

# The Service Pledge for Breast Cancer: Improving services through patient involvement

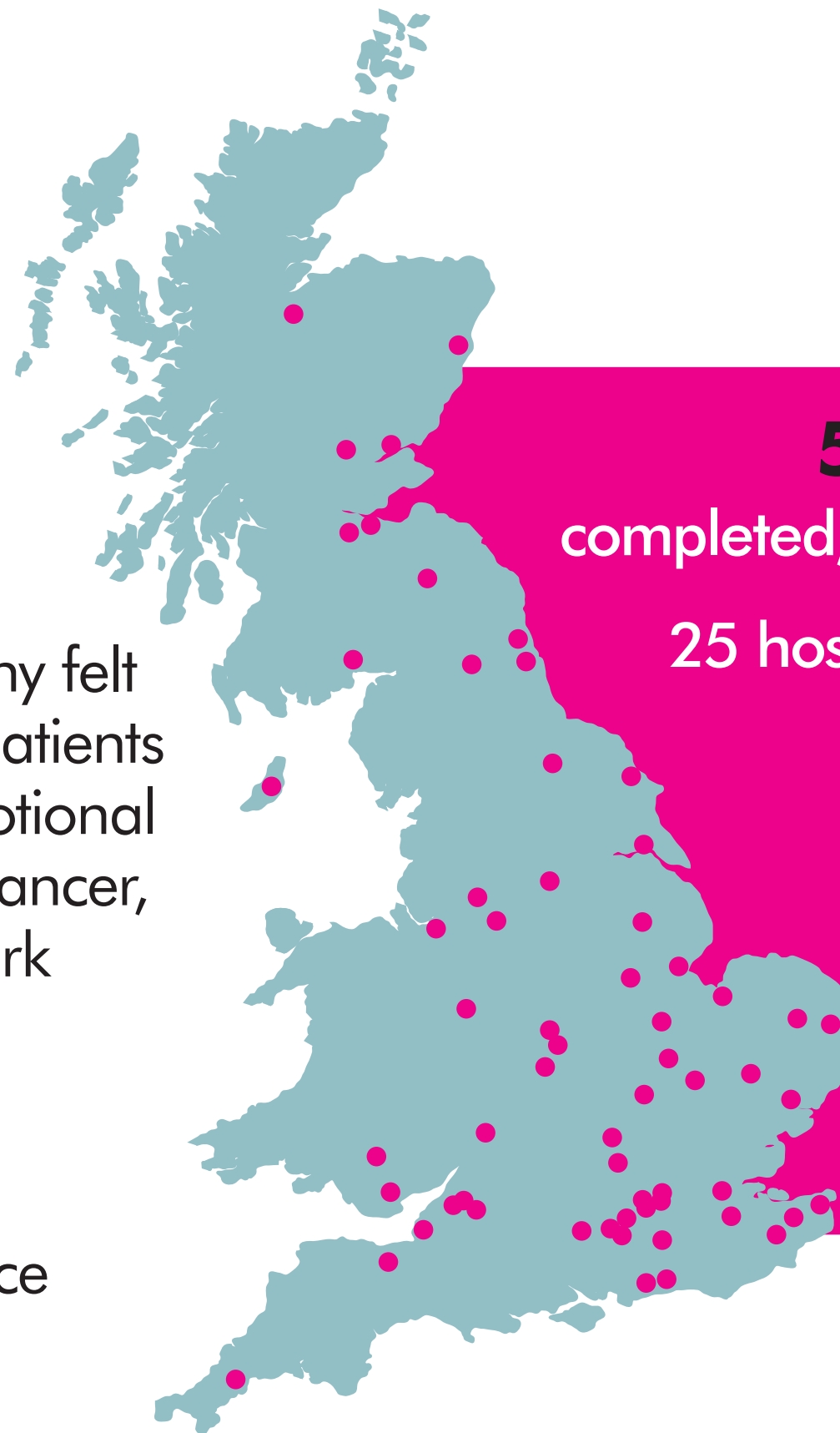
**BREAST CANCER**  
**BREAKTHROUGH**

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## Background

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK, with more than 48,000 women being diagnosed each year.<sup>1</sup> Patient and healthcare professional feedback collected by Breakthrough has shown a need for service improvement in some areas. Many felt that this could be best achieved through partnership between patients and their healthcare professionals. With such an important emotional need, Breakthrough developed our Service Pledge for Breast Cancer, designed to enable healthcare professionals and patients to work together to improve local breast services.

