# Written Information Leaflets Policy

**Author:** Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care  
**Responsible Lead Executive Director:** Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery & Allied Health Professions  
**Endorsing Body:** Healthcare Quality Assurance & Improvement Committee  
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**Responsible Person:** Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care
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| • Euan Erskine – Strategic Sourcing Officer  
| • Gail Richardson – Head of Pharmacy  
| • Michelle Nobes – Information Governance Manager |
| Distribution: | • FirstPort  
| • NHS Lanarkshire website |

CHANGE RECORD

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>R Edwards</td>
<td>Update to reflect current procedures</td>
<td>04</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>R Edwards</td>
<td>Minor amends at routine review</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>R Edwards</td>
<td>Updated to reflect new print procedures</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Risk Dept.</td>
<td>GDPR statement added into section 3 and updated name of Current data protection legislation Act</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>K. Torrance</td>
<td>Extended until March 2022 (COVID-19)</td>
<td>06</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Good quality information is an important component of good quality healthcare. It is needed to:

- Improve care and communication with the public, our patients, their families and carers
- Support informed decision-making and consent
- Help patients become well-informed partners in their own care

1.2. The provision of information is one of the driving forces of current NHS philosophy. NHS Lanarkshire is committed to improving the information it provides.

2. AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

This Policy and the accompanying guide to developing written information for the public, patients, their relatives and carers* are aimed at supporting staff in producing good quality information materials that are:

- Relevant;
- Accurate;
- Clear
- Accessible

Sources of information and support are also identified.

*These groups will be referred to as "the public" in the rest of the document.

3. SCOPE

This policy provides standards and outlines guidelines for the development of written information for the public. It is applicable to all staff employed by NHS Lanarkshire.

“NHS Lanarkshire take care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Current data protection legislation Notice on our website at www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk or ask a member of staff for a copy of our Current data protection legislation Notice.”
4. PRINCIPAL CONTENT

4.1 Relevant Information

4.1.1. All information leaflets for the public should be assessed by the Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care before they are printed. This is to ensure that they comply with NHS Lanarkshire Policy, to assess readability, to ensure that the leaflet incorporates the principles of plain English and to have it registered on the patient information database in the Resources Section on Firstport.

All new information leaflets must be submitted with a completed Patient Information Proposal Form (Appendix A).

4.1.2. In order for information materials to be relevant, they must meet the needs of the people who use them.

You should take active steps to identify and listen to the information needs, beliefs and concerns of the people for whom you are producing the information. Patients and carers should be consulted at both the development and evaluation phases.

The type of information that should be included in an information leaflet will depend on its aims and intended audience. Identify and include any further sources of information and support that the reader may find useful.

4.1.3. Appendix B, the “Guide to Developing Written Information for the Public, Patients, their Relatives and Carers” contains suggested contents checklists. These will help you to put your information materials together.


4.2. Accurate Information

All written information should be reviewed regularly.

Clinical information used to aid informed consent or to support self management should be reviewed annually:

- Clinical information must be based on the most accurate evidence possible
- Use rigorous research-based sources of information
- All information should be peer reviewed for accuracy of clinical content

Other service information or educational information should be reviewed at two yearly intervals

4.3. Clear Information

4.3.1. Before you start to develop a new information leaflet, check the patient information database on Firstport to make sure that there is not already a leaflet available covering the same subject.
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4.3.2. Information is of little use if people cannot understand it. When developing your leaflet think about the ease with which it can be read. Appendix B, the “Guide to Developing Written Information for the Public, Patients, their Relatives and Carers” can help with quality checks and plain English guidance.

4.4. Copyright

Care should be taken not to infringe copyright when researching / producing your information.

If you have replicated or duplicated information from another source (copied or downloaded text or images from the internet) you must clearly indicate this on your Patient Information Proposal Form and state whether you have permission to reproduce it.

