

Complaints Policy

Introduction

The practice is committed to providing high quality care for all and will ensure that our patients and their representatives can seek advice, provide feedback or make a complaint about any aspect of our service. This policy describes how the practice receives, manages, responds to and learns from complaints made about our service. All members of the team are expected to understand and follow this policy when dealing with a patient complaint.

The key aspects of this policy are that:

- Our patients know how to complain and are confident that we will take this complaint seriously
- We will investigate all complaints and will keep the patient informed of the findings of our investigations
- We will learn from any complaints, concerns and feedback that we receive and use these lessons to improve our service

Information for Patients

The practice believes that if a patient wishes to make a complaint or register a concern about any aspect of our service, they should find it easy to do so. Our complaints procedure encourages patients to let us know when our service has not met their expectations and explains how we will investigate their complaint and keep them informed.

Copies of our Complaints Procedure are displayed in our Patient Folder which is kept in the waiting room and is also available from our website.

Our Approach to Complaints

A complaint can be made by a patient of the practice or a person acting on their behalf if the patient is a child, has a physical or mental incapacity, has consent to the person acting on their behalf or has delegated authority to act on their behalf. A complaint can also be made by an individual who is, or is likely to be affected by our actions, inactions, decisions or omissions.

A complaint provides the practice with the opportunity to identify where our practice systems have failed and what we can do to improve our service. In dealing with a complaint the practice will:

- Be open and transparent to ensure that all those involved understand the process and what to expect
- Acknowledge a complaint promptly
- Undertake evidence-based investigations
- Provide sympathetic responses within appropriate timeframes

- Identify the causes of complaints and act to prevent recurrences
- Learn lessons and implement changes
- Ensure the ongoing care of the complainant is not adversely affected by the complaint

Complaints Process

Handling a complaint efficiently and sympathetically from the outset may encourage early resolution and avoid the need for a formal complaint process involving investigation and formal reports which is stressful and time consuming for all those concerned.

When making a complaint an individual usually wants an apology and to know what happened and why, what will be done to put it right, what action will be taken immediately and to prevent the cause for the complaint happening again.

Receiving Complaints

All members of the team must be able to receive a complaint or feedback (verbal or written) and deal with it appropriately. It must be remembered that the individual making the complaint may not refer to their concern as a complaint.

The practice Complaints Managers (**Vijay Raichura and Reena Raichura**) are responsible for dealing with all complaints received by the practice unless immediate resolution is possible.

The responsible person in charge of overseeing our complaints procedure and implementing changes where necessary is the Practice Owner Vijay Raichura.

When receiving verbal complaints, it is important that the member of the team listens to what the individual is saying and be polite and considerate. Avoid justifying any actions that led to the complaint or being dismissive of the individual's concerns. Where possible and, depending on the nature of the complaint, you should aim to resolve the matter as soon as it is received, making a note of the complaint and how you resolved it and pass the information to the Complaints Manager.

If you are unable to resolve the complaint immediately the team member should encourage the individual to speak with the Complaints Manager. If the Complaints Manager is unavailable then the team member should take brief details of the complaint and arrange a convenient time for the Complaints Manager to contact the individual. The notes should be passed to the Complaints Manager and a copy given to the patient together with a copy of the code of practice for complaints handling.

If the complaint requires an urgent response and the Complaints Manager's are not available you should pass the complaint to the deputy Complaints Manager (**Practice Manager**)

If a written complaint is received via letter or email it should be passed immediately to the Complaints Manager.

Acknowledgement

The Complaints Manager will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working days and enclose a copy of the practice code of practice for complaints handling. If a delay in acknowledging the complaint is anticipated, the reason for the delay will be explained to the individual

The acknowledgement will include:

- Confirmation that the matter will be investigated and that the individual will receive a report of the findings
- An offer to meet with the individual to discuss the complaint and gather information
- A description of how the complaint will be handled and who will be involved
- Anticipated timescales of the investigation and preparation of the report
- How the individual would like to be kept informed of progress

Investigation

The purpose of the investigation is to

- Understand what the complaint is about
- Establish what the individual would consider to be a satisfactory resolution
- Seek the views of other relevant team members and seek suggestions on how to resolve the matter
- Identify other useful sources of information

The practice aims to complete the investigation and send a detailed report to the individual within 10 working days. Where there is a delay anticipated the individual will be informed and a progress report will be provided every 10 days.

Response

Before providing a written response, the individual will be invited to a meeting to discuss the findings of the investigation.

The written response will:

- Address all issues raised and demonstrate that each point has been fully and fairly investigated
- Include an apology where something has gone wrong
- Explain the conclusions and any action that has been taken as a result or explain why no further action is required.
- Include details of how to contact the NHS Ombudsman or the Dental Complaints Service if the individual remains dissatisfied

Records

The Complaints Manager keeps full records of all complaints, investigations and responses. These records are kept securely and not with the individuals' clinical records. These records include:

- The date a complaint was received by who and how
- Details of the complaint and the results of the investigation
- Copies of any communications and records of telephone conversations and meetings
- The outcome of the complaint and any action that we took as a result
- Correspondence between the patient and the practice

Learning from Complaints

The practice adopts a no-blame approach to complaints that are received but recognise that all feedback provides an opportunity for development and for the improvement of the services we provide.

As soon as possible after a complaint has been dealt with the practice will ensure that those involved are provided with individual feedback. Where the investigation has identified a need to improve or review the practice systems, general discussion at practice meetings will be encouraged and suggestions for improvements will be sought. Any agreed changes will be kept under review.

The practice will undertake ongoing monitoring of all complaints to identify trends and assess training requirements.