



Sellindge Surgery
Main Road
Sellindge
Ashford, Kent TN25 6JX
Tel: 01303 812180

Practice Based Complaints Policy & Procedure



A brief guide on policies and procedures
relating to practice based complaints

Introduction

All GPs are required under their Terms of Service, to participate in NHS Complaints Procedures. The new Complaints Procedures introduced in April 2009 encourages local resolution and a patient centred approach. The practice understands the importance of listening to patients and making changes when things have not gone as they (or we) would wish.

The practice recognises that patients who complain about the care or treatment received have a right to expect a prompt, open, constructive and honest response including an explanation and if appropriate, an apology.

Aims

To ensure all complaints receive thorough and timely investigation and a detailed response aimed at resolving issues to the satisfaction of all parties.

Communicate effectively with the complainant, agreeing a way forward for handling their complaint and meeting agreed timescales.

Ensure patients' concerns are heard and acted upon; encourage and train front line staff to play an active role to resolve issues and where appropriate, to refer matters to the Complaints Manager in a timely manner.

View patient complaints seriously, identify trends and apply learning to improve services for the benefit of all patients.

Publishing the Scheme

Details of the Practice's Complaints System are published in the Practice's Complaints Leaflet, and a poster informing patients of the procedure is displayed at the reception desk. Details of NHS England's Scheme and SEAP Independent Advocacy Service will also be made available to patients.

Scope

- This policy is concerned with **formal complaints** defined as “An expression of dissatisfaction from a patient or their duly authorised representative, or any person who is affected by or likely to be affected by the action, omission or decision the practice, whether justified or not.”
- Complaints will be investigated if they are made within 12 months of the event(s) concerned or within 12 months of there being a discovery that there was a cause for complaint. (The practice may waive these timescales if there is good reason for the complaint not being made earlier and it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and efficiently.)
- The complaints process will be managed by the Practice Manager under the Practice’s Complaints Procedures and in accordance with NHS Complaints Regulations. Once all investigations are complete, the practice’s response to the complainant will advise them of their right to request a review by the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied. Contact details will be included. There is no mechanism for referring the matter to NHS England at this stage.
- Where a complaint also identifies issues with another organisation (e.g. a hospital department) the practice will liaise with that organisation in order to respond to all aspects of the complaint. Where the complaint only relates to that organisation, the practice will seek permission from the patient to pass the complaint to that organisation for a response.
- Where patients ask NHS England to investigate their complaint about the practice, NHS England will seek their consent to contact the practice for a response to concerns; this will in turn be sent back to NHS England to allow them to formulate a full response to the patient.

Procedure

- All complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and agreement reached with the complainant about the expected time scale and outcome of the investigation.
- Confidentiality will be respected at all times and the patient's consent will be sought where complaints are made by anybody other than the patient themselves.
- The practice manager will undertake a thorough investigation of events and seek to address all aspects of a patient's complaint; taking advice and where beneficial, arranging meetings with the complainant.
- Where appropriate the practice will invite and co-operate with agencies such as NHS England, or SEAP in order to achieve a local resolution.
- The practice will also ensure that links are established with Social Services and other agencies to ensure a seamless response to complaints.
- Every effort will be made to keep the complainant informed of progress and for a final response to be sent to the complainant by the senior partner within the agreed timescale.
- The practice manager will keep a record of all complaints received together with details of timescales and outcomes. This information will contribute to the identification of service improvements, staff training needs as well as forming part of the practice's Annual Report on Complaints for NHS England.