

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The future of the Healthcare Commission has been in doubt for years. There is a move afoot to bring health care and social care closer together and when this occurs there is likely to be a new complaints procedure issued. This has been expected every year since 1999 so may happen as early as 2009. In the meantime, the current situation is explained below.

The vast majority of complaints are dealt with by local resolution. Each practice should:

- Have a formally appointed Complaints Manager – often the practice manager.
- Have a poster/notice or leaflet telling the patient:
 - That the first step in complaining is to try Local Resolution through the practice Complaints Manager.
 - Who the practice Complaints Manager is and how to contact him/her.
 - That if they wish they can complain directly to the Complaints Manager at the PCT (08456 583805) but it will still be referred back to the practice for local resolution as a first step, although the PCT can provide a conciliation service to help the process if required.
 - That if they need help in making the complaint the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) provides free, independent and confidential help. Contact is 0845 120 3782
 - That any NHS treatment can be investigated.
 - That the outcome of the investigation may be an explanation, perhaps an apology, and, if appropriate, a reaction or response to avoid a similar thing happening again.
 - That a response in writing will be issued within 10 days.
 - That if, after Local Resolution has been tried, they are still unhappy, they have 56 days from the date of that practice response to request the Healthcare Commission in writing for an Independent Review.

So far as GPs are concerned:

- No complaint sent directly to the PCT will ever be handled without informing you.
- When you receive a complaint directly from a patient you are not obliged to tell the PCT or the LMC about it, but we remain available at all times to discuss and advise should you require it.
- Naturally if it was a very serious complaint then we would hope to be consulted at an early stage so that the best outcome can be achieved for both the person complained about and the practice.

[Signed on the original]

Mike Forster
Lay Secretary