

Complaints and Comments Procedure

Policy

- The Practice will take all reasonable steps to ensure that their staff are aware of and comply with this Procedure as part of mandatory training.
- The Practice has nominated the practice manager as its Complaints Manager, to be responsible for managing the procedures for handling and considering complaints in accordance with the Policy and Procedure.
- The Practice has nominated Dr Anna Collenette as its Responsible Person, to be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Policy and Procedure, and in particular ensuring that action is taken if necessary in the light of the outcome of a complaint.
- The frontline member of staff dealing with day to day complaints is Beverley Shadbolt. She will escalate to the practice manager or responsible person if a formal complaint follows the initial contact.
- The Practice will take all reasonable steps to ensure that patients are aware of:
 - The Complaints and Comments Procedure
 - The roles of the Practice, NHS England and the Health Service Ombudsman with regard to patient complaints.

This includes the alternative facility for the patient to complain directly to NHS England instead of making their complaint to the Practice, as well as their right to escalate their complaint to the Health Service Ombudsman when they are dissatisfied with the initial response.
- The Practice Complaints and Comments Patient Information Leaflet, the Practice Patient Information Leaflet and the Practice Website will be the prime information sources for implementing this Policy and will be kept up to date and be made freely available to all Patients.
- All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- Patients who make a complaint will not be discriminated against or be subject to any negative effect on their care, treatment or support.
- Where a complaint investigation requires access to the patient's medical records and involves disclosure of this information to a person outside the Practice, the Practice Manager (Complaints Manager), will inform the patient or person acting on their behalf.
- The Practice will maintain a complete record of all complaints and copies of all related correspondence. These records will be kept separately from patients' medical records. It will not be recorded in a patients medical records.

Procedure

RECEIVING FEEDBACK

There are a series of steps that you need to undertake if you are the person receiving feedback in any form.

- acknowledge feedback openly and honestly, try not to feel defensive and let the patient talk.
- clarify the nature of the problem ‘What did this mean for you?’
- show that the information has been listened to and understood
- establish the outcome looked for ‘what would you like to see happen’
- discuss the concerns with the patient
- provide an honest and objective response, share learning and what will change as a result of their complaint.

RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

There are a series of steps that you need to undertake if you are the member of staff that a complaint is made to.

- ensure that the patient's immediate health care needs are being met
- listen to their concerns and check that you understand the problems
- ask the complainant what they want to happen as a result of the complaint to establish whether those expectations can be met. If they can't, it is important to say so up front to minimise disappointment
- establish that the person raising the concern wants the matter dealt with under the NHS Complaints Procedure by explaining the process to them. This may mean signposting the person to Bev Shadbolt, Kate Barnes, or Anna Collenette
- decide whether the matter can be responded to within 3 days - if not advise the complainant that they will receive an acknowledgement within 3 days
- if the complaint is made on behalf of somebody else, you will need to check if they have the necessary consent of the patient
- check the complainants preferred method of communication
- contact Bev Shadbolt (or Kate Barnes or Anna Collenette) to discuss

Remember the following:

- Reflect – stop and think about the situation
- Regret – give a sincere and meaningful apology
- Reason – if you know, explain why something has happened or not happened and if you don't know, say that you will find out
- Remedy – what can you do to try to resolve the situation

Initial action upon receipt of a complaint

- All complaints, whether verbal or in writing must be discussed with Bev Shadbolt and forwarded immediately to the Practice Manager or, if unavailable, to the responsible GP.
- Where the complaint is made verbally, a written record will be made of the complaint
- A written acknowledgement of the complaint must be made within 3 working days of receiving the complaint.
- This written acknowledgement will include:
 - The name and contact details of the Practice member of staff who will be investigating the complaint
 - The response period within which the investigation of the complaint is likely to be completed and the full response is likely to be sent to the complainant.

Investigation and response

- The Practice will investigate the complaint speedily and efficiently and as far as reasonably practicable, keep the complainant informed of the progress of the investigation.
- The Practice will send the complainant a response within 21 days signed by the Responsible person. The response will incorporate:
 - The written report, including an explanation, apology where appropriate, and any improvement that has been identified.
 - A statement of the complainant's right to take their complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Complaints Register

To ensure the Practice monitors, handles and reviews complaints in a logical and timely manner, and to keep an audit trail of steps taken and decisions reached, the Practice records all complaints received on a dedicated complaints register found on the Y drive under secure.

Annual Review of Complaints

- In line with National Guidance, the Practice will supply the following information:
 - The number of complaints received;
 - The issues that these complaints raised and actions taken.
 - Whether complaints have been resolved
 - The number of cases referred to the Ombudsman.

NHS.UK

Any complaints placed on NHS.UK (NHS choices) will be responded to within 1 working day with:

'We are sorry you have felt the need to complain about our services. If you could please contact the practice manager they will talk through the complaint with you.'

Mandatory Training

Training will be held on our complaints policy on a 2 yearly basis for all staff.

The difference between complaints and concerns

- How would the patient prefer the issue to be dealt with?
- Is the patient expressing dissatisfaction?
- Is this a one-off or has this issue been raised by others before?
- What outcome does the patient want?
- Which process will best achieve that?

Complaints	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time investigation will take 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are straightforward issues you hope can be quickly and locally fixed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of issues raised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have no significant wider implications for patient OR others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of departments or organisations involved 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious implications for patient care (including other patients) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissatisfaction with response to feedback 	

Please see the Whistleblowing protocol if it is a member of staff that has a concern or complaint

Legalities

'An apology is not an admission of negligence or breach of statutory duty'