

## **RCN fact sheet: Friends and Family Test November 2012**

### **Introduction**

The Government has announced that from April 2013 all providers of NHS funded acute services for inpatients and patients discharged from A&E will be required to ask patients whether they would recommend the service, using the following question:

“How likely are you to recommend our <ward/A&E department> to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment?” with answers on a scale of extremely likely to extremely unlikely.”

### **What is the basis for the question?**

The question, and the approach, is based on the Net Promoter Score, a customer loyalty metric developed by (and a registered trademark of) Fred Reichheld, Bain and Company, and Satmetrix. It is most frequently used in commercial retailing to generate customer feedback following a transaction.

The NPS is based on the idea that a company's customers can be divided into three categories: Promoters, Passives, and Detractors. The question, ‘How likely is it that you would recommend [company X] to a friend or colleague?’ is used to identify three groups among a company's customers, and by doing so provide an easy to understand measure of the company's performance, through its ‘customers' eyes’.

In the standard mode the categorisation works to a ‘0 to 10’ point rating scale, and customers are categorized as follows:

- Promoters (score 9-10) are loyal enthusiasts who will keep buying and refer others, fueling growth;
- Passives (score 7-8) are satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who are vulnerable to competitive offerings;
- Detractors (score 0-6) are unhappy customers who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

Taking the percentage of an organisation's customers who are Detractors from the percentage who are Promoters Detractors gives the NPS.

### **How does it work?**

People who have recently experienced an episode of healthcare, i.e. having been a patient in a hospital, or having attended an A&E department and received treatment,

will be asked the question, and asked to indicate their response via a scaled response option.

### **What will the nursing involvement be?**

It is likely that nurses and healthcare assistants will be involved in the process for dissemination or collection of paperwork (forms, information leaflets) to support the test.

All staff will be impacted by the results of the test, since it will be used measure their employing organisations 'success' in achieving patient satisfaction, and could result in changes to staffing, structures, or services.

In addition the Prime Minister announced in October 2012 that funding for IT equipment and training for nurses and healthcare assistants would make reference to the test, whereby those organisations doing well on the test would not have to pay back Government loans.

### **Critique**

The validity of both the process, and the actual question, are both contested, even in retailing.

In relation to healthcare it is difficult to assign any single motive or rationale to an individual's choice, and so beyond the simplistic interpretation of an individual being satisfied with their care, it is hard to give any further meaning about how their response is associated with anything related to the actual provision of safe, high-quality healthcare.

Additionally, and as raised in research undertaken by the Picker Institute and the CQC, whether or not the question is embedded within a series of other questions, or how the options for responding are framed, can all alter the way respondents answer.

### **Further information**

The test is currently being used across NHS Midlands and East Strategic Health Authority region.

The RCN will continue monitoring the application and use of the test as it rolled out across the country, and with special focus on the IT and training promise made by the PM..

### **References and further reading**

- The Picker/CQC research into the question and the use of the Net Promoter Score across the NHS can be here:  
<http://www.pickereurope.org/news-release-21-june-2012.html>
- Kings Fund Article

<http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2012/06/family-and-friends-test-will-hospitals-raise-their-game>

- PM's announcement on funding for IT for nurses and healthcare assistants:  
<http://mediacentre.dh.gov.uk/2012/10/08/next-generation-nursing-and-midwifery-to-free-up-more-time-for-patients/>
- East Midlands' Quality observatory:  
<http://www.emqo.eastmidlands.nhs.uk/welcome/quality-indicators/friends-family-test/>