



*The National Healthcare Charter: You and Your Health Service 2012* states that as a service user you are entitled to “honest and open communication throughout your care especially when plans change or if something goes wrong”

We respect this right and we are committed to improving the safety and quality of the care we deliver to service users. This is why we operate a policy of Open Disclosure which will assist you if you have experienced harm as a result of your care/treatment.

This leaflet has been developed to help you during this process and to ensure you have an understanding of what to expect.

*The National Healthcare Charter 2012 – Our responsibilities to you*

## Get involved!

**Find out about how you can get involved in improving health services in Ireland.**

The HSE is actively inviting service users to get involved on patient forums and quality improvement initiatives. To find out more contact:

National Advocacy Unit, HSE,  
Quality & Patient Safety Directorate,  
Health Service Executive, Oak House,  
Millennium Park, Naas, Co. Kildare

**Tel: (045) 880 400**  
**Email: [yoursay@hse.ie](mailto:yoursay@hse.ie)**  
**[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)**

# Open Disclosure

## Communicating when things go wrong



**HSE**  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



**people caring for people**

**This is a collaborative project by the HSE and the State Claims Agency**

Tús Áite do  
Shábháilteacht 1 Othar  
Patient Safety First

**HSE**  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Quality and Patient Safety Directorate

Gníomhaireacht Éileamh an Stáit  
State Claims Agency

### ***What is Open Disclosure?***

Open Disclosure occurs when staff in the health and social care service communicate with you in an open and honest manner when things go wrong with your care i.e. when an adverse event occurs.

### ***What is an Adverse Event?***

An adverse event is when you experience an incident which results in harm to you. This may or may not be the result of an error.

### ***Why do Adverse Events occur?***

Sometimes, despite our best plans and actions, things can go wrong in healthcare. A service user may suffer harm which is a recognised complication or side effect of a condition, procedure or treatment.

Sometimes, errors happen in the delivery of care and treatment to patients as healthcare is very complex and unanticipated things can occur.

### ***What can I expect if an adverse event happens to me?***

If something goes wrong with your care or treatment when you are attending a health and social care service you can expect the following:

- A member of the staff will speak to you honestly and openly as soon as possible after the event in relation to (a) what happened, (b) your condition and (c) your ongoing care plan.
- Remember that all of the facts in relation to what has happened may not be available at this time so staff may not be able to answer all of your questions until a later date.
- If you are not in a condition to receive the information e.g. you are too ill or recovering from an anaesthetic, staff will inform your next of kin or support person as named by you in your healthcare record.

- You are entitled to nominate family members whom you would like to be involved and also to name those whom you do not wish any information to be shared with.
- The service will review what went wrong and you will be kept informed about the findings of this review, any recommendations made and any actions taken or planned by the service to try and prevent this happening again.
- You can expect to be involved in and contribute to decisions made in relation to your care
- You will be treated with dignity and respect and you will receive an apology, when an apology is due to you.
- You can expect confidentiality.

### ***Should I have someone with me when staff are talking to me about what happened?***

It is recommended that you have somebody, of your choice, with you to support you during this meeting. Your support person should be somebody that you are comfortable with and can talk to easily and somebody you are willing for the service to share your personal information with. An advocate may be arranged for you if required.

### ***Who will speak to me about what happened?***

- The number of staff present at this meeting may vary depending on what happened. Usually the person leading the meeting will be someone from your healthcare team who knows the most about what happened and who will be able to answer any questions you may have.
- When something goes wrong it is distressing for everyone involved including staff who are also often traumatised by the event.
- The member of staff leading the discussion may bring a support person with them.
- There may be a member of staff present also to take notes.

### ***How should I prepare for an Open Disclosure meeting?***

#### ***Prior to this meeting you may find the following advice helpful:***

- Think about what questions and fears/concerns you have in relation to (a) what has happened, (b) your condition and (c) your ongoing care.
- In advance of the meeting write down any questions or concerns you have.
- Think about who you would like to have present with you at the meeting as a support person.
- Think of what things may assist you going forward.
- Think about which healthcare staff you feel should be in attendance at the meeting.

### ***What happens after the meeting?***

- Further meetings may be necessary if all of the information you require is not available.
- You may be satisfied that all of your issues / concerns have been addressed.
- If you are not satisfied that your concerns have been addressed adequately you have the right to make a complaint. Further information in relation to how to make a complaint is available from the service you are attending or email [yoursay@hse.ie](mailto:yoursay@hse.ie)
- You are entitled to obtain a copy of your medical record.