



Telling people about waiting lists



The Public Services Ombudsman looks into complaints about services that are for everyone. We call these **public services**.



In April 2022 we started to look at how people are told about waiting lists in Northern Ireland.



We looked at

- how doctors tell people about waiting lists
- how Trusts tell people about waiting lists
- patient stories and complaints about waiting lists
- how easy it is to get waiting list information
- plans to make waiting list information better.



What we did



- We had visits and meetings with Health and Social Care Trusts and others.



- We looked at examples of how to run things well. We looked at what we could learn from these.



- We sent out 2 questionnaires about waiting lists. 1 for doctors and 1 for anyone.



- We did interviews about waiting lists. Some with doctors and some with patients.



- We asked questions and asked for information.

Using Principles of Good Administration



We used Principles of Good Administration to see how well things were being run.



Principles of Good Administration

- Help everyone understand what good administration looks like and
- give people better services.

The principles are



- Getting it right.



- Putting the needs of the customer first.



- Being open and taking responsibility.



- Being fair.



- Putting things right.



- Always looking to do things better.

What we found out



- Services do not tell people about waiting lists in the same way. The Department of Health has done nothing to make this better.

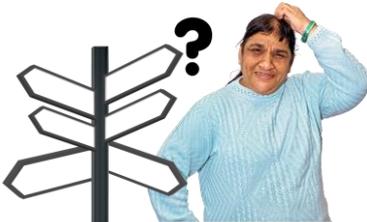


- There needs to be better guidance on how to tell people about waiting lists.



Waiting list information is not always given. People are not told

- how long they might wait
- about problems that can make waiting times longer
- about rules that can mean losing their place on a waiting list.



- Waiting list information is not easy to find.



- Plans to make things better will not fix all the problems we found.



We found the way people are told about waiting lists in Northern Ireland is not good.

We call this **systemic maladministration**.

8/06/2023

What we think should happen



- The Department of Health should change guidance. This will help Trusts know what to tell people about waiting lists.



- There should be a letter or text that can be used by all Trusts. It should give people the same type of information. For example



- The type of waiting list you are on. For example, an appointment waiting list or an operation waiting list.
- The medical area your waiting list is for. For example, radiology for cancer treatment.
- How long people might wait.
- How to get information and what might happen.



- Patients should be given an update if waiting more than 6 months.



- There should be an area on Trust websites that gives waiting list information.



A copy of our report and a video is on our website.

www.nipso.org.uk

To get in touch with us



Call **0800 343424**
Email nipso@nipso.org.uk