

854 Dental Health Complaints policy

At 854 Dental Health we try to ensure that patient complaints are dealt with quickly and resolved to the patient's satisfaction.

Helen Dailey is responsible for dealing with complaints about any aspect of the service that we provide. Letters of complaint should be referred to Helen Dailey. Helen Dailey also deals with any complaint made over the telephone, if she is not available immediately then details are taken and she follows up the complaint as soon as possible.

If a telephone complaint cannot be followed up quickly by Helen Dailey another practice member should do this as required see below.

Any complaints are discussed at practice meetings so that changes in work systems can be agreed if necessary. All written complaints are kept in the complaints file. General comments received are logged in the comments book.

Complaints on behalf of someone else - The rules of medical confidentiality will be adhered to if the complaint is received on behalf of someone else. A note signed by the person concerned will be required, unless they are incapable (e.g. because of illness) of providing this to allow the complaint to be investigated.

How to Deal With a Complaint

A patient may approach any member of the practice team with a complaint or comment and should be referred to the nominated person, unless it is a simple matter which can be resolved immediately. However, it is important that the patient is treated with sensitivity and courtesy at all times. Try to provide a quiet environment in which to discuss the problem. The upstairs back room can be used when appropriate. In summary we aim to:

- find out what happened and what, if anything, went wrong
- make it possible for the complainant to discuss the problem with those concerned
- Identify what we can do to make sure the problem does not happen again.

At the end of the investigation the complaint will be discussed with the complainant in detail, either in person or in writing.

In order to achieve the above the following steps should be followed.

Listen carefully to the patient without interrupting. Do not be afraid to apologise and remember that the first few seconds of dealing with the patient are critical. Try to

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match the response to the problem, since the appropriate response will be more likely to resolve the situation.

Investigate by establishing the facts accurately and try to understand the cause of the complaint. Ask open questions (open questions begin with who, what, where, when, why and how). Clarify what the patient expects/wants to happen. Record all the relevant information.

Communicate if not verbally on the spot, within 2 days in person or by telephone if possible. There must be an initial written response within 10 days. The initial response may be an acknowledgement of the complaint with more detailed correspondence to follow. If a written response is required, it should include a summary of the complaint, an explanation of events from the viewpoint of the practice, an apology where appropriate and details of what has been done to prevent a recurrence of the problem within the practice, if necessary. If there are any delays in the process we will keep the complainant informed.

Resolve quickly. This is very important. Make sure that the time limits are observed. Resolve problems verbally if possible.

Ideally, the patient's expectations should be exceeded so that he/she is delighted rather than just satisfied with the outcome. In some circumstances, a written apology, card or gift such as flowers may be appropriate.

If a patient remains dissatisfied or is unwilling to participate, record the facts and refer the patient as appropriate.

If the problem is a clinical one, the dentist should consider seeking advice from his/her defence organisation before dealing with the complaint personally and promptly. More serious matters should always be referred for professional advice.

If the complaint is not resolved to the patient's satisfaction, the patient will be advised to write to:

Care Quality Commission
Healthcare Team
Citygate - Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne - NE1 4PA
Email: info@cqc.org.uk / Website: www.cqc.org.uk

Dental Complaints Service
Telephone: 08456 120540
www.dentalcomplaints.org.uk

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