

NEWS



Shared Lauren Hughes and baby daughter Leah

Patients share their experiences

Website also publishes health board responses

Clair Fullarton

Patients are being encouraged to share their experiences of hospital on a new website.

Patient Opinion, which is an independent and not-for-profit site, was started to give people the chance to share what they think about the local services they use without having to make things official or even be identifiable.

Young mum Lauren Hughes shared her positive experience of Crosshouse Hospital on the site and was delighted when she received a response.

She said: "My daughter had had bronchiolitis previously, so I recognised the symptoms when she started to struggle with her breathing at the beginning of the year and she was taken by paramedics to the local hospital.

"Every nurse and doctor who looked after my daughter was friendly, fantastic with her, so helpful and kept me informed. It was the wee things that made all the difference: their empathy and skill at putting people at ease.

"This has been a recurring medical condition which is worrying and feeling confident in the people who look after her means the world to me. I'd had less than positive experiences elsewhere so didn't know what to expect. All four times we've been in here has been great.

"Patient Opinion gave me an easy way to put my experience down and I liked that it didn't have to be face to face. I felt so strongly and wanted other people to see it so they'd know what to expect too. I felt like I needed to do something more than just say thanks."

In the last few months, NHS Ayrshire and Arran has been encouraging patients and families, like Lauren and Leah, to use Patient Opinion to say what they think about local services.

Not all the experiences posted on the Patient Opinion website are as positive, but health boards such as NHS Ayrshire and Arran welcome all the feedback they can get.

"We know that we don't get it right 100 per cent of the time, but what is important is that we learn from our mistakes and do everything we can to make sure that we improve," said Fiona McQueen, nurse director. "That's where patients and the public come in. By telling us where they think we can do better, they are helping their local health and care teams to aim for excellence."

As another patient, calling themselves "Cagney" said recently on Patient Opinion: "I wasn't sure if I was doing the right thing by posting on Patient Opinion but I am so glad that I did, hopefully lessons will be learned from my experience and maybe others will feel confident enough to share their



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Lauren Hughes

stories - good or bad."

Patient Opinion allows people to share their experiences whenever they choose to, and they can do so anonymously. The website, launched in 2005 by Sheffield-based GP Paul Hodgkin, is easy to use - simply think of a username and get posting. The team at Patient Opinion moderates messages and makes sure that each posting is directed to the right person within the relevant hospital or Health Board, then puts responses online for all to see.

"It's all about openness," said Gina Alexander, director, Patient Opinion Scotland. "The NHS really matters to people, and they want to know that their experience is listened to and, if necessary, acted upon."

Find out more about Patient Opinion by visiting www.patientopinion.org.uk

Friends raise cash for kids

Friends of Loanhead fundraising committee held a raffle in the school and raised £400 towards a play structure. Thanks to Wilkinson, Morrison, Asda, Halfords, Kilmarnock F.C, Kilmarnock Fire Station, Odeon Cinema, Galleon Leisure Centre and CC Chocolate Creation for their support.

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