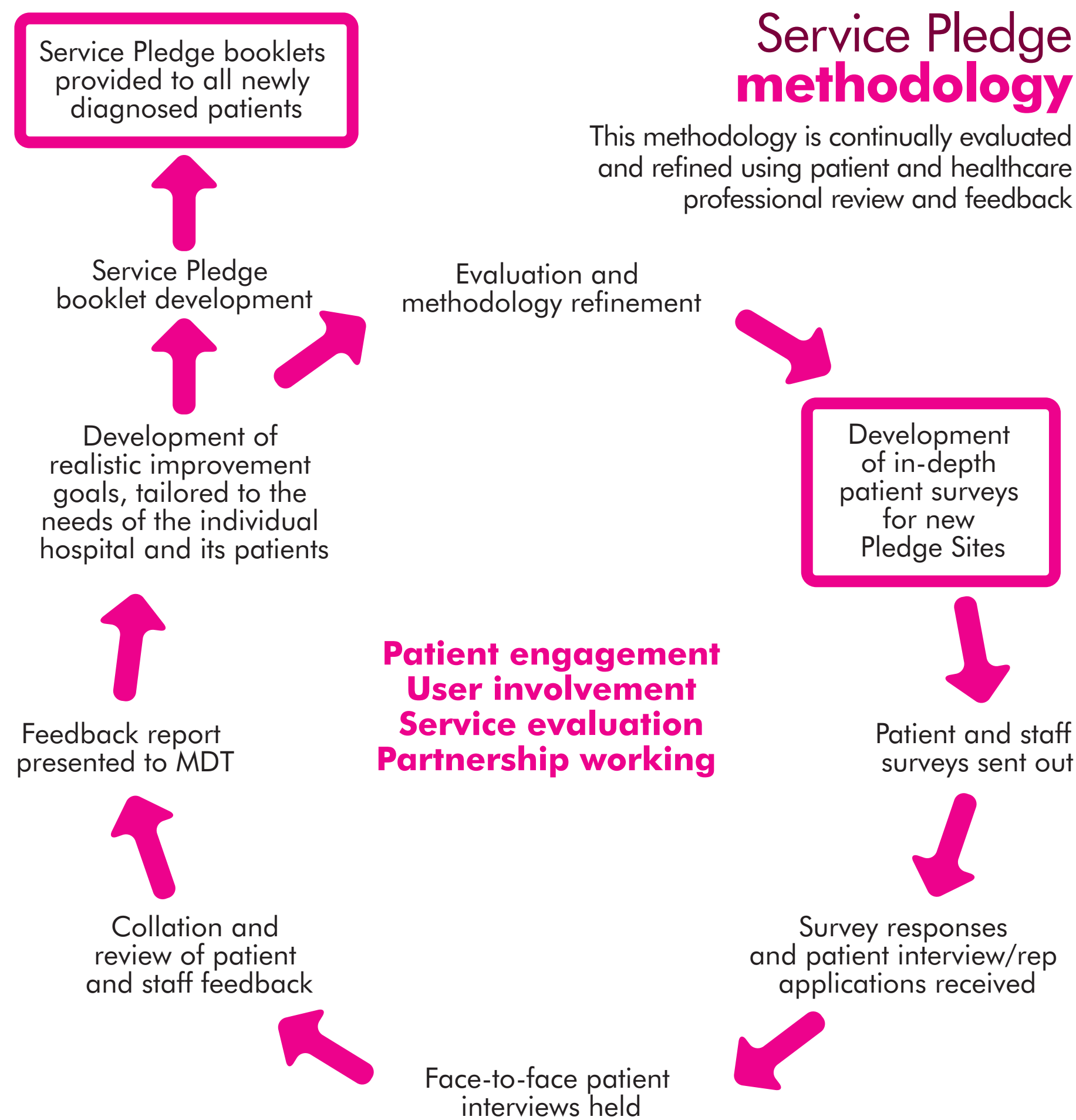
There is evidence that meaningful patient involvement and engagement of people in their own care supports relationships with NHS professionals, and improves the quality and experience of healthcare.<sup>2,3</sup>



**51 Service Pledges** have been completed, with a further 15 planned for 2012  
25 hospitals completed the Service Pledge in 2011, with **over 1,400 completed patient surveys** and 45 patient interviews  
Since 2004, the Service Pledge has benefitted an estimated **30,000 patients** across the UK

## Methods

Breakthrough works closely with hospitals to develop their own Service Pledge booklet containing short, medium and long-term improvement goals for the hospital. This is given to newly diagnosed patients. At each hospital a member of the breast care team (often the Breast Care Nurse) takes on the role of Pledge Lead to co-ordinate the Service Pledge activities.



## Conclusions

Healthcare professionals involved have reported patient views are a powerful tool for securing change.

“Our breast team has realised the value of working together with patients. What we consider to be small changes can make the biggest difference to our patients.”

**Jo Diver**  
Breast Care Nurse Specialist,  
Lincoln County Hospital

Breakthrough is committed to exploring opportunities to adapt this model across and beyond cancer services, and is working with Breast Cancer Care to explore a Service Pledge for Secondary Breast Cancer to enable people with metastatic disease to help shape future breast care services.

## Results

Local improvement goals provide tangible actions from patient involvement. For example:

- **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital** set up a patient buddy system
- **Pilgrim Hospital** set up their own dedicated breast unit
- **Ipswich Hospital** provided tailored information for men with breast cancer

The Service Pledge has proven to be very successful in driving local service improvement. Although financial constraints and large workloads for nurses are cited as possible limitations, the Service Pledge can help hospitals encourage an environment of user involvement and patient engagement to improve patient experience.

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