**Saying sorry is the right thing to do**

The NHS Litigation Authority (NHS LA) has issued further guidance which supports and encourages Trusts to apologise to patients.

Saying sorry when things go wrong is vital for the patient, their families and carers, as well as to support learning and improve safety. Of those that have suffered harm as a result of their healthcare, 50% wanted an apology and explanation. Patients, their families and carers should receive a meaningful apology – one that is a sincere expression of sorrow or regret for the harm that has occurred.

The NHS LA has always encouraged Trusts to issue a verbal apology to patients as soon as staff are aware that an incident has occurred. A written apology, which clearly states the healthcare organisation is sorry for the suffering and distress resulting from the incident, must also be given.

Saying sorry is not an admission of legal liability; it is the right thing to do. Healthcare professionals should explain that new information may emerge as an investigation is undertaken, and that patients, their families and carers will be kept up to date with the progress of an investigation.

It is important that all healthcare organisations create an environment in which members of staff are encouraged to report patient safety incidents. Staff should feel supported throughout the investigation process because they too may have been traumatised by being involved.

For more information see our [Saying Sorry](#) leaflet.

Ends

**Notes for editors**

1. The NHS Litigation Authority was created to deal with claims from patients who have been harmed while undergoing NHS treatment. It aims to pay justified claims promptly and fairly and to defend unjustified claims robustly. It also has a role in helping providers of healthcare services to learn lessons from claims, to better manage risks and improve patient and staff safety.

2. From 1 April 2013 the National Clinical Assessment Service (NCAS) became an operating division of the NHS LA.

3. For further information about this press statement, please contact: Lynne Spencer, Head of Communications at NHS LA on 020 7811 2843 or communications@nhsla.com or visit our website at [www.nhsla.com](http://www.nhsla.com).