

THE VILLAGE & FRESHFIELD SURGERIES - FORMBY

# Complaints Policy

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Version 1

## Policy Statement

This policy has been established in accordance with guidelines set out by the Department of Health in the National Health Service (NHS) Complaints regulations 2004, NHS Complaints Regulations Amendments [April 2009 and September 2009]. This policy applies to all staff working at the Village & Freshfield Surgeries

It is the policy of the Village & Freshfield Surgeries to elicit the views of service users about the quality of the services that we provide. Complaints, compliments, comments and concerns must be viewed as an opportunity to improve services and to learn from any mistakes that have occurred. The Village & Freshfield Surgeries will make every attempt to resolve any issues or complaints locally. The partners will support staff in the application of this 'local resolution' ethos which should be underpinned by effective leadership, governance, culture, focus on outcomes and being open and accountable.

The Village & Freshfield Surgeries are committed to resolving concerns at the earliest opportunity through front-line resolution and the empowerment of all staff through training and information. The Practice Manager aims to provide immediate information and assistance for patients, their families and carers in the case of a concern. She will aim to provide informal resolution to all complaints in the first instance. If this is not possible the Practice Manager will provide complainants with access to the formal complaints process.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to bring together in one document guidance and best practice for all practice employees. The policy describes the controls in place to effectively manage concerns and complaints about the services and/or facilities provided by the Village & Freshfield Surgeries

- All complaints, concerns and comments received by the Village & Freshfield Surgeries must be handled effectively through a person centred approach
- All staff must be aware of the complaints process and guidelines
- All staff must be aware of their own responsibilities in handling complaints
- This policy reinforces the ethos of a learning organisation and complaints and comments must be handled as such

## Definitions

**Complaint** – An expression of dissatisfaction that requires a formal response.

**Formal Complaint** – can be received in writing, via e-mail or verbally. The complainant may request a formal investigation or the complaint may require a formal investigation due to the severity and subject matter

### Definitions

**Complaint** – An expression of dissatisfaction that requires a formal response

**Formal complaint** – can be received in writing, via email or verbally. The complainant may request a formal investigation or the complaint may require a formal investigation due to its severity and subject matter

**Informal complaint** – usually received verbally or via email. These complaints can usually be resolved quickly (usually within 24 hours) and the subject matter is less serious

**Concern** – An issue with the potential to become a formal complaint which might be able to be resolved informally or expeditiously (usually within 24 hours)

**Comment** – Usually an isolated comment (positive and negative) about a service, individual or episode that may or may not require a response

**Equiry** – A formal or informal request for information

### **The Complaints Process**

The practice will acknowledge a complaint within two working days and aim to have looked into any complaint within ten working days of the date in which it was first brought to our attention. When complaints are looked into we must try to identify: -

- Find out what happened and what went wrong
- Make it possible for the complainant to discuss the problem with those concerned, if that is what they wish
- Make sure the complainant receives an apology
- Identify to the complainant what we can do to make sure the problem does not happen again (as appropriate)

A complaint may be made by:

- Any person who is affected by or likely to be affected by an action, omission or decision of the Village & Freshfield Surgeries staff
- A representative (e.g. a relative or friend) can complain on behalf of a patient or someone affected by an action or omission by the Village & Freshfield Surgeries staff but must be acting with the individuals consent unless the patient is a minor (see form in appendix 1)
- A representative body for example The Independent Complaints and Advocacy Service (ICAS) or an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA). The application of the patients consent will be relevant in most cases
- A Member of Parliament can write in on behalf of a constituent regarding a concern or complaint but they must have agreed written consent from the constituent for the surgery to respond with personal data

### **How a Comment / Concern / Compliment or Complaint can be raised**

The complaints and feedback process must be open, robust and accessible to all who are eligible to use it. The following complaints and feedback channels are available;

- Via any member of practice staff
- Via e-mail, in writing or by telephone
- Via comments boxes located in the reception area
- Via the NHS Choices website
- Via other agencies including PALS, ICAS and CCG
- Via ad hoc patient surveys
- Via National Patient Surveys
- Via the Patient Participation Group (PIP)

### **Supporting staff involved in complaints**

All staff involved in a complaint must be offered support.

