

PRACTICE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE GUIDE FOR PATIENTS

Making a Complaint

- Patients may wish to make a complaint and can do so in writing, in person, over the telephone, or electronically.
- Where a complaint is made verbally, the complaints manager at the practice will make a written record of the complaint which includes the name of the complainant, the subject matter of the complaint and the date on which it was made.
- Where a complaint is made in writing, the Complaints Manager will make a written record of the date it was received.
- The practice takes notice within its complaints procedure of the need for equality and diversity when dealing with any complaint.
- A complaint must be made within six months of the date on which the matter which is the subject of the complaint occurred unless the Practice agrees that the patient has good reasons for not making the complaint within that time and it is still felt possible to investigate the complaint thoroughly.
- If the complaint is not from the patient concerned, written consent from the patient will be required allowing that individual to act for the patient.

Receipt and Acknowledgement of Complaints

- The Practice will acknowledge all complaints whether they are written or given orally, in writing within two working days. If the complaint was made orally, the acknowledgement will be accompanied by the written record that was made at the time of the complaint.

- Verbal complaints however, will be listened to carefully and attempts made at resolution at the time.
- The Practice Manager will be the point of contact for the complainant to refer to and this will be noted in the written acknowledgement of the complaint.
- A copy of the complaint and its acknowledgement will be sent to all persons identified in the complaint.
- The acknowledgement will also include information about the right to assistance from the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS).
- The complaint will not be recorded in the patient's medical records.

Investigation of the Complaint

- The Practice Manager will gather an appropriately sufficient amount of clinical, factual and other information relating to the case to determine what has occurred and any appropriate action required.
- The complainant will be informed of any delay in this process.
- The results of the investigation will be discussed with all available partners.

Responding to the Complaint

- The Complaints Manager who is the Practice Manager will prepare a written response to the complainant which summarises the nature and substance of the complaint, describes the investigation and summarises its conclusions.
- The response will be sent to the complainant within ten working days from the date of the receipt of the complaint, or longer with the agreement of the complainant if that is not possible.

- The response will inform the complainant of their right to ask the Health Commission for an independent review of their complaint if they are unhappy with the response provided.
- Copies of the response will be sent to any other person who was involved in the complaint.

Resolving the Complaint

- The practice will encourage the complainant to meet with the team at any point during the complaints process in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome. They will also be able to bring a friend or advocate to any meeting.
- All meetings will be accurately noted and the minute signed by both the patient and the Practice Manager.
- Following the written response to the complainant, if they are not satisfied the Practice will try and bring the complaint to resolution with a further meeting or engaging with other services which may be able to offer help and clarification.

Following the Resolution of a Complaint

- All outcomes of complaints will be discussed at with the partners so that recurrence where possible can be prevented.
- The Practice will review its internal complaints policy annually and reflect on the experience gained.

Amended – November 2008

References: Healthcare Commission Complaints Toolkit

The National Health Service (Complaints) Regulations 2004