Virtual wards evaluation: patients' and unpaid carers' experiences

Topic guides and information sheets

March 2025

Contents

Introduction

This supplementary document presents the topic guides and information sheets developed for the Virtual Wards Evaluation: Patients' and unpaid carers' experiences. These tools were critical in structuring and facilitating the interviews that explored the perspectives of patients and unpaid carers regarding virtual ward services.

The scoping phase of the project (September 2023 – January 2024) established a foundational understanding of virtual ward delivery and shaped the key lines of enquiry (KLoEs) that guided the evaluation interviews.

Eight virtual ward teams participated in the evaluation, recruiting patients and carers to share their experiences. Participants received a 'Participant Information Sheet' outlining the details of the evaluation.

By providing copies of the topic guides and information sheets in this supplementary document, we aim to offer transparency about the methodological tools used in this evaluation and support future research into virtual ward delivery and its impact on patients and carers.

Scoping: Stakeholder topic guide

For interviews with key stakeholders – including the national team, regions and systems – so that we could understand the virtual ward programme in detail and design a programme of qualitative research that reflected the range of virtual wards across patient groups and conditions.

Context and their role

1. Can you tell me about your role in the virtual wards programme?

   o How long have you been in this role?
   o How does your wider role relate to your work in the programme (if part of wider role)?
   o How did you get involved in the programme?
   o What does the role involve (in relation to virtual wards) – overall, and day-to-day?

The virtual wards programme

2. How would you describe a virtual ward – what are their key features?

   o What are the key differences in terms of patients, conditions, approaches
   o Staffing / Partners / Links with other services / Technology
      1. What do you understand to be the aims of the virtual ward programme?
   o Over-arching, long term aim(s) – timescale?
   o Medium and short term aims – timescale(s)?
   o *If not addressed – how do these relate to patient/carers experience/outcomes?*
      2. For national stakeholders only: Could you tell me how the programme is intended to achieve these aims?

3. How are virtual wards expected to deliver long, medium and short term aims?

   o *If not addressed – how do these relate to patient/carers?*
   o How is the programme structured to implement virtual wards towards these aims?
   o What support is in place for regions, systems, providers?

4. For national stakeholders only: If you're familiar with the data about virtual wards and their delivery across England, what do you think are the key things that it tells us so far?

   o What are the key metrics for you?
   o Are there any key patterns?
   o What is the picture of implementation?
   o Are there any gaps in what it is able to tell us?

5. For regional stakeholders: How are virtual wards being delivered across your region?

   o Where are they most established – and what types of wards?
   o Where are they least established – and what types of wards?
   o Are there different experiences for patients in different places (and why)?
   o Has the programme evolved during the time that you have been involved?

- o What have been the key developments, or changes?
- o Why was this important/ what was it intended to achieve?
6. Who has been involved in the design of virtual wards as they've been developed?

- o Has there been patient involvement?
- o Are there any health inequalities dimensions to virtual wards?
- o Are there any inequalities that virtual wards are intended to address?
- o Are there any inequalities impacts from virtual wards?

Learning to date

7. What do you think have been the key successes of virtual wards, and why?

- o Why is this/are these important?
- o What have been the enablers?
8. What do you think is working less well at the moment, and why?

- o What are the key challenges?
- o What have been the barriers?
9. What do you think has been the key learning to date?

- o About virtual wards?
- o About the implementation of the virtual wards programme?
- o If not addressed – how do these relate to patient/carers?
- o Are there any knowledge gaps?
- o Why is this/are these important?
- o Do you know of any plans to address this/them?
- o If not addressed – how do these relate to patient/carers?

The evaluation

10. What, for you, are the key questions that the qualitative research must answer?

- o Are there specific ones: for patients / unpaid carers / families
- o What would you like the products from the research to be?
- o Type(s) of output
- o Timings of output(s)
- o Use(s) of output(s)
11. We are planning to work with ward staff to recruit patients to the research.

