations with a GP or other clinician (on-site, home visit or telephone appointment)
* Patients contacting the practice to request information or to order or collect repeat prescriptions, etc.
* Patients attending the practice in person, without a prior appointment, and opting to leave without being seen

Services provided by outside agencies, such as midwifery which are not part of the practice’s core services do not require the practice to capture data for those services; this remains the responsibility of the service provider.

## Data collection

The collection of data should not be a cumbersome process; in fact, NHS England stipulate that it should be flexible whilst “aiming to create as little burden as possible for providers and their patients”.

Data may be collected as follows:

* Handwritten, i.e. postcard format
* Telephone
* Tablet
* SMS / text message
* Via an app or online
* Any other method agreed in the practice

At Sheerwater Health Centre, the preferred method(s) of collection are as follows:

* Handwritten, i.e. postcard format
* Telephone
* SMS / text message

Via website <https://www.sheerwaterhealthcentre.nhs.uk/service/friends-and-family-test/>

* Bottom of Form

Data is to be submitted to NHS England at the end of each month for that calendar month of data collection. It is to be submitted by using the Calculating Quality Reporting System (CQRS). Access to CQRS is achieved by users logging in by using their unique username and password. Guidance on submitting data can be found [here](https://www.england.nhs.uk/fft/fft-submission/).

The following information is to be submitted:

* Total number of responses for each response category
* The collection method of each response
* The number of responses per each collection methodology

A template for recording this data is shown overleaf in tabular form.

Please note, there is no requirement to submit the data/statistics for the responses to the additional question asked by the practice to NHS England.

Table for collecting data:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very good | Good | Neither good nor poor | Poor | Very poor | Don’t know | Total |
| Handwritten | 50 | 25 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 82 |
| Telephone | 1 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| Tablet | 23 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 39 |
| SMS/text | 11 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 21 |
| App | 5 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 19 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Total | 90 | 47 | 24 | 7 | 1 | 12 | 181 |

Data for submission should be:

Response category:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very good | Good | Neither good nor poor | Poor | Very poor | Don’t know | Total |
| 90 | 47 | 24 | 7 | 1 | 12 | 181 |

Data collection method:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Handwritten | Telephone | Tablet | SMS | App | Other | Total |
| 82 | 13 | 39 | 21 | 19 | 7 | 181 |

A [friends and family test (FFT) data collection tool](https://practiceindex.co.uk/gp/forum/resources/friends-and-family-fft-collator.1120/) has been established to assist with this process.

## Publication of results

Results are published on a monthly basis by NHS England and NHS Choices.

NHS England will publish the following data:

* Number of responses
* Number of responses for each category
* Number of responses for each collection method
* Total percentage of ‘Very good’ and ‘Good’ categories
* The practice list size

The following data will be published on NHS Choices:

* Total percentage of ‘Very good’ and ‘Good’ categories
* The practice list size

## Inclusivity

The FFT is to be available to all practice patients, including children and young people, those with learning disabilities, dementia sufferers, deaf, deafblind and those with little or no English or poor levels of literacy. In such circumstances, the support of parents, carers, volunteers or a member of the team should be considered.

Further guidance and examples of work in England to make the FFT inclusive for all can be seen by emailing [england.friendsandfamilytest@nhs.net](mailto:england.friendsandfamilytest@nhs.net)

In addition, the FFT help desk should be emailed for supporting material to make the FFT accessible to children and young persons, those with learning disabilities and other conditions such as deafness, deafblind, dementia and sight loss. Also available are question translations and guidance for the use of interpreters. To access this information, email [england.friendsandfamilytest@nhs.net](mailto:england.friendsandfamilytest@nhs.net)

## FFT queries

Every attempt should be made to answer any queries using the guidance material associated with this policy. Staff are to speak to the practice manager should they have a query that they are unable to answer having read this policy and the aforementioned supporting guidance.

Where there remains a query, which cannot be resolved directly, it should be referred to [info.gpc@bma.org.uk](mailto:info.gpc@bma.org.uk) with the subject heading of: Friends and Family Test.

1. **Summary**

The FFT is an essential development tool that enables the practice to enhance service delivery by introducing new initiatives which meet the patients’ needs. It is envisaged that these revised changes will encourage better access to this FFT for all patient groups.

Encouraging participation will increase patient involvement in all elements of service delivery.

1. [NHS E Friends and Family Test](https://www.england.nhs.uk/fft/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [NHS (E) FFT in General Practice Guidance](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/using-the-fft-to-improve-patient-experience-guidance-v2.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [www.england.nhs.uk/fft/fft-guidance/revised-fft-guidance/](https://www.england.nhs.uk/fft/fft-guidance/revised-fft-guidance/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)