

More information

Or you may wish to contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at the Trust. Their contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

PALS provides a free, confidential service to represent the views of service users, carers, relatives or friends who may need advice, information, support or guidance with a particular issue.

PALS will be able to tell you about other organisations that can help you, such as Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA).

AvMA is an independent charity which promotes better patient safety and justice for people who have been affected by a medical incident. You can call their helpline on 0845 123 2352 or visit www.avma.org.uk

Contact us

Head of Risk & Compliance
Jenner House
Langley Park
Chippenham
Wilts
SN15 1GG
01249 468246

www.awp.nhs.uk

PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01249 468261
Freephone: 0800 073 1778
Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, audio, Braille) or in another language, please call the PALS number.

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Avon and Wiltshire 
Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

Being open

**saying sorry when things
go wrong**

Information for service users

You matter, we care

Being open- saying sorry when things go wrong

Each day more than a million people are treated safely in the NHS. However, occasionally something goes wrong and a patient or service user is harmed.

Healthcare staff may feel cautious about apologising for things that go wrong. They worry that they might say the wrong things and make the situation worse. They may also be concerned that they will automatically be blamed for the mistake.

However, we recognise that service users and their families can cope better if healthcare staff are open about mistakes.

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) has given guidance to all NHS organisations to be more open with people when mistakes are made.

This Trust has a Being Open policy.

If a mistake seriously harms you, a family member or someone you care for, you can expect one of the doctors or nurses treating you to apologise and explain clearly what went wrong.

They will also tell you what they will do to stop the problem happening again.

A chance to talk

Being open will mean that someone involved in your treatment will offer a meeting with you to talk about what went wrong.

You should be able to choose who comes to this meeting. It will usually be the doctor or nurse treating you, but you can choose someone else if you would prefer.

You can bring a friend or relative along and you can also choose where you want the meeting to be. You may prefer to talk away from a hospital or care setting.

At the meeting, someone from the team should:

- say sorry for what happened
- explain exactly what went wrong and, where possible, why things went wrong
- ask you what you think went wrong and why
- tell you what they'll do to stop the problem happening again
- let you ask any questions.

It can sometimes take weeks or months to look into a problem. So it might be that at the first meeting no one can tell you exactly what went wrong.

However, someone will keep you up-to-date with how the investigation is going.

Follow up

After the meeting you will get a letter of apology. This letter will explain how and, if possible, why things went wrong with your treatment. The letter may also say what the hospital or surgery will do to stop the problem happening again.

If this information isn't available, you should be told how your case will be investigated and when you can expect more details.

Improving the NHS

The NHS can learn from people who have been harmed whilst in their care. Sharing your experience may help stop the same mistake happening to someone else.

You may feel anxious about talking through your experience with the people who have been treating you, especially if you need further treatment.

But people who have been harmed by treatment that has gone wrong, often say that they cope much better once they get an apology and understand what went wrong.