

**Stockton Heath Medical Centre
London Road
Stockton Heath
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 6HJ**

INTERNAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We are sorry that you have experienced a problem with our service and wish to make a complaint. We hope that by using our internal complaints procedure we can resolve your complaint and also ensure we learn from your experience and improve our service.

This policy will give information about how we manage, respond to and learn from any complaints we receive about our service. It meets the requirements of the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) 2009 and reflects the recommendations from both the Francis Report (2013) and "My expectations for making raising concerns and complaints" (2014) and NHS England Complaint Policy.

We will:

- Advise you how to make a complaint
- Give you confidence that your complaint will be dealt with seriously
- We will investigate your concerns and keep you informed at all stages
- We will give you information about any resolutions
- We will ask for your reflection of your experience

Definition of a complaint or concern:

A complaint or concern is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision of Stockton Heath Medical Centre, either verbal or written, and whether justified or not, which requires a response and/or redress.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can complain, including young people. A family member, carer, friend or your local MP can complain on your behalf with your written permission.

(Patient Advocacy: Since 2013, individual local authorities have a statutory duty to commission independent advocacy services to provide support for people making, or thinking of making, a complaint about their NHS care or treatment. The Practice can advise on the current advocacy arrangements on request).

The Practice may receive a complaint made by, or (with his/her consent) 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.

In the case of a third party pursuing a complaint on behalf of the person affected we will request the following information:

- Name and address of the person making the complaint
- Name and either date of birth or address of the person affected
- Contact details of the affected person (if not deceased) so that we can contact them for confirmation that they consent to the third party acting on their behalf.

All complaints, written and verbal will be recorded, and written complaints will be acknowledged in writing within three working days of receipt. Patients will be encouraged to complain in writing where possible.

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 six months. The practice standard will be 10 days for a response.

How to complain

Complaints will obviously vary and we want to ensure the correct person deals with it. Complaints can be reported verbally or in writing. If patients wish to put them in writing this can be done by filling in Practice Complaints form (attached) or by sending an email to WARCCG.StocktonHeathMC@nhs.net stating "complaint FAO Practice Manager" in the title

- All complaints will be acknowledged no later than 3 working days after the day the complaint is received (either by telephone, email or letter). The Practice would aim to investigate and resolve complaints within 10 working days.
- Include an offer to discuss the matter in person. Advise the patient of potential timescales and the next steps;
- In the case of a telephone complaint check with complainant if a telephone reply is acceptable. Advise the patient of potential timescales and the next steps;
- ensure the complaint is properly investigated. Where the complaint involves more than one organisation the Complaints Manager will liaise with his / her counterpart to agree responsibilities and ensure that one coordinated response is sent;
- where the complaint has been sent to the incorrect organisation, advise the patient within three working days and ask them if they want it to be forwarded on. If it is sent on, advise the patient of the full contact details;
- provide a written response to the patient as soon as reasonably practicable ensuring that the patient is kept up to date with progress as appropriate. This will include a full report and a statement advising them of their right to take the matter to the Ombudsman if required.

In the event that a specific 'complaint' does not or cannot be dealt with in this manner, the issues must be discussed with the (appropriate) Partners as soon as possible to decide the most appropriate course of action. This may include seeking advice from a professional body such as the BMA, RCN, MDU or MPS. Clinical complaints will be discussed during Clinical Team meetings which are held at least once a month. (An investigation of this type can often take much longer than 10 working days). The complainant will be kept informed of all stages and of any reasons for delay.

As soon as it is reasonably possible after completing the investigation and within the agreed timescales with the complainant, the Practice will send a written formal response.

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 the 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 send later;
- An apology or explanation as appropriate;
- A statement of the right to escalate the complaint, together with the relevant contact detail.

Later we will ask if you are satisfied with the outcome of your complaint and whether you feel it has been resolved.

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.

Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled in the strictest of confidence in accordance with the NHS England Confidentiality policy and will be kept separately from patient medical records. Care will be taken that information should only be disclosed to those who have a demonstrable need to have access to it.

Confidentiality will be maintained in such a way that only managers and staff who are leading the investigation know the contents of the case. Anyone disclosing information to others who are not directly involved in this may be dealt with under disciplinary procedures.

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.

Stockton Heath Medical Centre

Complaints Local Resolution
Patient Information

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If you wish to approach NHS England

NHS England
PO Box 16738h
REDDITCH
B87 9PT
e-mail: England.contactus@nhs.net
Telephone: 0300 311 22 33

Should you, however, remain dissatisfied at this stage, you may now approach the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman to request an Independent Review into your complaint. You have six months from the date of this letter in which to do so.

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman may be contacted at:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP

You are advised that there are strict time limits for formal complaints to the health authority. These are:

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

Please fill form in overleaf:

To Complain:

PLEASE Write down your complaint, on a separate sheet, as you see it, particularly stressing dates, times and names of staff involved. **If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, we will need signed note of their permission for you to do this.**

PLEASE Return this form with your complaint to the Practice Manager who will then act on the option you have chosen from below.

PLEASE Choose one of the following by placing a tick in the box next to it.

To enable us to respond to you, make sure you put your name and address on the complaint.

A. Talk to the Doctor or team member concerned

B. Discuss your complaint with the Practice Manager.

C. Have your concern referred to another Doctor in the practice.

D. Another choice, please indicate here:

Please return this form with your complaint to Karen Chriscoli, Practice Manager, who will then act on the option you have chosen.