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Complaints handling policy

We are committed to providing high quality care for all and will ensure that our patients and their representatives can seek advice, provide feedback or make a complaint about any aspect of our service. This policy describes how we receive, manage, respond to and learn from complaints made about our service. All members of the team are expected to understand and follow this policy when dealing with a patient complaint.

The key aspects of this policy are that:

- Our patients know how to complain and are confident that we will take their complaint seriously
- We will investigate all complaints and will keep the patient informed of the findings of our investigation
- We will learn from any complaints, concerns and feedback that we receive and use these lessons to improve our service.

Information for patients

We believe that if a patient wishes to make a complaint or register a concern about any aspect of our service, they should find it easy to do so. Our code of practice for handling complaints, encourages patients to let us know when our service has not met their expectations and explains how we will investigate their complaint and keep them informed.

Copies of our code within our patient information folder in the waiting room.

A complaint can be made by a patient of the practice or a person acting on their behalf if the patient is a child, has physical or mental incapacity, has consented to the person acting on their behalf, or has delegated authority to act on their behalf. A complaint can also be made by an individual who is, or is likely to be, affected by our actions, inactions, decisions or omissions.

A complaint provides us with the opportunity to identify where our practice systems have failed and what we can do to improve our service. In dealing with a complaint, we will

- Be open and transparent to ensure that all those involved understand the process and what to expect
- Acknowledge a complaint promptly
- Undertake evidence-based investigations
- Provide sympathetic responses within appropriate timeframes
- Identify the causes of complaints and act to prevent recurrence
- Learn lessons and implement change
- if the individual is a patient of the practice, ensure that their ongoing care is not adversely affected by the complaint.

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Practice complaints process

Handling a complaint efficiently and sympathetically from the outset may encourage early resolution and avoid the need for a formal complaint process, involving investigation and formal reports. which is stressful and time-consuming for all concerned.

When making a complaint, an individual usually wants an apology and to know what happened and why, what will be done to put it right, what action will be taken immediately and to prevent the cause for complaint happening again.

Receiving complaints

All members of the team must be able to receive a complaint or feedback (verbal or written) and deal with it appropriately. You should bear in mind, that the individual making the complaint may not refer to their concern as a complaint.

The practice Complaints Manager, Angela Leivers, is responsible for dealing with all complaints received by the practice, unless immediate resolution is possible.
The responsible person in charge of overseeing our complaints procedure and implementing changes where necessary is Angela Leivers.

Verbal complaints: Listen to what the individual is saying and be polite and considerate; avoid justifying the action that led to the complaint or being dismissive of the individual's concerns. Where possible and, depending on the nature of the complaint, you should aim to resolve the matter as soon as it is received, making a note of the complaint and how you resolved it and pass the information to the Complaints Manager, Angela Leivers.

If you are unable to resolve the complaint immediately, you should encourage the individual to speak with the Complaints Manager. If the Complaints Manager is not available, you should take brief details of the complaint and arrange a convenient time for the Complaints Manager to contact the individual. Your notes should be passed to the Complaints Manager and a copy given to the patient, together with a copy of the code of practice for handling patient complaints.

If the complaint requires an urgent response and the Complaints Manager is not available, you should pass the complaint to Angela Leivers – Practice Owner

Written complaints: If you receive a written complaint (by letter or email.), you should pass it immediately to the Complaints Manager - **info@refinedental.co.uk**.

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Acknowledgement

The Complaints Manager will acknowledge the complaint in writing within Three working days and enclose a copy of our code of practice for handling complaints. If a delay in acknowledging the complaint is anticipated, the reason for the delay will be explained to the individual.

The acknowledgement will include

- Confirmation that the matter will be investigated and that the individual will receive a report of the findings
- An offer to meet with the individual to discuss the complaint and gather information
- A description of how the complaint will be handles and who will be involved
- Anticipated timescales for the investigation and preparation of the report
- How the individual would like to be kept informed of progress
- Local organisations that can provide help.
  The individual will be informed that they can obtain advice and information from the Independent Complaints Advocacy Team at the local NHS Healthwatch – *see.healthwatch.co.uk/find-local-healthwatch for contact details*

Investigation

The purpose of the investigation is to

- Understand what the complaint is about
- Establish what the individual would consider to be a satisfactory resolution
- Seek the views of other team members and seek suggestions on how to resolve the matter
- Identify other useful sources of information – for example, published research, suppliers

We aim for the investigation to be completed and for the individual to receive the report within 10 working days. Where we anticipate a delay, we will explain this to the individual and provide an update on progress at least every 10 working days.

Response

Before providing a written response, we will invite the individual to a meeting to discuss the findings of our investigation.

Our written response to the individual will

- Address all the issues raised and demonstrate that each has been fully and fairly investigated
- Include an apology where something has gone wrong
- Explain our conclusions and any action that we have taken as a result or explain why no further action is needed

- Include details of how to contact the NHS Ombudsman or the Dental Complaints Service if the individual remains dissatisfied

Who else can you contact:

General Dental Council, 37 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8DQ, Email: www.gdc-uk.org, Telephone: 0845 222 4141 or 020 7887 3800

Financial Ombudsman - https://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk , complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk, Call the helpline on 0800 023 4567. If you are dissatisfied with our response and your agreement is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service, free of charge, but you must do so within six months of the date of the final response or 8 week holding letter. Further information and contact details can be found on www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk.

Records

The Complaints Manager keeps full records of all complaints, investigations and responses. These records are kept securely and not with the individual's clinical records (if they are a patient of the practice). These records include:

- The date a complaint was received, by who and how (verbally or in writing)
- Details of the complaint and the results of the investigation
- Copies of any communications and records of telephone conversations and meetings
- The outcome of the complaint and any action that we took as a result
- Correspondence between the patient and the practice.

Learning from complaints

We adopt a no-blame approach to complaints that we receive but recognise that all feedback provides an opportunity for us to develop and improve our service.

As soon as possible after a complaint has been dealt with, we will ensure that those involved are given individual feedback. Where our investigations identify a need to improve or review our practice systems, we will encourage general discussion at practice meetings and seek suggestions for improvement. Any agreed changes will be kept under review.

We will undertake ongoing monitoring of all complaints to identify trends and assess training requirements.

Date: November 26

Review date: November 2027