### **Front line staff**

- All verbal complaints / concerns should be dealt with by an appropriate front line member of staff in a sympathetic and courteous manner. If concern cannot be resolved within 24hrs of it being raised it should be referred to the practice manager and considered as a formal issue
- Staff must, where possible deal with the complaint rapidly and in a sensitive manner. If a complaint is received in writing this must be forwarded to the practice manager immediately
- If the complainant prefers to make their initial complaint to someone who has not been involved in their care staff should advise the practice manager
- If at any stage a member of staff feels that they are not confident or competent to deal with the complaint they must refer the matter immediately to the practice manager
- All documentation relating to complaints must be kept separately from the patients clinical records
- Staff must ensure that they do not treat patients, relatives or carers differently as a result of making a complaint or raising a concern
- To integrate and document learning from complaints and feedback, however small, and use to inform and update the rest of the team and make service changes

### **Complaints Standards**

The final response letter must include:

- A record of thanks to the complainant for bringing the matter to our attention
- An expression of condolence when a bereavement has occurred
- An explanation of the reasons for any failure in service and the actions taken to prevent a reoccurrence and / or make improvements
- A response to each issue raised in the complaint
- An apology for each specific concern raised if it is identified that there was a failure in service, or alternatively an apology did not meet the complainants expectations and the reasons why
- Reassurance that the complainant has been taken seriously and the information gained will be used to improve the service that we provide
- When a written response refers to matters of clinical judgement, the clinical aspects of the complaint must be agreed with the health care professional concerned
- The letter must include how the complainant can proceed if they remain dissatisfied
- Avoid complex medical terminology where possible or explain the terminology in plain English

### **Complaining to the CCG**

We aim to ensure that complainants are satisfied with our complaints procedure. The practice will view complaints as an opportunity to improve our Practice and ensure that staff remain aware of the quality of service provided to patients. Complainants will be reminded that they have the right to approach the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) if they feel they cannot raise their complaint with us, or if they are dissatisfied with the result of our investigation.

**Appendix 1**

**THE VILLAGE & FRESHFIELD SURGERIES - FORMBY**

**Statement of Consent for the Disclosure of Personal Records**

Complainants Name:	
Complainants Address:	
Telephone Number:	

***I hereby give my consent for the Village & Freshfield Surgeries to share any relevant information to the person identified above in order to complete the investigation into my complaint.***

***I understand that this could include disclosure of my personal records. The information used to investigate the complaint and to be included in any response must be solely for the purpose of supporting an appropriate investigation into my complaint and allowing a comprehensive response / explanation to my complaint.***

Patients Name:	
Patients Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Signed:	
Date:	

## THE VILLAGE & FRESHFIELD SURGERIES - FORMBY

### Patient information leaflet on complaints

#### Practice complaints procedure

If you have a complaint or concern about the service you have received from the doctors or any member of staff working in this practice, please let us know. We operate a practice complaints procedure as part of an NHS system for dealing with complaints, and which meets national criteria.

#### How to complain

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 the most a few weeks, as this will enable us to establish what happened more easily. However, if this is not possible, 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, providing this is within 12 months of the incident

Complaints should be addressed to Ms Susan Lowe, Practice Manager, the Complaints Administrator, or any of the Doctors personally. Alternatively, you may ask for an appointment in order to discuss your concerns, where the complaints procedure will be explained to you and ensure that your concerns are dealt with promptly. It will be a great help if you are as specific as possible about your complaint.

#### What we will do

We will acknowledge your complaint within two working days and aim to have looked into your complaint within ten working days of the date it was raised. We will 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 this is appropriate
- ◆ Identify what we can do to make sure the problem doesn't happen again

## **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 their permission to do so. A signed consent form will be needed, unless the patient is incapable (because of illness) of providing this. Please ask a member of staff for a form.

## **Complaining to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)**

We hope that, if you do have a problem, you will use our practice complaint procedure. We believe this will give us the best chance of putting right whatever has gone wrong and an opportunity to improve our practice. However, this does not affect your right to approach the local Primary Care Trust if you feel you cannot raise your complaint with us, or you are dissatisfied with the result of our investigation. You should contact the Primary Care Trust complaints manager, or your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service, details below:-

There is a new freephone telephone number for the PALS service **0800 218 2333**; this number covers the whole of Sefton.

If you live in South Sefton you can contact PALS on the freephone number above or visit the PALS office at Merton House, Stanley Road, Bootle, L20 3DL (please ring the office first to make sure someone is available).

If you live in North Sefton you can contact PALS direct on the freephone number above or visit the PALS office at 5 Curzon Road, Southport, PR8 6PL (please ring the office first to make sure someone is available).

Independent Complaints Advocacy Service North West

Tel : 0845 1203735