Ward staff will be asked to speak to or email patients or their (unpaid) carer/family member who are coming to the end of their time on the ward or have been recently discharged to explain that some NHS researchers would like to speak to patients and (unpaid) carers / families about their experience.

There will be an information sheet for them to use and to pass on. They will ask the patient/carer/family member for permission to pass their contact details to the researchers.

For all stakeholders: do you know of any other approaches that have been taken to recruiting patients?

For regional leads: do you think that any of the systems in your region would be willing to help us with this research?

For regional leads: are any systems in your region conducting research with patients/carers? Do you have contact details so that we can learn from their work, both in terms of their findings and learning from approaches to recruiting patients?

Scoping: Exemplar systems topic guide

Interviews with key stakeholders – including people involved in delivering different virtual wards – to understand how different virtual wards work and to design qualitative research that reflects the range of virtual wards across patient groups and conditions.

Context and their role

1. Can you tell me about your role in your virtual ward?

o   How long have you been in this role?
o   How did you get involved in the virtual ward?
o   How long has the ward been running for?
o   How many patients have been on the virtual ward since it was established?
o   How was the national guidance adopted for developing the ward to meet the needs of the local population?
o   What does the role involve – overall, and day-to-day?
o   How, if at all, has your role change during this time?

The virtual ward programme

2.   How would you describe your virtual ward – what are the key features?

o   Which patients are eligible for the virtual ward?

o   Step-down, step-up – or both?

o   How well does the inclusion criteria meet the needs of your patient population?

o   Who are the key staff in delivering the virtual ward (directly and indirectly / other wards/ specialities/community)?

o   Is technology used for remote monitoring? If so, which types? (By patients and staff)

o   How many patients are on the virtual ward at any one time?

3. Could you describe the key stages of the patient's pathway and what is involved at each stage?

   a. How are patients assessed as appropriate for the virtual ward – what conditions, thresholds, duration?
   o   Who makes the assessment and decision?
   o   How long do patients typically stay on the virtual ward?
   o   What is the process for admitting the patient to the virtual ward?
   o   How is the option introduced to them – and their family or carer?
   o   How is it explained to them? Do they know they are on a virtual ward?
   o   Are families/carers involved in the decision?

- o How are they discharged/admitted to the virtual ward?
- o What does the patient do or need to do when they get home if a step down referral?
- o If a step up admission, how are they admitted – are they visited at home?
  b. What happens to the patient when they're on the virtual ward – what is a typical day?
- o (For tech-enabled) What role does technology play?
- - What happens if patients / their supporting carers/family do not submit data?
- o (For non-tech-enabled) How are patients monitored?
  c. Who supports the patient while they are on the virtual ward and how?
- o Health and care staff – do they receive any home visits (from whom, when/ on what basis)?
- o Families/unpaid carers – what is required of them? What support do they get to do this?
- o What is in place to ensure clinical safety?
- o What is the criteria for readmission to an inpatient ward?
- o How are patients/families/carers involved?
  d. What is the criteria for referring / escalating patients to the MDT or other services
- o How does the ward work with other service areas [linking back to partners in Q3c]? E.g. 2-hour UCR, social care, emergency care (SDEC), community services
  e. How does the discharge process work?
- o How is it explained to patients and their families/carers?
- o What is the criteria for discharge from the virtual ward?
- o Are there any common concerns from patients, or families/carers at any stages of this pathway, and how are they addressed?

4. How does the ward address different needs of different patients?

- o Are there any barriers faced by different groups? For example, technology, accessibility, language, literacy etc
- o Are any adaptations made?
5. Are there any health inequalities implications from the virtual ward?

6. Has the ward evolved during the time that you have been involved?

- o What have been the key developments, or changes – and why?

Learning to date

7. What do you think have been the key successes of your virtual ward, and why?

- o Why is this/are these important?

   o What have been the enablers?

8. What do you think is working less well at the moment, and why?

   o What are the key challenges?
   o What have been the barriers?

