

Visit to Yew and Willow Wards at Redwoods Centre Shrewsbury

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About Healthwatch

Healthwatch Shropshire is your local health and social care champion.

If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. We are independent and have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice. Last year, the Healthwatch network helped nearly a million people like you to have your say and get the support you need.



We are not experts in health and social care. We work to make your voice count when it comes to shaping and improving services. We use a variety of methods to find out what people like about services, and what could be improved, and we share these views with those with the power to make change happen. Our reports are published publicly and sent:

- the organisations who provide services
- the commissioners who pay for services (e.g. Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board, Shropshire Council)
- service regulators (the Care Quality Commission, NHS England)
- our national body Healthwatch England to let them know how local services are working in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin

In-person visits are just one of the methods we use to put a spotlight on services and ask people to share their views with us.

We are very grateful to all those who took the time to share their experiences with us. If you have an experience to share about the topics raised in the report, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Context

Healthwatch Shropshire was invited to join Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) during a Quality Standards Assurance Visit to Willow and Yew wards at the Clee Unit. These visits are an internal quality review of services within the Trust.

The Clee unit is in a building on the site of the Redwoods Hospital and is a 32-bed low secure unit for men with mental health needs who are subject to the criminal justice system.

Yew is a 12-bed admission and assessment ward, while Willow is a 20-bed rehabilitation ward supporting people to develop greater independence before discharge.

What We Did

During the visit we viewed both wards, spoke with staff and spoke directly with **nine patients**.

Some patients were away from the wards taking part in activities or on *ground leave, while some chose not to speak with us.

Healthwatch information was left on both wards so that people could provide further feedback following this visit.

*Ground leave is whereby patients are given **permission** to leave the ward and move around the hospital and its grounds

What People Told Us

"The insight and experience of staff, the doctor in particular, over the last year has basically cured my anxiety. I've worked hard and my life and individual journey have been a success story. Before I came into hospital I hated the world – I avoided people. I've had the right care and treatment."

Caring and supportive staff

The strongest theme from the visit was the positive feedback about staff and the care patients received.

Patients on both wards described staff as kind, caring and approachable. On Willow, one patient told us:

- **"The mental health support is outstanding, the doctor the managers all the team."**

Another patient said:

- **"Staff are really good here – they're kind and polite."**

On Yew Ward, patients similarly described staff as "brilliant" and said that staff listened and offered one-to-one support.

Patients also spoke about the importance of having trusting relationships with staff. One patient on Willow Ward explained:

- **"I know if I need anything in the middle of the night, I can just ask the staff. I've earned that trust with staff and that's been really rewarding for me."**

Care and treatment supporting recovery

Patients recognised the role of medication, treatment and staff support in helping them recover.

One patient on Yew Ward said:

“Gives you the headspace so that it's safe enough to move on.”

Another said:

“I am being treated and main thing is I get better.”

There was also positive feedback from patients about opportunities to understand medication and become more independent. They described being encouraged to identify their medication and, where appropriate, to watch it being prepared, e.g. measured out.

On Willow Ward, patients spoke particularly positively about their progress towards living in the community. One person told us:

“Being well in the community is what this is all about and I've achieved that now.”

Another described their experience as a “success story” and said that the care and treatment they received had helped them overcome anxiety and become more able to engage with other people.

The importance of activities and independence

Patients told us they valued activities and opportunities to spend time outside the ward. Both wards offered a range of activities, including sport, cooking, gardening, computers and access to the community through leave.

A patient on Willow Ward said:

- **“We do cooking which is good for when you go out in the world.”**
- **“We play football on Thursday at Shrewsbury Town ground”**

Another said:

- **“I am being treated and main thing is I get better.”**

Patients also described ‘leave’ (agreed time off the ward to go into the community) as an important part of their recovery and progress towards greater independence.

However, some patients expressed frustration when leave was restricted by staffing levels, or when they felt they had to start again after moving between wards.

