

Code of Practice for patient complaints

We want all our patients to be pleased with the service they receive, so we take complaints seriously. If a patient makes a complaint, we will deal with it promptly and courteously. Our aim is to resolve the matter as quickly as possible following the agreed procedure and, wherever possible, to the satisfaction of the patient.

A complaint may indicate a failing on our part, which we can learn from and make improvements to our service. We will adopt a 'no blame' approach when investigating a complaint and especially where individuals are identified, with the aim of reach a satisfactory conclusion. We will, at all times, be polite and respectful to our patients.

Practice procedure

1. The Practice Complaints Manager Naomi Bingham is responsible for dealing with all complaints about our service.
2. If a patient makes a complaint in person or by telephone, the member of staff receiving the complaint makes an initial record of their concerns and checks this for accuracy with the patient. The patient is given a copy of the record and the original is passed to the Complaints Manager. If the Complaints Manager is available, the patient is asked whether they would like to see him/her immediately. Otherwise the patient is advised when the Complaints Manager will make contact to arrange a meeting in person or by telephone.
3. If the patient complains in writing or by e-mail, the complaint will be passed immediately to the Complaints Manager.
4. Complaints about clinical care or the amount charged for treatment will be referred to the dentist concerned, unless the patient requests otherwise.
5. All complaints are acknowledged in writing as soon as possible but within three working days for Northern Ireland A copy of this code of practice will be sent with the acknowledgement. If the patient has not yet discussed the matter with the Complaints Manager, they will be offered the opportunity to do so and also be asked how they would like to be kept informed of developments - by letter, e-mail, telephone or face-to-face meetings. The patient will also be advised of the process we will follow in resolving the complaint and the anticipated timescale.
6. We will investigate the complaint speedily and efficiently and, as far a reasonably practicable, will keep the patient informed of our progress. Investigations will normally be completed within 10 working days Northern Ireland.
7. On completion of our investigation, we will provide the patient with a full written report, which will include
 - an explanation of how the complaint has been considered
 - the conclusions reached in respect of each specific part of the complaint

- details of any necessary remedial action and
 - whether the practice is satisfied with any action it has already taken or will be taking as a result of the complaint.
8. Proper and comprehensive records will kept of any complaint received as well as any actions taken to improve services as a consequence of a complaint.
9. If a patient is not satisfied with the result, then the complaint may be referred to:
- Health and Social Care Board Health and Social Care Board, Tower Hill, Armagh, BT61 9DR, (028) 3741 0041
 - RQIA is the independent body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland, and encouraging improvements in the quality of those services. To contact them please write:
The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, 9th Floor Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place, BELFAST, BT1 3BT
 - NORTHERN IRELAND* Northern Ireland Ombudsman, Freepost BEL 1478, Belfast BT1 6BR telephone: 0800 343424 or www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk for complaints about NHS treatment.
 - The Dental Complaints Service, The Lansdowne Building, 2 Lansdowne Road, Croydon, Greater London CR9 2ER, 08456 120 540 or www.dentalcomplaints.org.uk for complaints about private treatment.
 - The General Dental Council, 37 Wimpole Street, London, W1M 8DQ the dentists' registration body.