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# Paediatric early warning system – clinical communication tool factsheet

Purpose

This factsheet is for senior clinicians and clinical leads responsible for implementing and improving paediatric early warning systems (PEWS) within Aotearoa New Zealand hospitals.

Introduction

It is helpful for health professionals to use a standardised clinical communication tool when communicating information about a deteriorating or critically ill tamariki. Where a tamariki is critically unwell, this information must be conveyed clearly at the beginning of the escalation conversation.

Te Whatu Ora districts use various clinical communication tools, and paediatric services should use what is already an accepted organisational tool.

If a district does not have a standardised approach, other clinical communication resources are available. One example is the (identify, situation, background, assessment, recommendation) ISBAR system, which encourages effective communication between clinicians and a shared understanding of the tamariki’s condition. A patient deterioration example of ISBAR is on page 2,[[1]](#footnote-2) followed by a paediatric example on page 3.

Other resources can be found at <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ImplementationToolkitforClinicalHandoverImprovement.pdf>.[[2]](#footnote-3)

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| **ISBAR****Communication tool template****Patient deterioration** |
| **I****Identify** | **Identify:**YouRecipient of handover informationPatient |
| **S****Situation** | **Situation:**Why are you calling?(Identify your concerns) |
| **B****Background** | **Background:**What is the relevant background? |
| **A****Assessment** | **Assessment:**What do you think is the problem? |
| **R****Recommendation** | **Recommendation:**What do you want them to do? |

Clinical example of ISBAR

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| **ISBAR****Communication tool example****Paediatric deterioration** |
| **I****Identify** | **Identify:**My name is Sarah, I am a registered nurse working in the paediatric assessment unit. Can I just check – are you Dr Smith *or* – Who am I speaking with? |
| **S****Situation** | **Situation:**I am providing care to Oliva who has been referred to PAU. I’m concerned she is deteriorating. |
| **B****Background** | **Background:**Olivia is 6 years old she came from her GP two hours ago where she was seen due to being unwell at home for the last two days with vomiting, loss of appetite and a temperature.  |
| **A****Assessment** | **Assessment:**On assessment today at (time) her PEWS score was 1 on arrival at the PAU, but it has changed and is now PEWS10. Olivia is experiencing increasing right-sided pain, is curled in the fetal position and disengaging. I suspect deteriorating appendicitis.  |
| **R****Recommendation** | **Recommendation:**Please could you come urgently to PAU and review Olivia.  |

PAU = paediatric assessment unit.

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| This document was published by the Health Quality & Safety Commission in October 2022 for implementation.  |



1. Example reproduced from: National Clinical Effectiveness Committee. 2014. *The Irish maternity early warning system (IMEWS) national clinical guideline No. 4*. Dublin: Department of Health. URL: <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/National-Clinical-Guideline-No.-4-IMEWS-Nov2014.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare. 2011. *Implementation toolkit for clinical handover improvement*. Sydney: ACSQHC. URL: <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ImplementationToolkitforClinicalHandoverImprovement.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)