9. In your experience, what are the key elements of the virtual ward that impact patient's experiences – what makes the experience a positive or can make it a negative one?

   o How do these influence unpaid carers'/ families' experiences?
   o How do these relate to patients' outcomes?
       1. How, if at all, do you gather insights about patients'/carers/ families' experiences?

   o What have been your key learnings from this?
   o What works well for doing this?
   o What challenges have you faced doing this? How have you overcome these?
   o Are there any regional forms of data collection on this?
   o How is this information used by the programme / organisation?

The evaluation – gathering patients'/carers'/families' experience

10. What, for you, are the key questions that the qualitative research must answer?

   o Are there specific ones: for patients, unpaid carers, families
   o How might the programme team use this research?

11. In your experience, what is the best way to recruit patients / carers/ families for this research?

Our suggested plan is that ward staff will be asked to speak to or email patients or their (unpaid) carer/family member who are coming to the end of their time on the ward or have been recently discharged to explain that some NHS researchers would like to speak to patients and (unpaid) carers / families about their experience. There will be an information sheet for them to use and to pass on. They will ask the patient/carer/family member for permission to pass their contact details to the researchers. We would provide target numbers for types of patients, families and carers to recruit to the research because we want to speak to people from a range of backgrounds.

o What do you think of the suggested approach to recruiting patients?

o Are there any alternative approaches that you think would work? Particularly seldom heard experiences including those most affected by health inequalities.

o When during the patient pathway would be best for ward staff to talk to patients / carers / families about this research?

o   What would you need from us to support ward staff recruit patients?

o   Are there any current approaches to collecting patient experience?

o   Do you think your ward would be willing to help us with this research if we were to approach you, using this proposed method?

o   If we were to agree with you that you would help us with the research, who would be the best person to liaise with on the team for this?

Research: Patient topic guide

Section 1: Personal information and background (5 mins)

First, I'd like to find out a little bit about you and whether you've heard about virtual wards/hospital at home [use recognised term] before.

a. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself/yourselves?

- *Do you mind me asking how old you are, whereabouts do you live, do you live with anyone, do you work etc. ?*

b. Did you know about virtual wards/hospital at home services before your admission?

- *What had you heard about them?*
- *From where?*

c. Can you tell me how long were you on the virtual ward for?

Section 2: Accessing support from the service (10mins)

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience of [xxxxx virtual ward (insert appropriate terminology that the participant will recognise] service.

We will discuss your journey in order, and please include any details you think are important.

1. **Firstly, I'd like to ask you how you initially came in to contact with the virtual ward service?**

   - *When were you first introduced to the service?*

   - *How did you feel about being admitted to the virtual ward?*

   - *How were you involved in the decision to admit you onto the virtual ward? What information was given to you to make that decision?*

   - *What were you being admitted/assessed for? Was this at home or elsewhere?*

   - *How was the service explained to you? (When and by who?)*

   - *Was the information you had about the service easy to understand? Is there any other information you would have liked? Would you have wanted the information in a different way or format?*

- *Were you given an opportunity to ask questions? Did you feel comfortable asking these? Were you happy with the answers that you received or was there anything that still wasn't clear?*

- *Did you have any assessments/tests carried out? (Who by? Where?)*

- *What questions were you asked? Was there anything that you think you should've been asked about, but weren't?*

- *How was the monitoring and care (remote and or face-to-face depending on the local model) that is provided introduced and explained? (Who by?)*

- *Did they explain what you could do if you had a concern or questions once you were on the virtual ward? (escalation processes but also general questions)*

- *What, if any, questions were you asked about your home, living environment and who was around to support you (unpaid carers/family members)? Or other paid carers?*

- *Who was involved in the decision for you to go on the virtual ward?*

2. **Can you describe how you started on the virtual ward?**

- *Were you at home or in the hospital (or elsewhere) when you were admitted to the virtual ward?*

- *(If not at home), Can you tell me how you got home?*

- *Was there any assessment of your home or household circumstances and what things might make it difficult to manage at home?*

- *Was anyone that provides you with support (unpaid carers/family members) involved from the beginning?*

