

Supplementary materials 1: Questions for participants

Complainant diary

- What has made you start a new recording — is it a new encounter with the NHS about your complaint? Or is it a new reflection about a previous encounter?
- What happened?
- What do you think went well in this encounter? Why?
- What do you think did not go well in this encounter? Why?
- What would you like to happen? Why?
- What do you intend to do now? Why?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you at this point in time? [on a scale from 0 to 10]
- Is there anything else you'd like us to know about?

Semi-structured interviews

Questions for complainants

Mid-journey

- Can you talk about your thoughts and feelings about your complaint at this stage?
- Do you feel that your complaint has been recognised, acknowledged and responded to appropriately so far?
- What were your expectations at the start of the complaint?
- Does your experience so far of complaining differ from what you expected?
- How have you felt so far about the language and communication that has been used while the Trust has been dealing with your complaint?
- Are there any further issues that you like to discuss?

End of journey

- Background
 - Can you talk about your thoughts and feelings about your complaint at this stage?
 - Is there anything about your complaint journey that you did not speak about in your diary that you would like to?
 - Was the diary a useful tool during your complaint?
- Expectations vs experience
 - What were your expectations at the start of the complaint?
 - Does the actual experience of complaining differ from what you expected?
- Emergent issues from diary research
 - How would you say you felt throughout the complaint journey?
 - We noticed you reporting feeling [*complainant specific feeling*]. Can you say any more about how you felt here?
 - We noticed you noted [*specific events or issues*]. Can you say any more about that here?
 - [Other participant-specific questions emerging from other strands of the research]
- Recommendations
 - Based on your experience, do you think the complaints process could be improved in any way?
 - What three things would like to see done differently for someone else in the same position as you in the future?
 - How did you feel about the language and communication that was used while the Trust was dealing with your complaint?
 - Are there any further issues that you like to discuss?

Questions for complaint-handling staff

- Background
 - Could you please summarise what you see as your role in the complaints-handling process?
 - How do you feel about your role in the complaints-handling process?
 - What value does the complaint-handling role have?
- Strengths and weaknesses of complaint-handling procedures
 - What do you think is good about the way complaints are handled? Why?
 - What is not so good about the way complaints are handled? Why?
 - How does that make you feel about your complaint-handling role?
- Recommendations
 - If you could do three things to improve the complaints process that you work with, what would they be?
 - Why do you believe those things to be the most important?
 - Are there any further issues that you like to discuss?