

WAUNFAWR SURGERY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

This procedure sets out the Practice's approach to the handling of complaints and is intended as an internal guide which should be made readily available to all staff. A leaflet for patient use is given at Appendix B.

PROCEDURE

1. General provisions

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

- The complaints procedure;
- The role of the local Health Board and other bodies in relation to complaints about services under the contract; and
- Their right to assistance with any complaint from independent review services.

The Practice will take reasonable steps to ensure that the complaints procedure is accessible to all patients.

2. Receiving of complaints

The Practice may receive a complaint made by, or on behalf of a patient, or former patient, who is receiving or has received treatment at the Practice. A relative or friend may make a complaint on behalf of a patient, however if the response is to include personal information then express consent will be required.

Where the patient is a child, only a parent or other person who has legal responsibility for the child may make a complaint on the patient's behalf.

3. Period within which complaints can be made

The period for making a complaint is:

(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 (provided that the complaint is made no later than 3 years after the date of the event).

These timescales should be viewed flexibly. GPs and / or Complaints managers should accept the complaint if it would have been difficult or unreasonable for the complaint to have been

lodged earlier, and it is still possible to adequately investigate and collate the facts surrounding the event.

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

4. Complaints handling

The practice will nominate:

(a) a person (the 'Complaints Officer') to be responsible for the operation of the complaints procedure and the investigation of complaints; and

(b) a Partner, or other senior person associated with the practice, to be responsible for the effective management of the complaints procedure and for ensuring that action is taken in the light of the outcome of any investigation.

5. Action upon receipt of a complaint

Complaints may be received either verbally or in writing and must be forwarded to the Complaints Officer (or his/her stand-in if the Complaints Officer is unavailable), who must:

- ensure that all verbal complaints are recorded on the 'Complaint review form ' for record purposes. This will ensure that any verbal complaints that cannot be dealt with immediately are recorded for future reference.
- acknowledge the complaint in writing within the period of 2 working days beginning with the day on which the complaint was received.
- ensure the complaint is properly investigated
- provide a full response to the patient within 30 working days beginning with the day on which the complaint was received by the Complaints Officer. Where that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable, the complainant must be given a written statement of the reason for the delay and an indication of when a response will be available.

6. Review of complaints

Complaints received by the practice will be reviewed to ensure that learning points are shared with the whole practice team:

- Complaints received during the month will be reviewed at the next meeting of practice staff to ensure any actions required are put into practice.
- A full review of all complaints will be carried out annually to identify any trends or additional actions/learning points.

7. 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 Complaints Officer 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.

8. Escalation

Complaints must be handled locally within the practice at the initial stages. Where the patient remains unhappy with the complaint outcomes they may request a review by the Independent Review Secretariat within 28 days of the notification of the outcome.

Once the secretariat receives notification of the complaint they will acknowledge within 2 working days, advise interested parties that the matter is subject to review, and appoint independent lay review personnel, who may include a clinician. The reviewer will provide the complainant with the Secretariat's response.

Where the patient remains unhappy with the Review outcome they may take the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Practices may also refer matters to the Ombudsman if they feel that the complaints administration or process has been managed unfairly. The Ombudsman will not normally accept complaints older than 12 months without good reason.

RESOURCES

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Putting Things Right: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/861/page/63560>

Appendix B

Comments, complaints and suggestions

Our aim is to provide the highest level of care for all our patients. We will always be willing to hear if there is any way that you think that we can improve the service we provide.

Making a complaint

If you have any complaints or concerns about the service that you have received from the doctors or staff working for this practice, please let us know.

We hope that most problems can be sorted out easily and quickly, often at the time they arise and with the person concerned. If your problem cannot be sorted out in this way and you wish to make a 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 enable us to establish what happened more easily. If it is not possible to do that, please let us have details of your complaint:

- Within 6 months of the incident that caused the problem; or
- Within 6 months of discovering that you have a problem, provided that is within 12 months of the incident.

Practice Manager will be pleased to deal with any complaint. They will explain the procedure to you and make sure that your concerns are dealt with promptly. You can make your complaint:

In person – ask to speak to Practice Manger

In writing – some complaints may be easier to explain in writing - please give as much information as can, then send your complaint to the practice for the attention of the Practice Manager as soon as possible

What we shall do

Our complaints procedure is designed to make sure that we settle any complaints as quickly as possible.

We shall acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days and aim to have looked into your complaint within 30 working days of the date when you raised it with us. We shall then be in a position to offer you an explanation, or a meeting with the people involved.

When we look into your complaint, we shall aim to:

- find out what happened and what went wrong
- make it possible for you to discuss the problem with those concerned, if you would like this
- make sure you receive an apology, where appropriate
- identify what we can do to make sure the problem doesn't happen again.

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

Complaining on behalf of someone else

Please note that we keep strictly to the rules of medical confidentiality. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, we have to know that you have his or her permission to do so. A note signed by the person concerned will be needed, unless they are incapable (because of illness) of providing this.

What you can do next

We hope that, if you have a problem, you will use our practice complaints procedure. We believe that this will give us the best chance of putting right whatever has gone wrong and the opportunity to improve our practice.

However this does not affect your right to initiate an independent review if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. The Independent Review Secretariat Wales undertakes this role.

If you remain dissatisfied with the responses to your complaint under the first 2 stages, you have the right to ask the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to review your case (see below).

Contact details:

Public Services Ombudsman For Wales:

Phone: 0300 790 0203

E-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk.

Postal address: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Website address: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Community Health Council

Tel: 01248 679284

Email: admin@waleschc.org.uk

Waunfawr Surgery

Address: Liverpool House, Waunfawr, LL55 4YY

Telephone: 01286 650223

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