- *Did you have any home visits before you started on the virtual ward?*

- *(If technology-enabled) How was the technology set-up?*

- *What happened on the first day on the virtual ward?*

- *Were you given the information you needed? Was there anything you weren't sure about?*

- *Were you told what would happen next?*

3. **Did anyone talk to you about any additional support you might need?**

   Such as for getting food, collecting medications/prescriptions

- *Were you made aware of the support available to you?*

- *Did you feel able to ask for support if you needed it?*

    If they did receive any additional support:

- *What support did you receive?*

- *Who spoke to you about this support and what did they ask about?*

- *Was there any type of assessment – what was involved?*

- *What happened as a result?*

- *Who provided the support you needed?*

- *Is there anything else that would have helped?*

    If they did not:

- *Do you think that would've been helpful? What difference would it have made?*

    All participants:

- *Has anyone from your family, a friend or neighbour supported you while you have been on the virtual ward? For example, anything that you would usually do for yourself or with any of the things you needed to do as part of being on the virtual ward?*

- *Who has helped you, and what things have they helped you with?*

- *How did you feel about being helped by this person?*

- *Was there anything that you worried about?*

- *Was there anything else that you would have liked help with?*

Section 3: Your experience of the virtual ward service (30 mins)

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience of the virtual ward

4. **What happens on a typical day on the virtual ward?**

- *Can you tell me what happened on a typical day?*

    Explore:

- *Who did you have contact with and how?*

- *What did you think about the quality of the care you received?*

- *Did you receive clear communication? Did you understand what was happening – with your condition, treatment and medications?*

- *Did you feel safe?*

- *Was [the person providing support, other people in the household if they don't live alone] happy with the care you received?*

- *Has being on the virtual ward had any impact on those around you? (who, why?)*

5. **How were you monitored by the virtual ward team? (to be covered within the typical day – but if not discussed in detail make sure these questions are explored)**

- *Did you have any technology, tablets or iPad, apps, telephone, monitors to take readings and provide the virtual ward with information?*

- *What did you like and dislike about these?*

- *Did someone come to your home to take readings or tests, or to help you with them? What happened?*

- *How often were you in touch with the hospital/virtual ward team?*

- *Were you able to contact the hospital/virtual ward team with any questions or concerns?*

- *Did you know what to do if your condition got worse?*

- If you did get worse whilst on the ward, can you describe what happened?

Now I want to ask you about when you were discharged from the virtual ward

6. **What happened when you were discharged from the virtual ward?**

- *How was the decision to be discharged made? Were you involved in the decision?*

- *Who discussed the decision with you?*

- *Were you happy with the decision?*

- *Did anyone talk to you about being on the virtual ward again in the future?*

- *Did you have any concerns?*

- *Were you informed about any possible follow-up support available or referred onto any follow-up support services?*

- *Have you had any admissions to the virtual ward or hospital since? What happened?*

7. **How did you manage your health condition at home before and how has being on the virtual ward impacted how you manage your condition going forward?**

- Did you learn anything about your condition whilst on the ward which has changed how you manage it?

We're coming to the end of the questions that I have now.

8. **What were the positives/benefits of being on the virtual ward?**

- *What were the best things about being on the virtual ward?*

9. **Conversely, what, if any, challenges, concerns or frustrations have you had with the service?**

- *Was there anything that you would change?*

10. **How does this compare to your other hospital experiences?**

- *Was this your first time on a virtual ward? If not, how did it compare to the time(s) before?*

- *How did it compare to any experiences you have had of being in a hospital?*

- *If you needed the same care again, would you rather be in the virtual ward or in a hospital?*

11. **Would you recommend others going onto the virtual ward?**

12. **Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience? Anything that you think is important that hasn't come up?**

13. **Have you got any questions for me?**

Research: Unpaid carer / family member topic guide

Topic Guide Template

Note to interviewer: Adapt the topic guide for each interviewee if needed.