Information from other Health Boards cannot be copied and used in part or their entirety without first seeking and obtaining permission. If the other Health Board have included information or images from other sources permission must be sought from the original source. More detailed information is available via this link to the Knowledge Services page on FirstPort: http://firstport2/staff-support/knowledge-services/default.aspx

4.5 Accessible Information

4.5.1 Information should be accessible for all. The communication support needs of people must be considered when producing patient information. This includes those who do not understand English, where English is not the first language, have literacy difficulties or sensory impairment.

Information can be produced in a variety of formats and other languages. If you identify a specific need for information to be provided in an alternative format or in a particular language, contact the Programme Manager for person-Centred Care and the Medical Illustration/Design Department for guidance.

Refer to Appendix B, the “Guide to Developing Written Information for the Public, Patients, their Relatives and Carers” for plain English guidance.

4.5.2 Alternative Formats - If you have identified a need for your leaflet to be available in an alternative language or format this should be indicated on the Patient Information Proposal Form (Appendix A) during the development stage. The Corporate Patient Affairs Department will coordinate the production of information in alternative written formats and languages.

4.5.3 The originating department is responsible for funding the production of information in alternative written formats.

4.6. Design

All leaflets should be formatted by the Medical Illustration Design Team.

4.6.1 Identity - All in-house written information leaflets must be clearly identifiable, displaying the NHS Lanarkshire logo on the front cover.
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The Medical Illustration Design Team will help you with the design and will layout/produce your leaflet to NHS Lanarkshire standards.
Leaflets are produced using clear print type face in line with NHS Scotland Corporate identikit.

4.6.2 Printing - Medical Illustration will advise you on the printing options available and the associated costs.

4.6.3 Cost - The cost of production and the quantities required should be considered at the planning stage. Order no more than a one year supply. Departments requesting printed copy will need to meet printing costs.

4.6.4 Leaflets should not be photocopied.

4.7. Evaluation
4.7.1 All written information should be evaluated to determine whether it achieved its purpose. The purpose of your leaflet may have been to:

- Increase knowledge and understanding about services and clinical care
- Reduce anxiety
- Give instructions
- Answer people’s questions

4.7.2 There is no real substitute for asking the public to look at your leaflet and tell you whether they understand it, whether they think it covers all the important issues, whether the tone and style are acceptable and what they think could make it better. This should be done before you arrange for a large number of copies to be printed.

Appendix C, “Guidance on Inviting Feedback from Users” will help you to think about how to do this.

4.7.3 The findings of the evaluation should be implemented.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 All NHS Lanarkshire staff are responsible for ensuring that written information provided for the public is relevant, accurate, clear and accessible. Any information produced by NHS Lanarkshire should be developed in line with this policy and guidelines.

5.2 The Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care is responsible for:

- Reviewing all written information leaflets
- Providing advice and support to staff developing/reviewing information
- Registering all approved leaflets in the central repository on FirstPort
- Coordinating any requests for information in alternative formats
- Coordinating stock printing of leaflets for use pan NHS Lanarkshire

5.3 The Medical Illustration Department Design Team is responsible for:
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- Design and formatting information to NHS Lanarkshire standards
- Providing advice and support to staff developing / reviewing information
- Producing printed copy on request or referring to NHS Lanarkshire approved printers when appropriate

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There is no significant impact on resources.

7. COMMUNICATION PLAN

To be registered on the NHS Lanarkshire public website and FirstPort (intranet) for staff.

8. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Monitoring of the effectiveness of this and supporting policies is carried out through the following processes:

- This policy will be amended if there are any changes to advice and information issued by Scottish Government or NHS Scotland
- Routine review will be undertaken in three years

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This policy meets NHS Lanarkshire’s EDIA.

10. SUMMARY of FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Additional guidance can be found in the attached appendices.

