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**NHS Chief Executives
NHS Directors of Nursing
NHS Directors of HR
NHS England Regional Directors of
Nursing
NHS England Regional Directors of HR
and OD**

28 November 2013

Dear colleague,

Re: NHS Friends and Family Test

Since the introduction of the Friends and Family Test (FFT) in April 2013, more than one million individual pieces of feedback have been collected on patients' experiences of inpatient and A&E services. All women are now being asked to complete the test in NHS funded maternity services too and we are looking forward to seeing the first results of their feedback at the end January 2014. And of course we are gearing up for the roll out of the NHS staff FFT in April 2014. We will be writing to Directors of HR in early December with further details of the requirements for staff FFT.

It is hard to overplay what an achievement this is for the NHS. I would like to personally thank you and your teams for making it happen and for your part in continuing to ensure that patients' voices are both heard and acted upon.

Since FFT began rolling out on 1 April, my team and I have visited a large number of trusts. We have witnessed, first hand, not only what a difference regular FFT feedback can make to both patients and their families, but also the difference it makes for staff, who can now see how much people appreciate what they do and where they can make improvements to services.

Something we have observed in these visits is how important and valuable the free text/open comments section is to Trusts. Enabling staff to understand why people have given the responses they have means they are empowered to make changes where necessary and also see which aspects of their service is the most valued by patients. We have witnessed how these comments are being used on the ward to drive improvement, such as helping frontline teams to focus on better communications with patients, the quality of their local environment and of nutrition and caring. It was the recognition of the power of such comments that influenced our decision to ask that free text comments be a required part of the maternity FFT. At present, inclusion of a free text box is not mandatory in the guidance for Inpatients and A&E but we expect to request its inclusion from the start of the next financial year. In the meantime, we would strongly encourage trusts to ensure people can provide feedback on why they gave the

answer they did. If you are not doing this already we can provide advice on how best to do it, so please feel free to contact us at england.friendsandfamilytest@nhs.net

The potential inclusion of a free text box across all FFT pathways is just one of the elements we are looking at as we review the operational processes underpinning FFT six months post launch. We recognise, as with any new initiative, that it is important to take stock and look at both what is working well and what could be improved. We have already listened to, and acted upon, your feedback around the presentation of Inpatient and A&E data on NHS Choices, but we will also be reviewing the areas of FFT data collection, calculation and communication to ensure that the Test is as effective as it possibly can be to drive improvements and better outcomes for patients. All trusts will have the opportunity to contribute to the review and ultimately influence the design of future FFT implementation guidance. We will be in touch later in the year with details about how you can get involved in this important exercise.

My team are working with a range of organisations across the country to test the application of FFT in additional clinical settings, such as outpatient and day case services, community and mental health services and primary care. We plan to issue guidance for these additional settings in the spring. I would encourage those of you who are keen to expand FFT prior to then, to go ahead rather than wait for the guidance and to feedback your experience of what works in these settings so that we can share your valuable learning.

Once again, I am very proud of what we have achieved in such a short space of time. The FFT is driving the patient's voice into the heart of some key NHS services and will eventually ensure that anyone using any part of the NHS has the opportunity to be heard. We have already learnt a huge amount from what we have been told. The key now is to ensure we continue to listen and make the changes necessary to ensure a first class service for all.

If you have any queries about the content of this letter, or about FFT in general, please don't hesitate to contact us at england.friendsandfamilytest@nhs.net We will continue to provide updates via the FFT Newsletter and our web pages at <http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/fft/>

Yours faithfully,



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