

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

183dental operates a practice-based complaints system that suits the practice and meets the nationally agreed criteria for practice complaints systems.

Handling complaints well can lead to greater satisfaction and improved services for patients. At the same time the practice is aware that dealing with complaints can at times be stressful and difficult. The practice believes that a good system for dealing with complaints, supported by all staff and dentists, is very important. Every member of the practice team needs to understand the procedure.

Comments and suggestions are also valuable. Patients often have good ideas about ways of improving facilities and services that can be missed by those working within the organisation. It is obviously better for the practice to deal with comments, suggestions **and** complaints within the practice, rather than allow a grumble to turn into something that has to be investigated by the Health Authority.

PREVENTING COMPLAINTS

Occasionally, any member of the practice team may be able to prevent a complaint. For example, if during or after a member of staff's contact with the patient he or she feels that the patient is dissatisfied with the service provided, then a problem report can be completed or, better still, the situation can be explained as soon as possible to the practice manager who administers the complaints procedure. This will allow us to contact the patient, if appropriate, *before* the patient decides to make a complaint.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the practice system are to:

- Enable patients to express comments, suggestions and complaints to the practice when they feel dissatisfied with the service provided.
- Provide patients with an explanation of what has happened; to make, where appropriate, an apology; and to give an assurance that the practice has taken steps to prevent the problem recurring, where this is possible.

CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Whilst the manager will be responsible for administering the complaints system, any member of the team may find that he or she is the first point of contact for someone

who wishes to complain. All members of staff should be familiar with this complaints procedure.

Dealing with people who are distressed or angry is not easy and first contact in these situations is very important.

Points to remember are:-

- Help the person feel relaxed. It is important that he or she realises that the complaint will be dealt with professionally and sympathetically.
- Ensure that the procedure is for the patients benefit and that the practice regards responding to a complaint as part of good management.
- Offer a private place in which to talk about the problem.
- If the person is upset, angry or nervous – BE CALM. Do not be antagonistic and try to show understanding.
- Listen carefully in order to establish the facts.
- Suggest that he or she see the manager at the practice at a time convenient to both parties. Alternatively, suggest that the manager will contact the patient by telephone to discuss the problem.
- Make a detailed and dated notes of what the patient says and of your response, if not during the discussion, immediately afterwards.
- Do not offer an explanation at this stage unless you are sure of your facts, especially if the matter needs to be investigated further.

Please refer to our CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PATIENT COMPLAINTS for more details on the procedure for handling a complaint.

A copy of the code can be found on reception, in the waiting room, in the complaints file and in the policies folder and on our new website.

When speaking to a complainant, never commit the practice to any action other than as described above. We will provide annual training in how to manage complaints and we will review our policies and procedures annually.

We will provide an annual statement to the team at NHS England regarding the number of complaints that we receive. We will always advise patients of other bodies they can complain to if they feel that do not wish to complain directly to us. These bodies are to found on the code of practice.

This policy will be reviewed annually