11. REFERENCES

- Centre for Health Information Quality (2002) http://www.highquality.org.uk/
- Plain English Campaign. Available at http://www.plainenglishcampaign.com
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- Guidelines for producing information. Edinburgh: Health Education Board for Scotland
## Appendix A - Patient Information Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Date of proposal</td>
<td>2. Name of Author</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Title of Information</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>5. What is the purpose of the information?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Education and instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Who have you consulted about your idea?</th>
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<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Patients / Carers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Line Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Please detail any actions taken** – such as focus groups / team meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Why do you want to produce the information?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Perceived gap identified</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Patient/carer request</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Is there information already available nationally or locally?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. Have you consulted colleagues elsewhere to check whether information has already been produced?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 10. If information is available, why does it not meet the needs of the patient or carer? **Please detail below.** |  |
| 10. |  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. What sources have you used to produce your information?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Professional Website / Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Research literature / Text Book</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>c. Other</td>
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**Please detail sources used:**

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<tr>
<th>12. Copyright</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Have you reproduced text or images from other sources such as publications or the internet? Sources used if not detailed in Section 11:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Have you obtained permission to reproduce this text or image?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and position of person authorising:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Are you happy for other NHS Boards to reproduce this leaflet?</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Appendix A - Patient Information Proposal Form

13. Which staff will use the information?  
   a. Acute  
   b. H&SCP  
   c. Specific Specialty (Please detail)

14. What will the uptake be?  
   a. Will the annual uptake be in excess of 3,000 copies?  
   b. Approximate quarterly usage (Please detail amount)

15. Will you need to produce the information in other formats?  
   a. Polish  
   b. Urdu  
   c. Mandarin / Simple Chinese  
   d. Large Print / Braille / Audio  
   e. Easy Read (Pictures & Large Print)  
   f. Other (Please detail):

16. Do you have budgetary approval for:  
   a. Printing  
   b. Translation  
   c. Distribution

Completed Forms should be submitted to the Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care with your proposed information literature.

For use by Patient Affairs Department  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Ser No</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<td>Stock Print</td>
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Appendix B

Guide to Developing Written Information for the Public, Patients, their Relatives and Carers

Information required by public or staff
Is there a leaflet available nationally or locally?

Yes
Can you access it?

Yes
Provide

No
Contact PM PCC

Not sure
Contact PM PCC

No
Discuss with colleagues if leaflet should be developed

Yes
Produce DRAFT & forward to PM PCC

No
No action

Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care (PM PCC)
Leaflet reviewed and feedback provided to author / key reviewer

Author / Key Reviewer
Text reviewed with colleagues and finalised DRAFT submitted to PM PCC with completed patient Information Proposal Form

Medical Illustration Design Team
Design, format & return to PM PCC & author to proof

Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care
Arrange amendments
Register on FirstPort when finalised

Author / Key Reviewer
Arranges pilot and sources small print via Medical Illustration in line with NHS Lanarkshire print protocol
Advises PM PCC of any amendments required

Medical Illustration
Does the print request exceed in house capacity?

Yes
Source print IAW NHSL print protocol

No
Print in-house
Appendix B

1. Planning
If you are considering producing a leaflet, ask yourself;

- What are you trying to produce?
- Who is the information for?
- What do you want to achieve?
- Will this leaflet benefit the public/patient/carer?
- Is this information already available?
- In any other department throughout NHS Lanarkshire?
- From an external source?
- Discuss your idea with colleagues.
- Check the patient information database on Firstport.
- If you are planning a leaflet for patients or carers you must contact the Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care for advice. Contact details are on the patient information database in the Resources Section on Firstport.
- Discuss your plans for new information leaflets with your Service Manager.
- Consider how your leaflet will be distributed. Will it be displayed in a rack, handed out or posted?
- If your leaflet is going to be useful it should provide the kind of information that your intended audience needs and wants. Therefore it is important to find out what people want to know.
- See Appendix C for guidance on inviting feedback.
- Identify a budget for the production of your leaflet and, if appropriate, the recurring cost of reproduction.

2. Development

People are more likely to read good quality leaflets that are clear and inviting.

Produce a first draft. Check it against these guidelines and the NHS Lanarkshire Policy for Written Information Leaflets.

