



Annual Reflection 2019-20

Learning from complaints

Forward



A clear and consistent approach to learning from complaints is essential for any service provider. When done well, complaint handling provides a direct and positive connection between those who provide services and those who use them day in, day out. It offers a rich source of learning for how services can be improved for the benefit of everybody. This is vital for our NHS, whose service we rely on every day and at critical times of need.

NHS Complaints Standards Framework (December 2019)


How we can help with NHS concerns or complaints

Healthwatch West Sussex provides the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS) to support West Sussex residents. NHS Complaints Advocacy is guaranteed under legislation, as a free, independent and confidential service to all people in England who need support to get their complaint resolved. It helps you know all your options, your rights and how to make sure your voice is heard.

The views people share with us help the NHS to better shape services and support in the future

Sally Dartnell
Chief Officer

We are keen to ensure our work supports local people to have their concerns heard and at the same time, is supporting our local Integrated Care System to learn from peoples' lived experiences. This report reflects our approach and why this service makes a difference.

 I was so impressed with the advocacy service. Your prompt and helpful advice made what seemed to me to be a difficult process very straightforward. Your support was much appreciated.

Personal feedback on our Service, February 2020



Find out more about us and the work we do

- **Website:** www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk
- **Twitter:** @healthwatchws
- **Facebook:** @healthwatchwestsussex
- **Instagram:** @healthwatchws

Highlights



200 West Sussex residents completed their NHS complaints process with our team's support



Our team supported learning as a Serious Clinical Review Member over a period of 12 months



105 residents received one-off assistance to support them to get their voice heard

Supporting serious clinical concerns

Our Clinical Commissioning Group (now NHS West Sussex CCG) identified significant concerns in the ultra-sound scans performed by two sonographers working for BestCare Ltd (which is no longer trading). The staff concerned performed non-obstetric ultra-sound scans for more than 1,600 coastal West Sussex residents, who received over 2,000 scans. The company was suspended from delivering any local services to Sussex patients in September 2018. A Clinical Harm review has been taking place to look at patients scanned to consider if any further harm has been done and to support people to get another scan where needed.

Our [work](#) on the panel enabled the members to benefit from understanding the impact on individuals, when a service makes a mistake.

The difference we have made:

- **Ensuring all forms of communication have been patient focused**
- **The review has looked at issues such as discrimination.**



"When the Clinical Harm Review Panel was convened, I felt it was essential to have a patient/lay perspective contribution to the work that was to be undertaken and transparency via the local Healthwatch. Katie has been incredibly valuable using her knowledge and experience to actively shape the design of the process. Her input - seeing things through the eyes of a patient - has been instrumental in the development of written information and more broadly in how the CCG takes the various steps that involve the patients".

Julia Dutchman-Bailey, Independent
Chair Clinical Harm Review Panel,
Coastal West Sussex CCG



Our advocate has been working with Andrew as he struggled to understand how the NHS works, and was confused by the whole complaints process

Example story 1: Andrew

Andrew's wife was taken ill in February 2017, she passed away in that Summer, whilst still waiting for a vital operation. With help from our advocate a complaint was submitted in Autumn 2017. It took until Spring 2018 to get a response, because this was a complex case. This resulted in us contacting the coroner's office, and they undertook a preliminary investigation. The complaint was submitted to the Parliamentary Health and Social Care Ombudsman (PHSO) and Andrew was informed he needed to take legal action against the Trust. Due to issues with no win no fee, he was unable to proceed, the complaint was re-submitted to PHSO and they rejected the complaint due to the time limit. With advocacy support, an appeal was submitted to the PHSO and they agreed to overturn the original decision and Andrew, after 3 years is currently awaiting the outcome of there investigation as to why the hospital in London and the local GP did not communication over the pre-operation assessment which resulted in the operation never taking place.

Example story 2: Sharon

Sharon's husband was taken ill at home in late 2018, after being discharged and awaiting referral to a hospital out of area. The ambulance service (run by South East Coast Ambulance NHS Trust) and an out-of-hours doctor (employed by IC24) were then involved in his care. He was finally admitted to a local hospital, but sadly passed away from Sepsis. With support, Sharon submitted a complaint and as a result both the Ambulance Trust and IC24 carried out Serious Incident Report Investigations. The findings from these led to NHS Pathways updating their national 999/111 questions for calls with potential Sepsis, as the calls with Sharon were non-compliant and missed Sepsis warning signs. IC24 updated procedures including how they allocate calls and a new system of call backs when people are waiting for an out of hours doctor.



Improving patient safety by working together to understand peoples' health concerns



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Telephone: 0300 012 0122

Email: helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Our [Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service](#) supported Julie to raise concerns with her GP surgery and local hospital. She has Malignant Nodular Melanoma, which started with a small skin lesion which was not acted upon early enough. Julie is undergoing treatment for the spread of cancer.

JULIE'S STORY

I first raised concern several times about changes to an area of my skin four years ago at several general practice (GP) consultations and was assured each time there was nothing to worry about.

Having developed a rash, I went back to my GP and was again told not to worry. After two years the mark had grown and I was feeling concerned when it started to bleed, so visited the GP again. I was told it was probably nothing to worry about, however, the GP referred me to a community dermatology clinic for an appointment with a GP with a specialist interest. After a 4 -6 weeks wait, the specialist GP suggested I either had a carcinoma or melanoma and made a two-week urgent referral. During this delay the growth grew from 1.2mm to 4.2mm before it was removed.

Working with our advocate, Julie has now met with the surgery to discuss her concerns over the delays in diagnosis and the impact this has had.


NHS England investigated her complaint and discovered the GP's at the surgery were not using the [National Institute of Care Excellence \(NICE\) Health Weighted 7-Point Checklist](#).

During Julie's treatment she needed regular skin checks, and these were provided at a local level until the beginning of 2019. She was then informed she needed to return to London for the check-ups.

By submitting a formal compliant and attending a Local Resolution Meeting, with the support of her advocate, the local hospital agreed to re-instate the check-ups and this has made her life much easier.

Building confidence

Over the last year we've provided a lot of one-off advice and guidance to people to enable them to raise their own concerns with NHS professionals. Giving people the knowledge so they can make informed decisions about their options is a fundamental part of our role.

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De-mystify processes

Meeting the clinicians to resolve a complaint can seem like a daunting prospect. In this case, our advocate offered advice regarding what might be expected at a resolution meeting and gave Jane the confidence to attend without assistance.

When needed our advocates will also attend meetings, to support complainants to get the best possible outcomes for them.

Getting a good outcome without complaining

Sometimes making a complaint may not be the best option for an individual and our advocates help people explore other avenues that might achieve the outcome they are seeking.

For David, his relationship with his GP surgery had broken down and he was fearful about seeking medical treatment. After discussing his options, the advocate helped him register with a new surgery, which enabled him to get the support he needed, without having to make a complaint.



Share your concerns with us

If you have a concern about an NHS service, or need help with making a complaint, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

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Contact us

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