

Patients' feedback sparks overhaul of hospital complaints process

Feedback from patients who made a complaint about their care at Salisbury District Hospital is being used to overhaul its complaints handling process.

Healthwatch Wiltshire's latest report highlights the findings of a survey which heard the views of people who had been through the hospital's complaints handling process between April and June 2022.

Patients and their families told us of feeling lost in the system, that they weren't listened to and had little confidence that changes would be made following the issues they had raised. These experiences have led to a review of the way the hospital handles complaints by Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust, which manages it.

What did people tell us?

Our report reveals that people found it difficult to find information on how to make a complaint and didn't fully understand the role of the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at Salisbury District Hospital.

We also found:

- People didn't feel they were kept properly informed of where they were in the complaints process, timelines were not always adhered to, and updates not always provided.
- There was a lack of signposting to additional support, such as advocacy services.
- Staff sometimes seemed reluctant to take ownership of a complaint.
- People felt disempowered and that they could not challenge decisions made by the hospital Trust.
- People thought that points or questions

they raised were not properly addressed.

- Apologies did not feel meaningful or sincere.
- People were not confident that the outcome of their complaint would help to drive improvements.

What's next?

The findings of our report will form the basis of a new Complaints Handling Policy, which is due to be launched by Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust in April 2023.

Victoria Aldridge, Head of Patient Experience at Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We have welcomed the opportunity to work with Healthwatch Wiltshire.

"The Trust acknowledges and accepts the findings from this project and strongly supports the identified areas for improvement... with the findings shaping both our new Complaints Policy and improving the processes associated with this."

Guy Patterson, Projects Lead at Healthwatch Wiltshire, said: "We're delighted to see how patient feedback is shaping the improvements the Trust are intending to make. We're also very pleased to see how committed they are to ensuring the patient voice is heard. We will revisit this project later in the year to see what progress has been made with the introduction of the new policy."

[Read the report](#) on our website.

