

THE BEACHES MEDICAL CENTRE

Sussex Road, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, NR31 6QB
C/o Shrublands Health Centre, Magdalen Way, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, NR31 7BP
Station Road, Hopton, Great Yarmouth, NR31 9BE

Tel: 01493 414141

Email: nwicb.thebeaches.mc@nhs.net

Website: www.thebeachesmedicalcentre.co.uk

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

This procedure sets out the Practice's approach to the handling of complaints and is intended as an internal guide who should be made readily available to all staff and also a summary setting out the approach to complaint handling should be available at reception for any patient requesting a copy.

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

- The complaints procedure
- The time limit for resolution
- How it will be dealt with
- Who will deal with it
- Lead GP handling complaints
- Their right of appeal
- Further action they can take if not satisfied
- The fact that any issues will not affect any ongoing treatment from the surgery and they will continue to be treated

PROCEDURE

Receiving of complaints

The Practice may receive a complaint made by a patient, or (with his/her consent) someone else 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:

- 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.

Period within which complaints can be made

The period for making a complaint is normally:

- (a) 12 months from the date on which the event which is the subject of the complaint occurred; or
- (b) 12 months from the date on which the event which is the subject of the complaint comes to the complainant's notice.

Complaints should normally be resolved within 6 months. The practice standard will be 28 working days for a response.

The Practice Manager or lead GP has the discretion to extend the time limits if the complainant has good reason for not making the complaint sooner, or where it is still possible to properly investigate the complaint despite extended delay.

When considering an extension to the time limit it is important that the Practice Manager or the GP 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.

Action upon receipt of a complaint

- It is always better to try and deal with the complaint at the earliest opportunity and often it can be concluded at that point.
- If it is not possible or the outcome is not satisfactory the patient should be asked to put it in writing. This ensures that each side are well aware of the issues for resolution. If the patient does refuse to put it in writing then it is advisable for the surgery to put it in writing and check that the patient is happy with the detail of the complaint.
- On receipt of a written complaint an acknowledgement should be sent within 3 working days confirming receipt and saying that a further response will be sent within 28 working days following an investigation of the issues. It should also say who is dealing with it i.e. GP or Operations Administrator.
- If it is not possible to conclude any investigations within the 28 working days then the patient should be updated with progress and possible time scales.
- A full investigation should take place with written notes and a log of the progress being made.
- It may be that outside sources will need to be contacted and if that is the case then a patient consent form will need to be signed to make such a request.

Unreasonable Complaints

Where a complainant becomes aggressive or, despite effective complaint handling, unreasonable in their promotion of the complaint, some or all of the following formal provisions will apply and will be communicated to the patient:

- The complaint will be managed by one named individual at senior level who will be the only contact for the patient
- Contact will be limited to one method only (e.g. in writing)
- Place a time limit on each contact
- The number of contacts in a time period will be restricted
- A witness will be present for all contacts
- Repeated complaints about the same issue will be refused
- Only acknowledge correspondence regarding a closed matter, not respond to it
- Set behaviour standards
- Return irrelevant documentation
- Keep detailed records

Final Response

This will include:

- A clear statement of the issues, investigations and the findings, giving clear evidence-based reasons for decisions if appropriate
- Where errors have occurred, explain these fully and state what will be done to put these right, or prevent repetition
- A focus on fair and proportionate outcomes for the patient, including any remedial action or compensation
- A clear statement that the response is the final one, or that further action or reports will be sent later
- An apology or explanation as appropriate
- A statement of the right to escalate the complaint, together with the relevant contact detail
- It should also advise on the next step in the process if the complainant is still not satisfied. That would normally be an offer of a meeting with the Lead GP and Practice Manager to try further reconciliation.

Annual Review of Complaints

The practice will establish an annual complaints report, incorporating a review of complaints received, along with any learning issues or changes to procedures which have arisen. This report is to be made available to any person who requests it, and may form part of the Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme ^[*].

This will include:

- Statistics on the number of complaints received
- Justified / unjustified analysis
- Known referrals to the Ombudsman
- Subject matter / categorisation / clinical care
- Learning points
- Methods of complaints management
- Any changes to procedure, policies or care which have resulted

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 Operations Administrator 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.

The practice will meet twice a year to discuss complaints at a practice meeting. Staff present at these meetings will include GP Partners, other GP's, Practice Manager, Operations Administrator, Reception Supervisor(s) and other clinicians i.e. ANP'S/Nurses.

We would always ask you to contact the Practice first with regards to a complaint but if you feel that your complaint cannot be resolved with the practice you can raise your complaint with NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB

Complaints about primary care services (GP, dentist, pharmacy or optician)

The ICB has taken on responsibility for all primary care complaints from NHS England as of 1 July 2023.

Please note that you cannot raise the same complaint to both organisations and that once a complaint has been responded to formally, the ICB will be unable to reconsider this.

You can contact the ICB Complaints team by:

- **E-mail:** nwicb.complaintsservice@nhs.net
- **In writing:** Complaints Manager, NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DL
- **Telephone:** 01603 595857 (This is an answer machine service. Please leave a message requesting a call back).
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If you are not satisfied with the response from the Practice or the ICB

You have the right to take your complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, if you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the NHS. The Ombudsman will generally only consider your complaint once you have completed the ICB's complaints procedure and received your final response.

If the Ombudsman is of the opinion that the ICB can do more to resolve your complaint, they will refer your complaint back to us.

You can contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman at:

- **Address:** The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Millbank Tower, London, SW1P 4QP
- **Telephone:** 0345 015 4033
- **Website:** www.ombudsman.org.uk

If you support through any part of the NHS Complaints Procedure you can contact:

POhWER – Nhs Complaints Advocacy

Telephone: 0300 456 2370

Email: pohwer@pohwer.net

Approved by Dawn Barnham

Quality Improvement Manager

Dated: 25/8/24

Review Date: 24/8/25

OC.01 Complaints Procedure

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COMPLAINT FORM

Patient Full Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

Telephone No:

Date:

Complaint details: (Include dates, times, and names of practice personnel, if known)

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(Continue overleaf if necessary)

SIGNED.....Print name.....

