

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO THE SEVEN STEPS TO PATIENT SAFETY IN GENERAL PRACTICE

STEP 1: BUILD A SAFETY CULTURE

- Carry out an audit to assess your team's safety culture.
- Highlight successes and achievements in improving safety, and be open and honest when things go wrong.
- Apply the same level of rigour to all aspects of safety, including incident reporting and investigation, complaints, health and safety, staff protection, Significant Event Audit (SEA) and clinical quality assurance.



STEP 2: LEAD AND SUPPORT YOUR PRACTICE TEAM

- Talk about the importance of patient safety and demonstrate you are trying to improve it by including an annual patient safety summary in your practice report or your Practice Quality Report.
- Include patient safety in in-house staff training, including the use of improvement methods, and ask for it to be part of continuing education outside of the practice.
- Promote safety in team meetings by discussing safety issues and making it a standing agenda item.



STEP 3: INTEGRATE YOUR RISK MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

- Regularly review patient records (e.g. using casenote review tools) so that areas of common harm such as delayed or missed diagnoses/treatment can be identified.
- Keep a good SEA record that can be used for the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, clinical governance, appraisals and revalidation.
- Involve wider primary healthcare team members in improving patient safety and use information from as many sources as possible to measure and understand safety issues in the practice.



STEP 4: PROMOTE REPORTING

- Share patient safety incidents and SEAs with the National Reporting and Learning Service (NRLS) so that learning can be disseminated nationally.
- Record events, risks and changes, and include them in your annual practice report.
- Cascade safety incidents and lessons learned to all your staff and other practices through your primary care organisation.



STEP 5: INVOLVE AND COMMUNICATE WITH PATIENTS AND THE PUBLIC

- Seek patient views, especially on what can be done to improve patient safety, and use complaints as a vital part of a modern, responsive practice.
- Encourage feedback using patient surveys and websites such as NHS Choices.
- Involve your practice population via patient groups, open meetings or by inviting patient representatives to patient safety meetings.



STEP 6: LEARN AND SHARE SAFETY LESSONS

- Hold regular SEA meetings, reflecting on the quality of your care, patient safety and lessons for the future.
- Make the discussion of significant events and the national analyses of patterns of risk everybody's business, including the wider primary healthcare team as appropriate, and act on your findings.
- Share experiences with other practices by making your patient safety lessons widely available.



STEP 7: IMPLEMENT SOLUTIONS TO PREVENT HARM

- Ensure that agreed actions to improve safety are documented, actioned and reviewed, and agree who should take responsibility for this.
- Use technology, where appropriate, to reduce risk to patients.
- Involve both patients and staff as they can be key to ensuring proposed changes are the right ones.