

TORIES AND LABOUR FAIL TO IMPRESS ON NHS PROMISES



In4Health Programme Director
Louise Ford

Neither the government nor the opposition have fared well on their promises for the NHS in a survey of delegates at the NHS Alliance's annual conference.

The majority (86%) of respondents, including GPs, nurses and primary care managers, were 'concerned' 'cautious' or 'suspicious' about health secretary Andy Burnham's promise to do all he could to protect primary care budgets from public sector spending cuts.

And despite the Conservatives' commitment to 'slash' NHS bureaucracy, only 26% of those questioned believed the return of a Tory government at the next election would improve the quality of patient care. The survey of 100 delegates at the Alliance conference in Manchester last week was carried out by In4Health, the national communication channel for patients in GPs' surgeries and hospitals.

Delegates were doubtful too about the government's new initiative to encourage patients to leave feedback about their GPs on the NHS Choices website. Nearly half (48%) thought this would **not** give an accurate picture of the quality of their GP's care. Only 19% thought it would give an accurate picture, while 33% were undecided.

The survey also showed that health professionals feel taken for granted in their jobs, and also revealed their views of the health service as patients.

A number admitted in the anonymous survey that they sometimes forget to keep appointments at their own GP's surgery or local hospital – despite knowing the cost to the NHS of not turning up.

More than 3 out of 10 (38%) confessed to missing up to five medical appointments with their GP or local hospital, costing the NHS around £100 a time.

A third (33%) of respondents confessed to missing one appointment while 5% revealed they'd missed up to **five** booked appointments. The NHS Information Centre estimates that DNAs (did not attend) appointments at hospitals cost the NHS in the region of £600 million a year.

The majority of GPs, nurses and health service workers did not feel valued by patients, their Primary Care Trust and the Department of Health or government. Sixty-six percent felt unappreciated by patients, 70% said their employers did not value them and 78% said the same of the government.

Speaking as patients, 59% of health professionals rated expert diagnosis and advice coupled with efficient, swift treatment as the most important factors in their healthcare experience. Only 13% rated cleanliness and hygiene as the most important factors. And just three per cent saw choice – the ability to be seen and treated by the health professional they wanted – as the most important.

With waiting areas the first impression many people have of the NHS, the survey revealed frustration among health professionals who were eager to de-clutter and overhaul public areas and make them more welcoming. According to 57% of respondents, GP and hospital waiting areas were over-filled with leaflets and posters, and mismatched seating. In short, they 'could do better'.

Louise Ford, Programme Director at In4Health commented: "The survey gives a fascinating snapshot of the views of health professionals on a range of vital issues, both professionally and as patients using health services. For instance, it reveals that they are prone to forgetfulness like the rest of us, and occasionally miss NHS appointments, despite knowing the high cost of these.

"It's worth noting that the majority of respondents would like to see an improvement in public waiting areas with more modern facilities, including up-to-date and relevant information displayed for patients.

"Another interesting finding is that the most important factor in their healthcare experience as patients is efficient, expert diagnosis and advice – which of course is what they and colleagues strive to provide every single working day."

-ENDS-

For further information and a copy of the full survey results please contact Ruth Devlin at Mason Williams Communications:
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About In4Health

In4Health is the national information channel created to make it easy for patients in GP surgeries and hospitals to ask questions, access information and leave feedback

In4Health provides

- **Real-time feedback from patients on what matters most**
- **Advertising-free broadcast screens delivering national and local tailored health messages**
- **The opportunity for patients to 'self-serve' information that is important to them**
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Following trials in Wiltshire, Sussex and London, surgeries have benefitted from time saved at busy GP receptions, and an increase in registrations for organ donation and smoking cessation programmes

Since its inception in 2008, In4Health has been working successfully with University College London Hospitals (UCLH) NHS Foundation Trust, Wiltshire Primary Care Trust and Brighton & Hove PCT to refine and develop its LCD screen offer to patients

In4Health aims to roll out its interactive system to 50 hospitals and 2,000 GP surgeries UK-wide by the end of 2011