



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/VG/4552/18

Mr Mohammad Ashgar AM
AM for South Wales East
National Assembly for Wales
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16 January 2019

Dear Mr Ashgar,

I am responding to your request made in Plenary on 13 November for a statement on the complaints procedure in NHS Wales.

The NHS Wales complaints process, *Putting Things Right*, is a comprehensive process for people who would like to make a complaint about NHS services. It operates on the principle of "investigate once, investigate well" with the expectation that complainants will be dealt with in an open, honest and transparent way.

Even though the 2017-18 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Report noted an increase in the number of NHS complaints that were made to him, it noted a fall in the number of complaints actually upheld against the NHS in Wales.

NHS organisations work collaboratively with the Ombudsman to improve the way complaints are dealt with and a number of health boards have had an improvement officer assigned to them by the Ombudsman. The PSOW Annual Report states that these officers have reported a number of changes and improvements across health boards in the past year.

The Welsh Government is committed to learning from complaints and improving processes, including complaints handling processes. The Evans Review, which reported in June 2014, made a large number of recommendations to improve the NHS complaints procedure. The vast majority of the recommendations have now been implemented and the benefits are being felt by patients. For example, work has been undertaken to encourage organisations to empower front line staff to deal with 'on the spot' complaints as soon as possible. This stops these types of complaints from escalating and gives staff more time to concentrate on formal complaints.

The Welsh Government convenes the Listening and Learning From Feedback Group which is made up of patient experience and complaints representatives from Trusts and Health Boards. Good practice in relation to complaints is shared by members of the group. The

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

NHS has also recently established a Complaints Handling Network to concentrate solely on how complaints handling can be improved.

In 2017/18, the NHS Delivery Framework was amended to require health boards and trusts to report quarterly to Welsh Government on the percentage of complaints that were responded to within 30 working days. The target is to respond to 75% of complaints within this timeframe. The target was set at 75% as some complaints are too complicated to be dealt with within 30 working days. The target takes into account the need for a good quality response to concerns to help ensure a satisfactory resolution of concerns whenever possible. The key is to keep patients regularly informed if a delay occurs.

It should be remembered that every year hundreds of thousands of people receive high quality care and the number of complaints made in relation to the number of patients treated is very small. It is also significant that 90% of respondents to the National Survey for Wales said that they were satisfied with the care they received at their last hospital appointment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V'.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services