

PressRelease

Communications PO Box 11, Chelmsford CM1 1LX

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Improving the way Essex hospitals handle complaints

Essex County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has released a report with recommendations regarding how the county's hospitals handle complaints from the public.

A small task and finish group from HOSC spoke to representatives from the NHS Area team, all five Acute hospital trusts, patient representative groups, Lead Governors from two of the Acute Trusts which are Foundation Trusts, and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). All five hospitals were visited and a workshop took place with complaints managers from the Trusts.

The report acknowledged good practice in a number of areas to encourage patient feedback, good and bad, such as the use of weekly drop-in sessions for patients to raise concerns and workshops attended by clinicians so that they can hear first-hand from patients and carers. However, the conclusions and formal recommendations reflect that there is significant opportunity to improve patient communications and engagement, and the sharing of knowledge and learning.

The group made fifteen recommendations focused on five key areas:

1. Patient Engagement (all hospitals should have a patient led Patient Representative Group which should be publicised).
2. Making it easier to complain and give feedback (that the Patients Advice and Liaison Service be better publicised and easily accessible).
3. Learning from complaints and sharing knowledge (complaints managers from the Trusts and representatives from patient groups at the Trusts should each meet regularly to share knowledge and best practice).
4. Staff training (complaints handling training should be rolled out to all staff and refresher training should be mandatory).
5. Improving the Information received by, and the effectiveness of, the HOSC (establishing processes for the HOSC to receive more patient feedback and a closer working relationship with Healthwatch).

Councillor Andy Wood, Lead Member of the Complaints and Handling Task and

Finish Group, said: “It is so important that it is easy for patients to be able to lodge a complaint or give negative feedback. Both should be seen as a positive for a Trust as they can highlight poor practice within a hospital and prompt improvements in patient care. We believe that Trusts now appreciate more the positive contribution that complaints and negative feedback can make.”

Each hospital will now have a chance to formally respond and a progress review will take place in six months.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The report can be found at HOSC Complaints Handling Report.

For Essex County Council media enquiries:

Press office: 01245 432100, press.desk@essex.gov.uk

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