



HORFIELD HEALTH CENTRE

Procedure for Complaints, Concerns & Suggestions

Information for Patients

We believe that comments, suggestions and complaints can be useful in helping patients to express ideas and real grievances in a constructive way and in helping the practice to monitor standards of performance. At the same time practice staff can be upset when a complaint is made, and abusive comments made over the reception desk can disrupt the smooth running of the whole practice. We have a policy that tries to take into account these apparently conflicting factors.

Our objectives

- To allow patients to express negative feelings when they feel that the practice has not provided the highest standard of care.
- To enable patients to receive an explanation of what has happened and, where appropriate, an apology.
- To protect those working in the practice from verbal and physical abuse.
- Wherever possible, to use information gained from complaints to improve our working practices.

Procedure

We have to distinguish between formal and informal complaints. We appreciate patients making direct comments to the responsible member of staff when they feel they have cause to complain. Staff will often be able to explain or apologise without anyone else being involved. If the patient is happy with the explanation then nothing further will be done and such complaints will not be logged or kept on record.

Formal complaints occur in these circumstances:

- When the person complaining wishes the complaint to be treated formally from the outset.
- When the person complaining is not satisfied with the initial explanation or, after hearing the initial explanation, decides that he or she would like it to be treated as a formal complaint.
- When the member of staff hearing the complaint needs to investigate further in order to provide a satisfactory explanation.

To make a formal complaint.

Once you have decided to make a formal 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 make it easier for us to find out what happened. If that isn't possible then there are time limits and you are required to give us details of the complaint either within twelve months of the incident that caused the problem or within twelve months of discovering that you have a problem.

Formal complaints can be made either in writing or directly to Peter Maynard, Practice Manager. If you want to speak to him directly it would help to ring in order to make an appointment. He will explain the procedure to you and will make sure that your concerns are dealt with promptly. It will help if you are as specific as possible, for instance being able to give precise details of the date and time of the incident concerned, and the member of staff involved.

The details of your complaint are kept separately from your medical record. There are no notes on your medical record to show that you have made a complaint.

Our experience is that most complaints or problems can be handled within our own procedure to the satisfaction of both the practice and the person complaining. We believe this will give us the best chance of putting right whatever has gone wrong and an opportunity to improve our practice.

Our response

We will aim to acknowledge your complaint within three working days and have looked into the problem within ten working days of your making the complaint. We shall then offer you an explanation or offer to arrange a meeting with the members of staff concerned. If you opt for a meeting, you may bring a friend or person from the advisory service with you. If you don't want a meeting then we write to you to tell you what has happened as a result. In particular we are required to tell you what steps we have taken to prevent the same thing happening in the future.

We shall try to:

- Find out what happened and what went wrong
- Make it possible for you to discuss the problem with those concerned, if you want.
- Make sure you receive an apology, if that is appropriate
- Identify what we can do to try to make sure the same problem does not happen again.

Complaining on behalf of someone else

Please note that we keep strict rules about confidentiality. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else we must know that they have given you permission to do so, and are happy for you to learn details of their medical history. We have a form for them to fill in, so please ask for it if you need it. We recognise that under some circumstances (most obviously because of medical problems) some patients will not be able to sign such a form, and we shall then try to decide what is in their best interests. Parents or someone with parental responsibility will be able to make complaints on behalf of children.

If you need help making a complaint

We are happy to help you, as we see this as an important part of the service that we offer. However if you would like help from an outsider, there are some free services set up by the NHS to help you:

- **Healthwatch** - They will listen to your feedback and liaise with your GP Practice. They also would like to hear about positive experiences that you have experienced so that they can help others improve. You can contact them on 0117 2690400 or visit their website www.healthwatchbristol.co.uk
- **SEAP** - Support Empower Advocate Promote. Free confidential help and support to make a complaint. Tel 03003435704, email Bristol@seap.org.uk or visit their website www.seap.org.uk

Taking a complaint further

We hope that you will be satisfied once we have dealt with your complaint here. However that doesn't always happen. If you are still unhappy you should take your complaint to the Health Service and Parliamentary Ombudsman, complaints helpline: 0345 015 4033, phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk.

Our review

We are also required by the NHS to review each year all the complaints we have received. We compile a report summarising the complaints and send the NHS a copy of the report. This report is available to patients on request.

Complaints about patients and their behaviour

We recognise that patients are often very worried or anxious, and this will sometimes make them behave more aggressively than they would normally do. However we cannot allow our staff to be abused, or feel threatened by the patients. If patients are considered to have behaved aggressively they will receive a written warning. If the problem continues after that they and their families will be required to register with another practice.

The Complaints Manager is the Administration Manager, Rhys Tawton.