

Managing Your Complaint - Explaining our Process

We are sorry that you are dissatisfied with a service we have provided, and apologise for any distress or anxiety you may be feeling as a result. We appreciate that dependent upon the nature of your complaint or concern, this may be a sad or difficult time for you; you may also be feeling angry or frustrated with our organisation. We take complaints very seriously and will work to resolve the issues you have raised and restore your confidence in our service.

May we take this opportunity to explain how we intend to manage your complaint in accordance with the 'Local Authority Services and National Health Service Complaints Regulations (2009)'. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Quality Team on the telephone number/s above - this information is supplementary to our Complaints Leaflet.

Listening ...

When we receive your correspondence we are required to acknowledge it within 3 working days – this is usually achievable, however in some cases there may be a delay if you are not the patient and the matter of authority needs to be addressed, or you have complained to us but we find your complaint is not about our service and needs to be managed by another organisation. Your letter will be triaged to determine how serious your concerns are, for example if your complaint was not dealt with immediately would there be a risk of harm to any individual. This risk assessment together with the experience of the Quality Team would be used to determine the timescale for the investigation and response to your complaint – we know that some complaints can be addressed quickly, however more complex complaints for example, those that span several services involving many clinicians will take longer to investigate. You will be advised in our acknowledgement letter, how long we anticipate it will take to investigate your concerns and formally respond to you. We understand that you may have questions about the management of your complaint or wish to meet with staff involved, so our acknowledgement letter invites you to contact us, either to discuss over the telephone or to make arrangements to meet with us, and talk through the process and methods of resolution and the independent support available. This would also give us the opportunity to better understand your expectations and desired outcome.

The triage process will identify your specific issues of concern, which may be one or many – some letters of complaint are clearer than others so the Quality Team need to carefully establish what the issues are, the service in which the issues arose, the staff involved and when it happened. When we have this information your complaint will be shared with the most appropriate staff – clinicians, managers, administrative staff - to respond.

Responding ...

To help with their response staff may review healthcare records, interview staff or request statements, undertake site visits or review other documentation such as incident forms – some or all of these methods may be undertaken depending on the level of investigation required. It is not usual for a complainant to be interviewed as their letter would be accepted as a statement of events, however should you feel that an ‘interview’ or meeting with the staff would assist the investigation please let us know and this could be arranged. We work hard to ensure the investigation is conducted quickly and efficiently, however we are mindful of staffs’ daily workload of clinical commitments and other duties and time away from work due to annual leave or ill health. Other factors may become apparent during the course of the investigation which means we are unable to respond to you within our original timeframe – it may be necessary to involve more staff than initially thought, other processes may commence as the result of your complaint such as a ‘serious untoward incident review’ or lost property investigation - we will inform you of the delay if this is the case.

Following the investigation, staff responses together with your original complaint letter will be filed together by the Quality Team and passed to an appropriate senior manager, not directly involved in the complaint, to review and draft a letter of response to you. The draft letter and file will then be passed to the Chief Executive of the Trust, or their designated deputy, to review and sign the letter, which is then sent to you – in a small number of cases our response to you may be delayed should the senior manager or Chief Executive feel that further investigation is required – we will inform you of the delay if this is the case.

Once you have received the Trust’s letter of response to your complaint we hope it will allay your concerns and achieve a satisfactory resolution – we do however acknowledge that this may not always be the case. If you remain dissatisfied you may choose to come back to us. Where we can, we will continue to work with you, alternatively you can contact the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman to request an independent review of your complaint and the way in which the Trust has managed it.

Improving ...

We sincerely hope we will reach an amicable and satisfactory outcome for you. In any case, complaints provide the Trust with valuable feedback from which we can learn and improve services. Any actions or lessons identified from your complaint are recorded, and together with service managers are monitored by the Quality Team to ensure that what we told you we would do happens, to ensure that we have done all we can to avoid your experience being experienced by others. Lessons learnt from complaints are anonymised and shared across the organisation. Learning may also be shared with the Care Quality Commission, who is responsible for monitoring our performance, and may feature in our annual report.

Thank you for taking the time to read this

– We hope you have found it helpful.