Section 1: Personal information and background (5 mins)

First, I'd like to find out a little bit about you if that's OK

1. **Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?**

   - *Whereabouts do you live? Who do you live with?*

   - *Do you work at the moment?*

   - *Can you tell me your relationship to [the person admitted] or how you know them? Did you support them in any way before they were admitted on to the virtual ward?*

   - *(If they live together) How long have you lived together?*

   - *(If not in the same household) Do you see XXXX regularly, did you provide any unpaid care/support to XXX before they were on the virtual ward?*

   - *Do you have any other caring responsibilities? (e.g. looking after children, providing care to other friends or family members)*

2. **Did you know about virtual wards before XXXX was admitted?**

   - *What had you heard about them? What did you think about them before?*

   - *From where?*

Section 2: Admission to the virtual ward (10mins)

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience while XXXX [person] was on [xxxxx virtual ward (insert appropriate terminology that the participant will recognise] service.

We will discuss the process in order, and please include any details you think are important.

3. **First, I'd like to ask you about how the decision to admit XXXX to the XXXX [virtual ward] was made and what was involved?**

   - *What was XXXX/the person you care for being admitted/assessed for?*

- *When did you first find out about the virtual ward – were you involved in the decision to for [xxxxx) to go on to the ward or were you told about the decision when it had been made?*

- *(If involved in the decision) Who talked to you about it? What information were you given?*

- *Were you asked any questions? Did you have the opportunity to ask questions?*

- *Was there anything that you think you should've been asked about, but weren't?*

- *(If not involved in the decision) When were you first told about the decision for them to be admitted to [the virtual ward] who told you – what did they say?*

- *Did you feel you had a choice about caring for the person? Did you feel you could say 'no' when asked to support them?*

- *(If it was a healthcare professional) How was the service explained to you? (When and by who)*

- *Were you provided with any information? Was the information you had about the service easy to understand? Is there any other information you would have liked? Would you have wanted the information in a different way or format?*

- *(All) Were you happy with the decision?*

- *Did you have any concerns? For XXX or for yourself supporting them*

- *How was the monitoring (remote or face-to-face) and care (face-to-face) that would be provided introduced and explained – and by whom?*

- *Did they talk about using technology as part of monitoring and/or how comfortable you/XXXX would be using it?*

- *Did they explain what you could do if you had a concern or questions once XXXX was on the virtual ward (escalation processes but also general questions)?*

- *Did you have any questions or concerns – and were these addressed?*

- *Is there any other information you would have liked?*

4. **Can you describe how XXXX who you support(ed) started on the virtual ward?**

- *Were they at home or somewhere else?*

- *(If somewhere else) Can you tell me about how they got home?*

- *Was there any assessment of the home/household circumstances and your ability and confidence in supporting XXX?*

- *What support, if any did you need to provide on that first day?*

- *Following any previous discussions about technology you had with staff, was any technology actually set up to provide remote monitoring?*

- *(If yes/If tech-enabled local model) How was the technology set-up? Did XXXX do it for themselves? Was any help needed? Did you help?*

- *Did you receive any information or training on how to use the technology provided? Was there anything you weren't sure about?*

- *Did you feel more or less comfortable about using the technology after it had been set up versus when you first talked about it with staff?*

- *Was there a home visit from a healthcare professional or anyone else?*

- *Were you told what would happen next?*

5. Did anyone talk to you or XXXX about any support they, or you, might need while XXXX was on the virtual ward?   e.g. carer support, transport, finance etc

Were you made aware of the support available to you?

