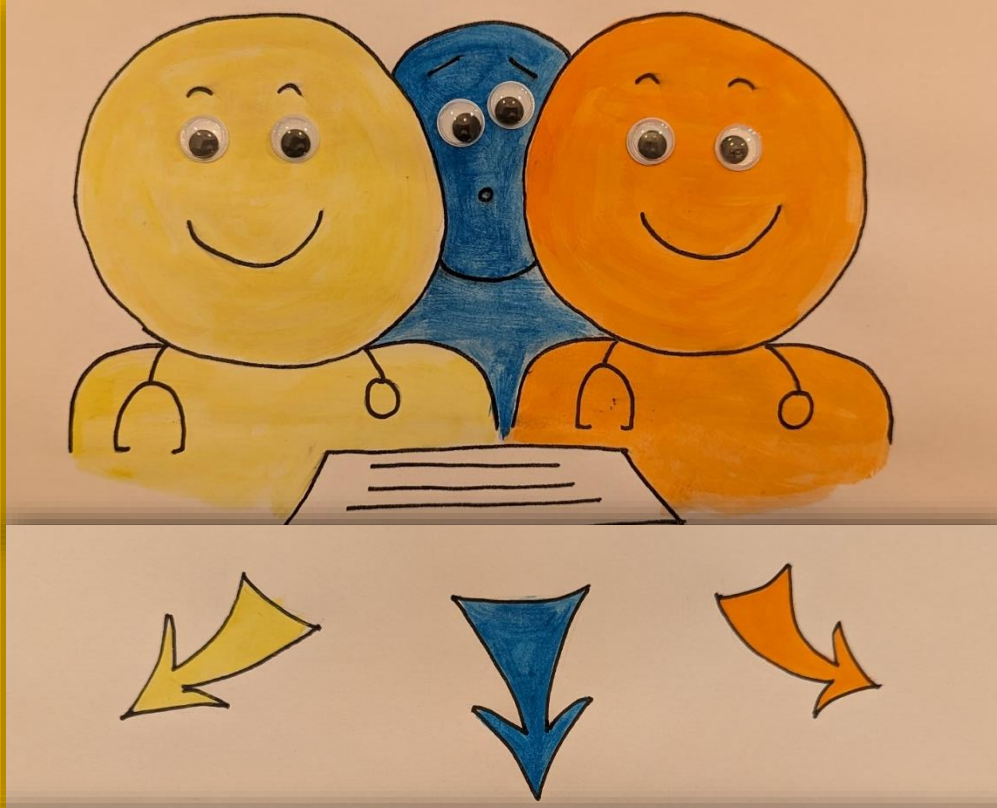




## Writing to patients

Design of a study to support the rheumatology multidisciplinary team to write directly to patients

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## Outpatient Clinic Letters: Clinically-led Specialty Outpatient Guidance

Letters following an outpatient appointment form an integral part of an outpatient attendance, providing valuable information on the consultation and the plan for the patient's ongoing management. They enable continuity of care within the provider, and as care is transferred/shared with colleagues in other specialties and primary care.

Outpatient clinic letters have at least three different audiences, each of which will have different requirements for what they need to be able to take from the contents. In view of this clinic letters must be clear, concise, in plain English and be structured with headings to allow quick and easy reference for all concerned. For patients, there should be an appreciation of their needs by considering adaptations e.g. those with visual impairment needing larger text in line with [Accessible Information standard](#)

	Patient / Carers	Primary Care	Secondary / Tertiary Care
Requirements	Patients often won't remember all that is discussed in clinic. The letter serves as a summary of their consultation to act as a reminder of what was discussed and what they can expect to happen next, or what they may need to do	In view of the high volume of letters these are primarily dealt with by admin, coders and pharmacy. Need to easily understand and identify information on any changes to the patient's diagnosis or management and any actions required by primary care	A summary of the care received to date and the patient's relevant history with a clear plan for the ongoing management to ensure that if the patient is seen by a different healthcare professional they are able to provide good continuity
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter written to patient with a copy to other healthcare professionals</li> <li>Avoidance of medical jargon and acronyms ensuring patients / carers can understand the</li> </ul>	Summary of the key information that is structured and in plain English: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnoses (highlight any new ones)</li> <li>Changes to medication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant past medical history (if not easily accessible through the electronic health record)</li> </ul>

Please, write to me. Writing outpatient clinic letters to patients. Guidance

03/09/2018

## Guidance and information for secondary, community and mental health service staff

It means most patients aged 16 and over with online accounts (such as through the NHS App or other patient online apps) will automatically be able to view new (prospective) entries in their GP clinical record.

This will include information sent into general practice from secondary care and other providers to be added into the patient record, such as outpatient clinic letters, discharge summaries and other correspondence.

# Writing to patients from rheumatology

## *Supporting the rheumatology multidisciplinary team to write directly to patients*

### Phase 1: **Scoping**

#### Surveys

To establish patients' current understanding of rheumatology clinic letters and the terms used in these letters, and healthcare professional current clinic letter writing practice

#### **Outputs**

*Knowledge of patients' current understanding of rheumatology terminology & current professional practice*

### Phase 2: **Exploring**

#### Interviews and focus groups

To understand patient and healthcare professionals' perspectives on clinic letters being written directly to patients, and their preferences regarding the content and structure of such letters

#### **Outputs**

*Better understanding of patient and professional views on writing directly to patients*

### Phase 3: **Co-producing resources**

#### Co-production workshops

To co-produce guidance and other resources to support healthcare professionals to write clinic letters directly to patients in a way that is understandable and acceptable to patients

#### **Outputs**

*Co-produced resources to support HCPs to write directly to patients, including example letters, training resources, patient materials*

Impact  
on  
practice

**Patient and public involvement and engagement**

# Relevance to primary care

- Prospective open access from 31<sup>st</sup> October
- Fewer requests to 'translate' secondary care letters
- Improved patient self-management
- Support shared decision-making
- Reinforce motivational conversations

# Thank you



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