

# Northlands Surgery

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## Complaints Procedure (last updated Mar 2011)

### Introduction

This procedure sets out the Practice's approach to the handling of complaints and is intended as an internal guide which should be made readily available to all staff. A leaflet for patient use is given at Appendix A.

### Procedure

#### 1. General Provisions

The Practice will take reasonable steps to ensure that patients are aware of:

- (a) the complaints procedure;
- (b) the role of the Primary Care Trust and other bodies in relation to complaints about services under the contract; and
- (c) their right to assistance with any complaint from independent advocacy services.

The Practice will take reasonable steps to ensure that the complaints procedure is accessible to all patients.

#### 2. Receiving of Complaints

The Practice may receive a complaint made by, or (with his/her consent) on behalf of a patient, or former patient, who is receiving or has received treatment at the Practice, or:

- (a) where the patient is a child:
  - (i) by either parent, or in the absence of both parents, the guardian or other adult who has care of the child,
  - (ii) by a person duly authorised by a local authority to whose care the child has been committed under the provisions of the Children Act 1989; or
  - (iii) by a person duly authorised by a voluntary organisation by which the child is being accommodated
- (b) where the patient is incapable of making a complaint, by a relative or other adult who has an interest in his/her welfare

### **3. Period Within Which Complaints Can Be Made**

The period for making a complaint is:

- (a) six months from the date on which the event which is the subject of the complaint occurred; or
- (b) six months from the date on which the event which is the subject of the complaint comes to the complainant's notice (provided that the complaint is made no later than 12 months after the date of the event).

GPs and / or Complaints managers have the discretion to extend the time limits if the complainant has suffered particular distress that prevented them from acting sooner. When considering an extension to the time limit it is important that the GP or manager takes into consideration that the passage of time may prevent an accurate recollection of events by the clinician concerned or by the person bringing the complaint. The collection of evidence, Clinical Guidelines or other resources relating to the time when the complaint event arose may also be difficult to establish or obtain. These factors may be considered as suitable reason for declining a time limit extension.

### **4. Complaints Handling**

The practice will nominate:

- (a) a person (the 'Complaints Officer') to be responsible for the operation of the complaints procedure and the investigation of complaints; and
- (b) a Partner, or other senior person associated with the practice, to be responsible for the effective management of the complaints procedure and for ensuring that action is taken in the light of the outcome of any investigation

### **5. Action Upon Receipt of a Complaint**

Complaints may be received either verbally or in writing and must be forwarded to the Complaints Officer (or his/her stand-in if the Complaints Officer is unavailable), who must:

- acknowledge in writing within the period of three working days beginning with the day on which the complaint was received or, where that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable.
- ensure the complaint is properly investigated
- within the period of 10 working days beginning with the day on which the complaint was received by the Complaints Officer although where that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable, the complainant must be given a written statement of the investigation and its conclusions.

### **6. Review of complaints**

**Complaints received by the practice will be reviewed to ensure that learning points are shared with the whole practice team:**

- complaints received will be reviewed at next appropriate regular meeting of practice staff to ensure any actions required are put into practice.
- a full review of all complaints will be carried out annually to identify any trends or additional actions/learning points.

## **7. Confidentiality**

All complaints must be treated in the strictest confidence

Where the investigation of the complaint requires consideration of the patient's medical records, the Complaints Officer must inform the patient or person acting on his/her behalf if the investigation will involve disclosure of information contained in those records to a person other than the Practice or an employee of the Practice.

The practice must keep a record of all complaints and copies of all correspondence relating to complaints, but such records must be kept separate from patients' medical records.

## Appendix A

### NORTHLANDS SURGERY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

#### Comments, Complaints and Suggestions

**Our aim is to provide the highest level of care for all our patients.  
We will always be willing to hear if there is any way that you think that we can improve the service we provide.**

#### **Making a Complaint**

If you have any complaints or concerns about the service that you have received from the doctors or staff working for this practice, please let us know.

We hope that most problems can be sorted out easily and quickly, often at the time they arise and with the person concerned. If your problem cannot be sorted out in this way and you wish to make a complaint, we would like you to let us know **as soon as possible** – ideally within a matter of days or at most a few weeks – because this will enable us to establish what happened more easily. If it is not possible to do that, please let us have details of your complaint:

- Within 6 months of the incident that caused the problem; or
- Within 6 months of discovering that you have a problem, provided that is within 12 months of the incident.

Alison Ingham (the Practice Manager) will be pleased to deal with any complaint. She will explain the procedure to you and make sure that your concerns are dealt with promptly. You can make your complaint:

***In person*** ask to speak to Alison Ingham, the Practice Manager

***In writing*** some complaints may be easier to explain in writing - please give as much information as you can, then send your complaint to the practice for the attention of the Complaints Manager (Alison Ingham) as soon as possible.

#### **What We Shall Do**

Our complaints procedure is designed to make sure that we settle any complaints as quickly as possible.

We shall acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and aim to have looked into your complaint within 10 working days of the date when you raised it with us. We shall then be in a position to offer you an explanation, or a meeting with the people involved.

When we look into your complaint, we shall aim to:

- find out what happened and what went wrong;
- make it possible for you to discuss the problem with those concerned, if you would like this;
- make sure you receive an apology, where appropriate;
- identify what we can do to make sure the problem doesn't happen again.

At the end of the investigation your complaint will be discussed with you in detail, either in person or in writing.

## Complaining on Behalf of Someone Else

Please note that we keep strictly to the rules of medical confidentiality. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, we have to know that you have his or her permission to do so. A note signed by the person concerned will be needed, unless they are incapable (because of illness) of providing this.

## What You Can Do Next

We hope that, if you have a problem, you will use our practice complaints procedure. We believe that this will give us the best chance of putting right whatever has gone wrong and the opportunity to improve our practice.

However this does not affect your right to approach the local Primary Care Trust if you feel you cannot raise your complaint with us **or** you are dissatisfied with the way we are dealing with your complaint. The Patient Advice and Liaison Service based at Wiltshire PCT provides confidential advice and support, helping you to sort out any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available from the NHS

Telephone 0800 389 7671 between 9am and 5pm Mon-Fri

or email - [pals@wiltshire.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@wiltshire.nhs.uk)

If you remain dissatisfied with the responses to your complaint, you have the right to refer the matter to the Health Service Ombudsman and request an independent review of your complaint. The Ombudsman provides a service to the public by undertaking independent investigations into complaints that the NHS in England has not acted properly or fairly, or has provided a poor service. A complaint form which gives all the information you need to make a complaint to the Ombudsman can be found at [ww.ombudsman.org.uk](http://ww.ombudsman.org.uk) or you can call them on 0345 015 4033 to request a copy.

They have a website which can be found at [www.healthcarecommission.org.uk](http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk)

## Help Us Get It Right

We constantly try to improve the service we offer.

Please let us know when you think we have done something well or if you have any suggestions as to how we can do something better

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**Telephone:** 01249 812141

**Website:** [www.northlands-surgery.co.uk](http://www.northlands-surgery.co.uk)

**Please Detail Below Your Comments, Complaints and Suggestions:**