If they did:

- *What support did you and XXX receive?*

- *Who spoke to you about this support and what did they ask about?*

- *Was there any type of assessment – what was involved?*

- *What happened as a result? Was there anything that had to be put into place for you? How did you feel about this?*

- *Who provided the support needed?*

- *Is there anything else that would have helped?*

If they did not:

- *Do you think that would've been helpful? What difference would it have made?*

- *Did you feel comfortable that you could have asked for support?*

All participants:

- *Was there any support put in place that continued after XXX was discharged from the virtual ward? Either for XXX or for you (e.g. ongoing carer support)*

• *Was there anything else that you would have liked help with?*

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your views and experience of the virtual ward

6. **What happened on a typical day on the virtual ward for you and the person you cared for?**

   • *How long was the person you cared for on the virtual ward?*

   • *Can you tell me what happened on a typical day?*

   Explore:

   • *Who did you have contact with and how?*

   • *What did you think about the quality of the care XXXX received?*

   • *Was XXXX's condition, treatment and medications explained to you in a way you could understand? How well did you understand what was said?*

   • *Did you feel XXXX was safe? Did you ever have any concerns about their safety?*

   • *How were they monitored by the virtual ward team? Were you involved in this?*

   • *(If technology enabled) Did the technology work OK – were there any issues?*

   • *What support did you provide on a day-to-day basis? Did anyone else provide this support as well?*

   • *How if at all did this impact your day-to-day life e.g. work, relationships, health?*

   • *How often were you in touch with the hospital/virtual ward team?*

   • *Were you able to contact the hospital/virtual ward team with any concerns?*

   • *Did you know what to do if XXXX's condition got worse?*

Now I want to ask you about when XXXX was discharged from the virtual ward

7. **What happened when XXXX was discharged from the virtual ward?**

   • *Who explained the decision?*

   • *Were you happy with the decision?*

   • *Did anyone talk to you about XXXX being on the virtual ward again in the future?*

- *Did you have any concerns?*

- *Was there any follow-up support available if XXXX needed it?*

- *Has XXXX had any admissions to the virtual ward or hospital since? What happened?*

We're coming to the end of the questions that I have now.

8. **What were the positives/ benefits of XXXX being on the virtual ward?**

- *What were the benefits for XXXX?*

- *Were there any benefits for you (or wider family/household/others who may provide unpaid care)?*

9. **Conversely, what, if any, challenges, concerns or frustrations have you had with the service?**

- *Was there anything that you would change?*

- *Were there any downsides to XXXX being on the virtual ward – for them, for you/others?*

- *Did you/others require any support? Was it requested, from whom? Was it provided, by whom?*

- *If support was not requested but needed, what was the reason if not requested?*

- *Is there anything you would change?*

10. **If you normally care for this person and have had experience of them being admitted into hospital how did this experience compare to that?**

11. **Would you recommend the virtual ward to others?**

12. **Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience? Anything that you think is important that hasn't come up?**

13. **Have you got any questions for me?**

Research: Patient, unpaid carers' and families' information sheet

What is the purpose of this service evaluation?

We are conducting an evaluation to learn more about patients' and their families' and/or unpaid carers' experiences with virtual wards. This information will be used to better understand what works well on a virtual ward and what could be improved to better support patients and their families and/or unpaid carers.

Why am I being contacted?

You are being contacted as you have received care on [add name of virtual ward service] or you are a family member and/or unpaid carer who has supported someone who has recently received care on [add name of virtual ward service].

By unpaid carers, we mean anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, or a mental health problem needs support. This might be a family member, friend, or neighbour.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary and your decision about whether to take part will not affect your care or support in any way.

What if I change my mind?

You can change your mind about taking part without giving a reason. Additionally, before we begin writing the report we will produce, you may withdraw from the evaluation, and we will not use the findings from your interview to write it.

However, once the report has begun being written (scheduled for September 2024) it will not be possible to withdraw as we will be unable to separate your views from other interviews.

Will I be compensated?

Everyone who takes part will receive a £20 high street voucher (Love2Shop) to say thank you.

Who is carrying out this service evaluation?

The evaluation will be conducted by the Strategy Unit at Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit (https://www.strategyunitwm.nhs.uk). The Strategy Unit is an independent evaluation organisation that is part of the NHS that helps the NHS learn and improve. We have been asked by NHS England to find out what patients and those supporting them (unpaid carers and families) think about the [name of virtual ward] service.

What is involved?

