

## How do I make a complaint?

### Making a complaint

If patients have any complaints or concerns about the service that they have received from the doctors or staff working for this practice, we would like to know. Our aim is to understand the complaint, try and resolve it as quickly and satisfactorily as possible and to try and prevent the problem from recurring.

We hope that most problems can be sorted out easily and quickly, often at the time they arise and with the person concerned. If a problem cannot be sorted out in this way and patients wish to make a complaint, we would like to know as soon as possible – ideally within a matter of days – because this will enable us to establish what happened more easily and investigate the matter effectively and fairly. If it is not possible to do this, we would want to have details of any complaint within 12 months of the incident that caused the problem; or within 12 months of a patient becoming aware of a problem, unless it is deemed there are good reasons for not making a complaint within this time limit and it is still possible to properly investigate the complaint.

The Complaints Manager for the Practice is **Karen Button, Practice Manager**.

The lead Doctor for complaint handling is **Dr John Davies**.

### What we shall do

1. In the first instance the person complaining will be referred to the practice manager or, in his/her absence, the lead GP or a nominated deputy.
2. If a complaint received by the Practice relates to another organisation, the patient will be advised of this within 3 working days. Ask the patient if they want the complaint to be forwarded to the correct organisation or provide contact details if the patient prefers to contact them directly.
3. A complaint can be made orally, in writing or electronically. If the complaint is made orally, a written record must be made. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the complainant may be asked to put the complaint in writing. This is to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the event that has led to the complaint.
4. If a complaint is made orally and is resolved to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint no later than the next working day, no further action is required. If an oral complaint is not resolved in this way, a copy of the written record will be given to the complainant.
5. All other complaints will be acknowledged, orally, in writing or electronically within 3 working days or, where this is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable, with an offer to discuss the matter in person. It will be explained to the complainant how the complaint will be handled, the likely period for completing the investigation and when they will receive a response. The Practice would aim to respond to complaints within 10 working days, although more complicated concerns may take longer to investigate.
6. A copy of the practice complaints procedure will be sent to the complainant.
7. All complaints will be investigated by the practice manager who will discuss the complaint with the partner appointed as the lead Doctor for complaint handling. If the complaint relates to the actions of the practice manager, the lead Doctor for complaint handling will carry out the investigation.
8. A full investigation will take place with the individual(s) involved; the complainant should be kept informed as is reasonably practical of the progress of the investigation. This is particularly important when a response to the complaint is likely to take longer than the Practice standard of 10 working days.

9. The results of the investigation will be put in writing and signed by the practice manager or lead Doctor for complaint handling reporting on the following:
  - An explanation of how the complaint has been considered
  - An apology and explanation as appropriate
  - The conclusions reached, including any remedial action thought necessary to ensure a similar incident does not occur again in the future
  - Confirmation that the Practice is satisfied that the action needed has already been, or will be, taken.
  - Details of the complainant's right to pursue the matter further.
10. If the complainant is not satisfied with the results of the internal investigation they will be invited to attend the surgery, with a friend if he/she wishes to discuss the complaint and the findings of the internal investigation.
11. Written confirmation of the outcome of the meeting will be sent to the complainant and the written record will be updated.
12. If the complaint involves other organisations other than the Practice, the Practice will make provision for disclosure and co-operation with the other organisations with the patient's prior consent.
13. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the practice investigation he/she should be informed of his/her right to contact:

**Complaints and Client Services Managers,**  
Primary Care Trust, County Hall,  
Ham Road, Exeter,  
EX2 4QL  
Phone: 01392 207819 Fax: 01392 207372  
Email: [complaints.devonpct@nhs.net](mailto:complaints.devonpct@nhs.net)

OR

**Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman,**  
Bank Tower, Millbank,  
London, SW1P 4QP  
Phone: 0345 0154033  
Website: [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)

### **Complaints received on behalf of someone else**

The Practice may receive a complaint on behalf of a patient, or former patient, who is receiving or has received treatment at the Practice. However, to investigate and respond to the complaint, the Practice must have the patient's written consent, or:

(a) where the patient is a child:

- by either parent, or in the absence of both parents, the guardian or other adult who has care of the child;
- 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;
- 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.

## **Additional Help and Support**

The following organisations do not form part of a formal complaints procedure but they might be able to resolve patients' concerns or can tell patients more about the complaints procedure:

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** – Are an informal and confidential service for NHS patients and can provide information and support to patients, their families and carers. PALS can be contacted on **0845 111 0080** or email [pals.devonpct@nhs.net](mailto:pals.devonpct@nhs.net).

**ICAS** – The Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) provides free help and support for people bringing formal complaints to the NHS. This is an independent and confidential service available in this area through South England Advocacy Projects (SEAP). They can be contacted on **0845 120 3782**.

## **Annual review of complaints**

Complaints received by the practice are reviewed (in an anonymised form) on an annual basis by both the Practice's Critical Friends Group and by a multidisciplinary team meeting.

The Practice complies with its contractual requirements for informing Devon Primary Care Trust of the complaints received, the learning from investigating and reviewing complaints and any changes to clinical/non-clinical policies or procedures that occur as a result of the complaint.

## **Confidentiality**

All complaints are to be treated in the strictest confidence. 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 the patients' medical records.