



## **Patient Feedback and Complaints – Operating Procedure**

### **Compliment, suggestion or complaint procedure:**

Anyone receiving a compliment, suggestion, or complaint whether verbal or in writing will record the details on the compliments, suggestions, complaints log.

All complaints, however they are received, shall be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality. Anonymous complaints should be recorded.

#### **Verbal Complaints:**

- All verbal complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, will be taken seriously;
- A statement should be taken from the complainant and the content should be checked and confirmed by the complainant that an accurate recording of the complaint has been agreed. Ask the complainant to sign and date the statement;
- Employees who receive verbal complaints will seek to solve the problem immediately;
- If employees cannot solve the problem immediately they will offer to get the Complaints' Manager to deal with the situation;
- All contact with the patient will be polite, courteous and sympathetic. There is nothing to be gained by employees' adopting a defensive or aggressive attitude;
- At all times employees will remain calm and respectful;
- Employees should not accept blame, make excuses or blame other employees;
- If the complaint is being made on behalf of an individual by an advocate it must first be verified that the person has permission to speak for the individual and is their nominated representative;
- After talking the problem through, a course of action to resolve the complaint will be suggested. If this action is acceptable to all concerned it will be implemented and recorded;
- If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable to the patient the patient will be given the opportunity to put their complaint in writing;
- In both cases details of the complaints will be recorded in the Electronic Complaints File and logged on the Complaints' Log.

#### **Written complaints:**

##### **1. Preliminary steps:**

- When a complaint is received in writing it will be recorded in the Complaints Log
- An acknowledgement letter will be sent within three working days.
- The acknowledgement must include:

- A thank you for bringing the issue to our attention;
  - an apology for their experience;
  - an offer to discuss the handling of the complaint;
  - a timeframe for resolution;
  - who will be conducting the investigation;
  - a named Contact with telephone number;
- If necessary, further details are obtained from the patient;
  - If the complaint is being made on behalf of an individual by a representative, it must first be verified that the person has permission to speak on behalf of the patient;
  - If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, advice may be sought from a legal advisor. If legal action is taken at this stage any investigation by the Practice under the Complaints' Procedure will cease immediately;
  - If the patient is not prepared to have the investigation conducted by the Practice they will be advised who to contact and be given the relevant contact details.

## **2. Investigation of the complaint by the Practice:**

The purpose of the investigation is to:

- Understand what the complaint is about:
  - Highlight with a pen and identify every issue requiring a comment/response;
  - Identify who needs to answer each of the above;
  - Consider the use of statements when interviewing employees;
  - Refer to the clinical records;
- Establish what the individual would consider to be a satisfactory resolution;
- Seek the views of other team members and seek suggestions on how to resolve the matter;
- Identify other useful sources of information – for example, published research, suppliers;
- We aim for the investigation to be completed and for the individual to receive the report within 6 weeks. Where we anticipate a delay, we will explain this to the individual and provide an update on progress at least every 10 working days.

### **Response**

Before providing a written response, we will invite the individual to a meeting to discuss the findings of our investigation.

Our written response to the individual will

- If a meeting is arranged the patient will be advised that they may if they wish bring a friend or relative or a representative such as an advocate;
- Address all the issues raised and demonstrate that each has been fully and fairly investigated;

- Include an apology where something has gone wrong;
- Explain our conclusions and any action that we have taken as a result or explain why no further action is needed;
- 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 individual's clinical records (if they are a patient of the practice).

These records include:

- The date a complaint was received, by who and how (verbally or in writing);
- Patient number;
- Communication method;
- Details of the complaint and the results of the investigation;
- If a complaint is relating to an employee – name of employee;
- 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.

## **4. Follow-up action:**

- The whole team will review the Complaint and agree the Corrective Action Plan;
- Training will be agreed if gaps are found in knowledge or skills;
- The Practice will discuss complaints and their outcome at formal quarterly management meetings as part of the continual improvement process;
- Any areas of improvement identified will be dealt with immediately to prevent a re-occurrence;
- Systems or procedures will be reviewed and amended as required and any corrective action take will be monitored to ensure its effectiveness;
- The Practice will include the complaint in its Annual NHS Complaints Report at the end of the current financial year.