If you agree to take part, your contact details will be given to the Strategy Unit who will contact you to arrange an interview at a time that suits you best. You will also be able to ask any questions you may have prior to the interview and decide whether or not you want to take part.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and be by telephone or Microsoft Teams/Zoom. In the interview we will ask you about your experience of the XXX service and the care that you have received or your views of the care the person you support has received. You don't have to answer any question that you don't want to.

We will write up your experience as part of a report, discussing the themes you mention alongside other people's experiences of virtual wards. No-one will be named in the report and no information that could identify you will be included.

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will ask you for your address or email address if you have one so that we can send you the £20 high street (Love2Shop) voucher.

You don't have to give your email or home address, but we will not be able to send the voucher to you if you choose not to.

How will the information I provide be used?

What we will do with information about you:

- To arrange the interview and to make sure you have what you need to take part, we will need some information about you. The virtual ward team [or supporting organisation team] will ask for your consent to share the following details with the Strategy Unit evaluation team:

    o Your name

    o Your contact number

    o Your gender and ethnicity

    o Any accessibility requirements you have such as having a family member or carer with you at the interview or requiring a different language.

- Your details and the information you provide will only be used for this evaluation and will not be shared with anyone outside the project team. They will be securely stored and securely deleted at the end of the project.

What we will do with the information you tell us during the interview:

- Before the interview, the interviewer will ask you if you have read this information sheet and had the opportunity to ask questions. They will ask you if you are happy to take part in the evaluation and will remind you that you don't have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.

- We will audio-record the interview to make sure that what we write up in our report is accurate.

- Recordings will only be accessed by the evaluation team and the transcription service who type up the recording word for word. All information will be handled and stored securely according to [General Data Protection Regulation](#)s

- Everything you say in the interview will be kept confidential unless the interviewer is concerned about your or someone else's safety. If this happens, they will need to let someone from the virtual ward team or NHSE safeguarding lead know what you have said.

- Your interview will inform a written report which will discuss themes about experiences you and others share with us. These common views and experiences will be anonymised even if quotes are used.

- The report will be shared with the virtual ward service and NHS England, the people who fund the service. It will be published on the NHS England and Strategy Unit websites. These will be published and used in accordance with our privacy policies: https://www.england.nhs.uk/privacy-policy/, https://www.midlandsandlancashirecsu.nhs.uk/statutory-notices/privacy-policy-2/ and https://www.strategyunitwm.nhs.uk/privacy-and-data-protection .

Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions about the evaluation you can contact:

- Your local virtual ward lead: [Local VW lead name, organisation, telephone number and email]

- The person leading the project: [Name, job title, Strategy Unit, contact details for SU site lead]

- The person from NHSE who has asked for this service evaluation to be carried out: Charlotte Lynch, Strategy and Policy Lead, Virtual Wards, NHS England.

Part B: Participant Consent

Consent means that you understand the purpose of your involvement and what is involved in taking part.

The virtual ward team [supporting organisation] will take the following information and consent from you verbally.

If you would like to talk to an interviewer about taking part, please provide the following information:

Name	
Contact Number	
Gender (optional)	
Ethnicity (optional)	
Accessibility requirements (E.g. language or if you need a carer/family member present at the interview)	

Can you confirm the following to consent to taking part and for the virtual ward team [supporting organisation] to share your contact details with the project team.

	Place tick box below
You have read the information sheet, or had it explained to you	
You have had time to ask questions, and are happy with the answers	
You agree to your contact details being passed on to the Strategy Unit to contact you	
You understand that you can stop taking part at any time (and do not have to give a reason why)	

Name of participant	
Date	

Name of person taking consent	
Date	

The Strategy Unit interviewer will go through the following consent information before the interview begins:

Your participation is voluntary and if you wish to withdraw, you can do so without giving any reason.

- You understand what is in the participant information sheet.

- You have had the opportunity to ask questions.

- You understand that the interview will be recorded for accuracy and will be transcribed

- Should we decide to use any quotes from the interview, we will not include any identifiable details and nobody outside of the project team will know what you have said.

- The data from the interview will be handled securely.

- You are happy to take part and for the interview to begin.