Text must be sent for quality checks to the Programme Manager for person-Centred Care in Microsoft Word format by email.

Piloting your leaflet before going to print will inevitably save money and time and will create a leaflet which the patient or carer feels is needed rather than what you feel is needed.

Piloting is easily done by asking potential users of your proposed leaflet and staff to read and comment on the content, layout and whether it has achieved its purpose. See Appendix C for guidance on inviting feedback.

Once a final draft has been approved by the Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care your leaflet will be registered on the patient information database on Firstport.

3. Evidence-based Material

An evidence-based approach is essential in developing good quality patient information. Information should be based on the most recent and accurate evidence available and be peer reviewed to verify its clinical content.
4. Content

The following are checklists of sub-headings that you should consider when putting your leaflet together. Your target audience should influence how you use them.

4.1 Checklist for information about conditions and treatments:

- What is the leaflet about and who is it for?
- What condition is being described?
- What causes it? Or, if the cause is not known, say so.
- Does anything increase the risk, for example age, sex, ethnic origin or family history of the condition?
- What are the signs and symptoms?
- Are there any tests or examinations needed to confirm the diagnosis?
- What treatments are available? Give brief descriptions.
- What are the risks and benefits of treatment?
- What are the next steps?
- What can the patient do for themselves?
- Are there other implications, for example infecting other people?
- Who can they contact if they have more questions?
- Say where the patient can find more information, for example support groups and websites.

4.2 Checklist for writing information about services, for example support groups and websites:

- Describe the service.
- Start at the beginning where the patient would start. For example, a leaflet about transport might start with how to book it and give a phone number.
- Who is eligible?
- Details of how to access the service.
- Is equipment or special clothing needed?
- Where to go for it?
- How to find it?
- Are maps needed?
- When is a service available?
- Is there a waiting time?
- How often do they need to attend?
- What is not available, for example transport.
- Are any costs involved?
- Are there any advantages or disadvantages that need to be explained?
- Who to contact – give phone number and times.
- Telephone, address and website of the organisation. If providing website addresses try to avoid deep linking. Direct the reader to the home page as some sites have terms and conditions that may need to be adhered to.
4.3 Checklist for operations, treatments or investigations:

What is the leaflet about and who is it for?
What is the procedure?
Why are they having it? Give the benefits.
What are the risks involved with the procedure?
Are there any alternatives?
What preparation do they need or not need?
What kind of anaesthetic, if any?
What happens when they arrive at the hospital or clinic, and who will they meet?
Will they be asked to sign a consent form?
What does the procedure involve? How long does it last?
What happens after the procedure – pain control, nursing checks, wounds and stitches, and so on?
How long will they stay in hospital?
Are there any special arrangements for going home?
What care do they need at home?
What follow up care is needed?
Should they see their GP?
What can go wrong – what are the signs to look for?
When can they start normal activities again – household activities, driving, sport, sex or work?
Who can they contact if they have more questions – give phone numbers and times?
Tell people where they can find more information, for example support groups and websites. If providing website addresses try to avoid deep linking. Direct the reader to the home page as some sites have terms and conditions that may need to be adhered to.

4.4 Writing information about medication for patients

If you are considering producing a leaflet containing information about medication, contact your local Pharmacy Department/Pharmacy Clinical Governance Co-ordinator for advice.

5. Corporate Style

All leaflets should be formatted by Medical Illustration and will, where appropriate, display the following on the front cover:

- NHS Lanarkshire logo
- Hospital name
- Department/Service
- What the leaflet is about
- For whom the leaflet is intended

On the back cover, all leaflets must include:

- a publication block
- the publication date, review date and issue number
- the Issuing Department
- where alternative formats can be obtained
6. Layout and Style

- Use headings to split leaflets into logical chunks as a method of signposting.
- Structure the information by discussing only one main idea in each paragraph.
- A question and answer format is helpful to divide up text.
- Bullet points are also a useful way of breaking up text.
- Use short sentences (15-20) words per sentence. Include only one main point in each sentence.
- Write in the first and second person (I, we, you).
- Write in an active rather than passive voice: it is more personal, lively and direct.
  
