

Date : December 2024

Review: December 2025

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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.

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 CCG 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:

It should normally be made within 12 months of an incident or the matter coming to your attention. The time limit can be extended provided you have good reasons for not making the complaint sooner and its possible to complete a fair investigation.

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- Jill Reeves) to be responsible for the operation of the complaints procedure and the investigation of complaints; and
- (b) The Practice Manager 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 Practice Manager 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 made or, where that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable.
- ensure the complaint is properly investigated and cascaded to all relevant parties involved.
- there is no set timeframe for responding to a complaint. This will depend on the nature of a complaint. Once all investigations are complete the complainant will receive a letter with our findings. Should our investigations take longer than 6 months we will liaise with the complainant?

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 during the month will be reviewed monthly at meetings 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 which are forwarded to NHS England on an annual basis.

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.

If you are not satisfied with our response you have the right to take your complaint to the Health Service Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is independent of government and the NHS. Their service is free and confidential. There are time limits for taking a complaint to the Ombudsman although they can waive them if they think there is a good reason to do so.

If you have any questions about whether the Ombudsman will be able to help you, or about how you make a complaint, you can contact their helpline on 0345 015 4033, email phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk, fax 0300 0614000 or via the post to Citygate, Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3HQ. Further information about the Ombudsman is available at www.ombudsman.org.uk

If the Patient does not want to complain directly to their GP practice they no longer have to go through NHSE. NHS Frimley ICB are responsible for investigating complaints for the services mentioned above in Surrey Heartlands. They can be contacted via:

Telephone: 0300 561 0290

Email: frimleyicb.southeastcomplaints@nhs.net

Post:

South East Complaints Hub
NHS Frimley ICB
Aldershot Centre for Health
Hospital Hill
Aldershot
Hampshire
GU11 1AY