

Complaints Policy

Prince George Dental Practice

Date of adoption: 30.1.23

Purpose

This policy statement sets out how this practice handles complaints at this practice so that they are dealt with quickly to avoid escalation, and to minimise any detrimental effects on patients, team members or the practice.

This policy is required because complaints are an important measure of overall patient satisfaction; for every complainant there were usually others who had similar experiences but did not come forward to express their dissatisfaction. In addition, statistics show that unhappy patients share their experiences with others far more than happy patients and this can have a negative effect on patients' confidence in us. Complaints posted on internet sites can amplify these out of proportion.

Getting to the root cause of complaints and proactively making changes to reduce them helps us to improve services in order to consistently deliver a high quality patient experience, thus strengthening patient loyalty and increasing word of mouth recommendations.

Background

Our policies establish internal organisational standards which support our team to meet external standards. This particular policy is required to comply with the following legislations and guidelines:

- [GDC Standards for Dental Teams](#) (GDC) Principle 5
- [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) Fundamental Standard 'Responsive'](#)

Scope

All team members, whether permanent, temporary, employed or contracted to provide services at or on behalf of the practice, are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of and comply with the requirements of this policy as well as the procedures and guidelines supporting it.

Associated Procedures

This policy is underpinned by the following procedures/guidelines:

Our aim is to react to complaints in the way in which we would want our complaint about a service to be handled. We learn from any mistakes that we make and our aim is to respond to patients' concerns in a caring and sensitive way.

- a) The person ultimately responsible for dealing with any concerns in this practice is Amir Moughadam.
- b) If you are unhappy about an aspect of your care, speak to a member of the reception staff either by telephone or at the reception desk. After listening to a description of the problem Carla Robson should be contacted if it cannot be dealt with straight away. Should the designated person or other responsible person not be available at the time, you will be informed when they will be available and arrangements will be made for you to meet with the appropriate person. The member of staff will take brief details of the concern and pass them on to Carla Robson.

- c) If you write to express your concern, by letter or email, this will be passed on to the designated person in the case of administrative issues, and for clinical issues, to the treating dentist concerned who is responsible for the clinical care provided.
The contact details to write to are: **The Practice Principal, PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL, Prince George Dental Practice, 1 Prince George Street, Havant PO9 1FR**
- d) If your concern is about any aspect of clinical care or associated charges, the dentist involved and the Principal Dentist will be informed.
- e) We acknowledge in writing any concerns within **three working days**. If you have raised a concern in writing, the written acknowledgement will also include a copy of this Code of Practice. We will investigate the concern and report back to you within ten working days. If, for any reason, we are unable to complete our investigations within 15 working days, we will notify you, giving reasons for the delay and the likely period within which the investigation will be completed.
- f) We will ask you how you would like your complaint to be handled – this helps give you control from the outset.
- g) Should there be any delay we will keep you informed at each stage and the reason for the delay.
- h) We will confirm the outcome of the investigation and any decisions made in writing.
- i) Proper and comprehensive records are kept of any concerns/complaints received.
- j) If, for any reason, you are not satisfied with the outcome or the procedure, you may write to the Dental Complaints Service, 37 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8DQ. Private patients can also contact the Care Quality Commission. Prince George Dental Practice will obviously try to avoid the matter escalating this far, however we understand that, sometimes, it is impossible to resolve matters and this is then the only way to proceed.
- k) If patients remain unhappy they may contact:

Dental Complaints Service	020 8253 0800.	www.dcs.gdc-uk.org
Care Quality Commission	03000 616161	www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us

Training

All team members are expected to improve their personal effectiveness through continuing personal and professional development which leads to an increase of knowledge and/or skills.

Principle 5 of the GDC's Standards for Dental Teams places individual responsibility on team members to:

- Make sure that there is a clear and effective complaints procedure readily available for patients to use, and follow that procedure at all times
- Respect a patient's right to complain
- Give patients who complain a prompt and constructive response

We support this by ensuring that all team members know that they are expected to:

- *listen* carefully to comments, criticisms and complaints, to understand the patient's perspective and desired outcome
- *respond* swiftly, empathetically and constructively to address their concerns as outlined in our practice procedure for handling complaints
- *improve* services to reduce the risk of future complaints

Lessons learnt from complaints are brought to team meetings for shared learning and continuous quality improvement. Feedback analysis is a routine critical thinking exercise in which positive and negative comments are discussed in a 'safe' (blame free) environment with a clear emphasis on:

- Team learning from good and bad feedback
- Identifying solutions e.g. new procedures, personal/professional development
- Implementing a change in practice

Root cause analysis of complaints generally identifies areas for improvement in 3 broad categories:

- *Place* - improve environment, improve access, improve image
- *People* - improve interactions and inter-personal relationship building with better verbal and non-verbal communication skills; improve clinical care or customer care with training
- *Processes* - improve transactions with more effective and efficient management e.g. of appointments, waiting times, uptake or progression of care plans, working with laboratories, referrals, recalls, teamwork, audits

Training in complaints handling – it is a requirement of the practice for all members of the dental team in order to deliver quality care that they undertake CPD in complaints handling. It will form part of the PDP during the appraisal process and training will normally be carried out in house and will be verifiable CPD to meet the current framework.

Patient Focus

Our relationship with patients is key to our success, and it is a team wide responsibility to exceed patient expectations by providing a safe, caring, responsive, effective and well led service.

We do this by providing a clear procedure for *handling complaints* with guidance and timelines based on those expected from the NHS (or equivalent health service), as suggested by the GDC.

In line with GDC guidance, our procedure for *making a complaint*:

- is displayed where patients can see it so patients do not have to ask for a copy
- is clearly written in plain language and can be made available in other formats if needed
- is easy for patients to understand and follow
- supports team members to investigate complaints in a full and fair way, deal with complaints promptly and efficiently and share learning to improve services
- explains the possible outcomes
- respects patients' confidentiality
- explains that if the patient is not satisfied despite our best efforts to resolve their complaint there are other avenues open to them, such as contacting other organisations to raise concerns:

Care Quality Commission – <https://www.cqc.org.uk>

Complaints about private care – The Dental Complaints Service 020 8253 0800

➤ <https://dcs.gdc-uk.org>

Monitoring

In order to ensure our services are safe, efficient and effective, team members are also involved in

our quality monitoring and improvement processes including:

- Complaints audits to monitor individual performance in handling complaints and to identify any areas that need to be improved
- Patient satisfaction surveys
- Routine feedback/incident/significant event analysis (SEA)

Responsibilities and accountabilities

The registered provider for the practice is P George Practice Ltd, whose key responsibilities are to ensure that all aspects of this policy are complied with. The day to day responsibilities for providing leadership and guidance for staff and overseeing implementation of this policy will be undertaken by the practice team. Questions about this policy or associated procedures should be raised with the above.

Approval

This policy has been approved by the undersigned and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Name: Amir Moughadam	Date approved: 30.1.23
Position: Registered Manager	Review date: 30.1.24