  For example:
  
  o “Take your tablets three times a day” (active), instead of “Your tablets should be taken three times a day” (passive).
- Use verbs rather than nouns. For example:
  
  o “When you arrive”, instead of “Upon arrival”
  o “When you leave hospital”, instead of “On discharge”
  o “When your operation is over”, instead of “Following surgery”
- Avoid abbreviations (ie/eg). Many people do not understand these. Use ‘for instance’ or ‘for example’ instead
- Do not use medical/nursing jargon or abbreviations
  
  For example: cardiac; respiratory; pre-med; medication; ECG; CVA.
- Avoid **BOLD BLOCK CAPITALS** for emphasis, use **bold lower case letters**
- Avoid underlining as this can distract the reader and makes the text more difficult to read
  
  The Royal National Institute for the Blind states that type size is not as important as the clarity of the typeface
- Consider the use of clear illustrations and diagrams to break up block text and to capture interest

7. Design and Printing

- Contact the Medical Illustration/Design Team for advice on design, colours to use and printing. They will lay out your leaflet in a range of templates in order to produce consistent, high quality information material
- Information leaflets across NHS Lanarkshire must be clearly identifiable. They must display the NHS Lanarkshire logo and ‘house design’ on the front cover
- Consider how many leaflets/booklets you need to produce and how often this information is likely to change. Ordering a large amount may be cheaper but it is often wasteful as it can go out of date quickly
- Consider storage of the leaflets/booklets

8. Reviewing and Updating

Healthcare and service information will not remain accurate and relevant forever.

It is important that you review your leaflet regularly and advise the Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care if any changes are required between review dates.
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- The Corporate Patient Affairs department will send you a reminder to review your information leaflet two months before it is due.
- Revision should lead to a common information base across NHS Lanarkshire.
- Ask patients and carers to evaluate your leaflet. Feedback should be obtained prior to revision in order to allow amendments to be made (see Appendix C).
- When updating service information remember to notify other sources such as the Web Editor to update the NHS Lanarkshire website.

9. Contact Information

Contact information for the Programme Manager for Person-Centred Care can be found on the patient information database on Firstport.

Medical Illustration Design Team contacts:

Design Team Leader: Andrew Craig (andrew.craig@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

- Hairmyres Hospital: 01355 585498
- Monklands Hospital: 01236 712127
- Wishaw General Hospital: 01698 366425
- Printing Services: 01698 366141
Appendix C - Guidance on Inviting Feedback from Users

1. There is no real substitute for involving the public, patients, their families and carers in the development of an information leaflet. You should do this early in the development of a leaflet to make sure that you have correctly identified what it is that people want to know. Don’t assume that you already know! This can be done in a variety of ways, either on an individual or group basis, but make sure that you ask enough people to ensure that you get a representative response.

2. You need to think carefully about how you will identify and approach people. Due to Current data protection legislation this may best be done by speaking to current patients or carers and asking if they would be willing to help. You should advise them that their input will be confidential and will not affect their care.

3. When you have drafted your leaflet you should ask a sample of the intended audience to look over it to find out:

   - Whether they understand the terms being used.
   - Which sections were most useful and why?
   - Which sections were least useful and why?
   - Whether the leaflet covers all the issues they want it to cover (remember that some people will not know what information might be available to them)
   - Whether the tone and style are acceptable to them.
   - Whether there was anything else they would like the leaflet to cover.
   - What other suggestions they might have to improve it.

4. Remember that many people are uncomfortable writing things down so you might need to speak with them individually or as a group.

5. Thereafter make any changes and pilot the leaflet to ensure that you have understood the needs of its audience.

6. When the leaflet is due to be revised, go back to its intended audience and ask them whether it still meets their needs.