



Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Approver	Notes
Version 1	16.01.2023	L Russell	Dr Mallard-Smith 	<i>No changes made on review undertaken at annual review 2026</i>

Review Date January 2027

Complaints Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all complaints are handled promptly, fairly, consistently, and in a transparent manner. The practice is committed to learning from complaints to improve the quality of services provided to patients and to ensure concerns are addressed appropriately.

This policy formalises the Practice Complaints Procedure and ensures compliance with NHS complaints principles.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All patients registered with the practice
- Any person affected by or involved in the care provided by the practice
- All members of staff, including clinical, administrative, temporary, and contracted staff

This policy covers complaints relating to services provided by the practice. It does not address issues of legal liability or compensation.

Responsibilities

Practice Manager

- Act as the main point of contact for receiving complaints
- Decide how each complaint will be investigated
- Ensure complaints are handled within agreed timescales
- Arrange meetings with complainants where appropriate
- Ensure responses are clear, factual, and empathetic
- Maintain records of complaints and outcomes

Practice Staff

- Treat complainants with courtesy and respect
- Pass any complaints received to the Practice Manager promptly
- Cooperate fully with investigations
- Learn from complaints and implement agreed changes

Partners

- Provide oversight and approval of complaint responses where required
- Support learning and service improvement following complaints

Procedure

Making a Complaint

Patients or their representatives may make a complaint by writing or emailing the Practice Manager. Complaints may be made directly by the patient or, where appropriate, by a representative with the patient's consent.

The practice has a duty to maintain patient confidentiality. Where a complaint is made on behalf of a patient, written consent may be required.

Acknowledgement and Investigation

- All complaints will be acknowledged promptly.
- The Practice Manager will decide how best to investigate the complaint.
- Wherever possible, complaints will be dealt with swiftly and informally.

Meeting with the Complainant

- Patients will normally be offered a meeting within ten working days to discuss their concerns.
- The complainant may bring a friend or relative to the meeting.

- The meeting will aim to:
 - Fully understand the concerns raised
 - Provide an explanation where appropriate
 - Discuss any actions required to prevent recurrence

Outcome and Response

Following investigation:

- The practice will provide a clear explanation of findings
- Any actions taken or planned will be explained
- Apologies will be offered where appropriate

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be advised of further options for escalation.

External Support and Escalation

Making a complaint through this procedure does not affect the right to contact external organisations, including:

- **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**
 - Telephone: 0800 328 5640
 - Tel: 07876 231045
 - Email: scwcsu.palscomplaints@nhs.net
- **SEAP (Support Empower Advocate Promote)**
 - Telephone: 0330 440 9000
 - Email: hastings.office@seap.org.uk

Monitoring & Review

- All complaints will be recorded and reviewed to identify themes or learning points.
- Actions arising from complaints will be monitored to ensure completion.
- This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes to legislation, NHS guidance, or practice procedures.