One patient said:

- **“Starting from scratch every time [I’m] moved.”**

Another said:

- **“There was a time I found it difficult when I was granted leave but couldn't go because there wasn't enough staff.”**

This suggests that patients value the opportunities provided to build independence, but that consistency in how leave and privileges are managed is important to them.

The ward environment

Both wards were calm and generally comfortable.

Willow appeared light and spacious, while Yew was smaller and darker but was still warm, inviting and calm. Patients told us there were very few violent incidents.

One patient on Yew Ward described it as a:

● **“Calm and soothing environment – not one alarm in 12 months.”**

Patients also recognised that living alongside other people could be challenging. A patient on Willow Ward reflected:

● **“It's comfortable – I get a sense of warmth from some others, but some are difficult to be around – they have their difficulties.”**

Food and cultural choice

Views about food were mixed. Patients generally said that there was enough food and appreciated being able to access food outside normal mealtimes. However, the quality and choice did not always meet everyone's preferences.

On Willow, patients described the food as **“up and down”**, while another said:

● **“Hate the food here. I like Jamaican food, used to have this but don't now.”**

The lack of multi-cultural food choices was raised by patients several times during the visit.

Care plans and communication

Although feedback about staff and care was overwhelmingly positive, we identified an area for improvement on Willow Ward. Only **one of the five patients spoken to was aware of their care plan.**

This is particularly important in a rehabilitation setting where patients are working towards greater independence and discharge. People should be able to understand their care, treatment and goals and know how they are involved in decisions about their recovery.

One patient also described having four different psychiatrists during an eight-year admission period and having to repeat their story:

❗ **“I've had four different psychiatrists since I've been here, so I've had to tell them my story again.”**

This highlights the importance of continuity to patients and effective communication when staff change.

Conclusion

During the visit, patients gave **strong, positive feedback about the care and support provided by staff on both Willow and Yew wards**. Patients described staff as caring, and supportive, they felt listened to. Many felt that their treatment was helping them recover and move towards greater independence.

Patients particularly valued meaningful activities, approved leave and opportunities to develop skills for life in the community following discharge.

At the same time, patients identified some areas where their experience could be improved. These included consistency around leave and privileges, (e.g. staffing pressures affecting access to leave), awareness of their own care plans, continuity between professionals, and food choice, including culturally appropriate options.

The feedback shows the importance of maintaining the positive relationships between staff and patients while continuing to support patients to have as much involvement, independence and choice as possible.

Recommendations

Healthwatch provided an overview of the feedback to the ward manager at the end of the visits. The manager was already aware of some of the concerns raised, including the lack of cultural food choices, and advised that this was being looked into with a view to **reinstating these choices** (had previously been a choice).

Healthwatch welcomes this response and the commitment to consider patients' feedback. We encourage the service to continue involving patients in changes that affect their day-to-day experience, particularly in the following areas:

- **Improve patients' awareness and understanding of their care plans**

Ensure patients are supported to understand their care plans, including their goals, treatment and progress towards discharge.

- **Review continuity of care**

Consider how information is shared when professionals change so that patients do not feel they have to repeatedly tell their story.

- **Review the impact of staffing on leave**

Where possible, minimise situations where approved leave cannot take place because of staffing availability, recognising how important leave is to patients' recovery and independence.

- **Promote consistency when patients move between wards or settings**

Explain clearly how leave and privileges are affected by a move and, where possible, avoid patients feeling that they have to regain this entitlement.

- **Continue to review food choices**

Take account of patients' preferences and cultural needs when reviewing the food offer.

- **Continue to provide meaningful activities**

Maintain the range of activities that patients told us they value, particularly those that develop practical and community skills.

Thank you

We want to thank the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) for inviting us to attend their Quality Standards Assurance Visit. We would also like to thank the patients and staff who took the time to speak with us during the visit and for sharing their experiences openly. Their feedback helps Healthwatch Shropshire understand what is working well and where services can continue to improve.

This report reflects the feedback shared with Healthwatch during the visit on 13 May 2026. It does not represent the views of all patients on the wards.



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