

Patient Discharge Summary

Are your patients being discharged safely?

Why this is important

In many trusts today the discharge process is a cause of major concern with a poorly defined and inconsistent process compromising the clinical care of patients and sometimes even leading to costly and damaging major patient safety incidents. Typically the discharge process fails to get vital information to GPs in a timely manner. Such information needs to include diagnosis, test results, treatment received and procedures performed and new or altered medication. All too often this information is lost, delayed or delivered incomplete or with illegible hand written notes. Without it GPs and community clinicians have to waste time calling around to get essential information. In some cases major patient safety issues can arise which result in patients needing to be re-admitted to hospital and potentially even costly litigation. Clearly such a situation represents an unacceptable risk to patients and is a waste of valuable NHS resources.

The problems arise because the process for creating discharge summaries is often a manual operation, handled differently by each department, duplicating time and effort with processes prone to errors and time delays. Patient demographics and diagnosis are often entered as free text or missed out altogether. Accuracy and timely creation of forms are totally dependent on the availability of patient case notes and the number of staff or departments involved to complete the process. Once created, the discharge summary is not tracked or guaranteed to reach its destination, often arriving at the GP practice several weeks later and sometimes not at all.

With the changing shape of the NHS, the concerns regarding discharge information are becoming heightened. With Choose and Book, GPs are dealing with an increasing number of hospitals and independent healthcare providers. In this environment previous informal routes to gathering extra information will not be sufficient.

There are also signs that PCTs are starting to take the issue seriously with some of them using discharge summaries to validate claims under the Payment by Results (PbR) system and refusing to pay where satisfactory summaries are not being produced in a timely manner.

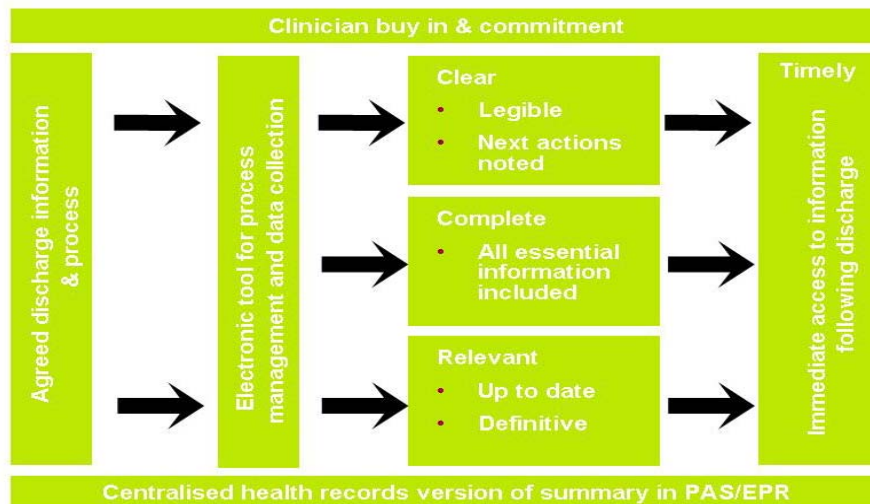
Model for success

WCI has worked in partnership with the NHS for 19 years and we draw on cross-industry best practice from industries such as pharmaceuticals, aerospace & defence to deliver lean solutions and technology to healthcare organisations. We have applied this expertise to the discharge process to remove unnecessary, non value-adding steps and introduce technology for automation and safe handling of patient information. The results increase efficiency, reduce waste and improve patient care whilst sustaining change. Our approach uses lean thinking through a proven set of principles and tools that will identify:

- what value has to be delivered to the customer (patient, doctor or department)
- what the current workflow process looks like and what the value stream will be
- what wasteful steps exist and where failure may occur in the processes
- what future state should be planned to eliminate the waste and enhance each value-adding step in a process

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Patient Discharge Summary: Model for Success



Benefits

Substandard discharge processes are derived from a combination of overly complex processes and the limitations of working in a paper based solution. The introduction of electronic discharge summaries and improved processes has been measured and can deliver profound benefits:

- Fewer patient incidents following discharge, resulting in reduced re-admissions
- Improved patient safety through the provision of clear, complete, relevant and timely discharge summaries resulting in reduced litigation
- Estimated cost benefits from better generation of summaries in excess of £200k p.a. for an average trust
- Improved coding efficiency resulting in smoother payment by commissioners
- Reduced data duplication & volume

Proof of Solution

WCI design discharge summary processes that deliver the value defined by the customer. Based on lean principles, the value added is with as few steps in the process as possible and the minimum of manual work, rework and intervention.

“We designed and piloted an electronic discharge form for the Trust using Microsoft Office InfoPath®. The new simplified process allowed ward staff to pre-fill much of the key data prior to the doctor finalising the patient’s release. At least 50% of the data can be treated this way.

The forms were automatically populated with information from the Trust’s PAS. Our process improvement measurements showed the Trust could save up to 20,000 working hours a year.”

Ben Stock, CTO, WCI Consulting Limited