

Introduction

We are committed to providing high quality treatment and care. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

“Any expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.”

If you need to complain about something, we encourage you to do so.

What the Complaints Procedure covers

You can complain about:

- failure or refusal to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of care and treatment, or an unreasonable delay in the provision of care
- failure to properly implement or follow policy, procedures and standards
- failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- the conduct, behaviour or attitude of a member of staff
- disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process).

What can't be dealt with through the Complaints Procedure

There are some things we are unable to deal with through our Complaints Handling Procedure.

While it is not possible to list everything, we have set out below what this includes:

- a routine first-time request for a service – you may be reporting a service request for the first time, for example a request for information you need with regard to your care or treatment.
- a request for a second opinion in respect of care or treatment
- matters relating to private healthcare or treatment
- a previously concluded complaint or a request to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- a complaint that is being or has been previously investigated by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)
- a complaint arising from a suggested failure to comply with a request for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018
- matters where there is intent to or instigation of legal action
- matters where there is an ongoing criminal investigation

We will give you information and advice to help you resolve your concerns in these situations.

Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services, or a service contracted or commissioned by us, can make a complaint. A representative for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser may make a complaint on your behalf. This will normally require your verbal or written consent.

Please also read the sections below on **Getting help to make your complaint** and **consent**.

How do I complain?

You can make a complaint to the Practice Manager or Practice Business Manager in person or by contacting the surgery, you can do this by telephone, by email, or in writing.

You can complain by contacting us on:

Telephone: [028 25 313 030](tel:02825313030)

Email: PracticeManager.Z00315@gp.hscni.net

For Written complaints:-

FAO Practice Manager / Practice Business Manager
Mountview Surgery
Ballymena Health & Care Centre
86 Cushendall Road
Ballymena
BT43 6HB

When submitting your complaint, please tell us:

- your full name and address
- your phone number, if you are happy to provide it, so we can call you to discuss your complaint
- your email address (if this is your preferred method of contact)
- the full name, address and date of birth of the person affected if you are complaining on behalf of somebody else
- as much helpful detail as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong; and
- what outcome you are seeking

Giving us this information will help us to clearly identify the problem and what we need to do to resolve matters.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about, or

- o finding out that you have a reason to complain

In exceptional circumstances (for example bereavement, poor health, communication difficulties, limited support or you may have only recently become aware of the issue(s) of concern) we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why. If we decide that, because of the time that has passed since the incident occurred, we cannot consider your complaint, we will confirm our rationale in writing.

Responsibilities of complainants

As a patient of Mountview Surgery, you have the right to expect the best possible services. If we fall short, you have the right to complain. When you complain, we ask you to follow these guiding principles:

- o provide adequate details of your complaint
 - o set out clearly the cause for dissatisfaction
 - o provide accurate details and supporting correspondence or other relevant supporting evidence
 - o if there has been a delay in submitting your complaint explain the cause of that delay
 - o explain what you believe to be a satisfactory outcome
 - o treat our staff with good manners, politeness and respect at all times
 - o accept that we will act fairly and promptly in dealing with your complaint
 - o be reasonable and open minded and listen to reasonable explanations; and
 - o be realistic. It may not always be possible to achieve the outcome you want.
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What happens when I have complained?

Our Complaints Handling Procedure has two stages:

Stage 1: Frontline Response

We aim to resolve complaints quickly. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, with immediate action to resolve the problem.

Sometimes we will have to make some enquiries before we can respond to your complaint. It is our aim to give you our response at Stage 1 within five working days or less, however there may be circumstances where we need more time to provide you with a response. If this is the case, we will advise you and will provide you with a response within ten working days.

Stage 2: Investigation

If you remain dissatisfied, you may request that we look at your complaint at Stage 2. You should include details of what you remain dissatisfied with and what outcome you are looking for. This should be done within 30 days of receiving our response at Stage 1 of the process. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

We may also move your complaint to Stage 2 if it is complex and requires a detailed investigation that cannot be achieved at Stage 1.

At Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within **three working days**
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1 and what outcome you are looking for at Stage 2
- if appropriate consider alternative resolution approaches such as mediation or conciliation; and
- explain the timeframe for a Stage 2 written response, which we should provide within 20 working days

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied with either our decision or the way in which we have dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) to look at it. NIPSO is the final stage for complaints about HSC services in Northern Ireland. NIPSO is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. The service provided by NIPSO is free. It is not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

NIPSO generally expect complaints to be brought to them within six months from when you received correspondence from us informing you that the complaints handling procedure is complete and of your right to refer your complaint to NIPSO.

NIPSO will generally ask you to provide details of your complaint and a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can contact NIPSO online or call [0800 34 34 24](tel:0800343424).

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint.

NIPSO's contact details are:

The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Freephone: [0800 34 34 24](tel:0800343424)
Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk
Web: [NIPSO](https://www.nipso.org.uk)

If you would like to visit NIPSO in person, you must make an appointment.

Their freepost address is: FREEPOST NIPSO

If NIPSO cannot investigate your complaint and your complaint requires an alternative route for independent review, NIPSO will tell you and provide you with the relevant contact details.

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a service user who is dissatisfied with our service as long as the service user has given their permission for us to deal with that person. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

We are committed to making our services easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equality duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you to access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another

language or format, tell us in person, contact us on [02825313030](tel:02825313030), or email us at PracticeManager.Z00315@gp.hscni.net

Consent

When we look into a complaint, we may need to review information from your health records to help us understand what happened and provide a full response.

We may have to share your information to allow us to respond to your complaint. Only staff directly involved in investigating the complaint will see this information, and it will be used solely for that purpose.

If you prefer that your information is not shared, we will respect your wishes. However, this may limit what we can investigate or the outcome we can provide. In some cases, we may still need to continue the investigation if there is an overriding public interest, such as a concern for safety.

Complaints by a third party should be made with the verbal or written consent of the individual concerned.