

HSC Complaints Procedure Attention all Family Practitioner Services

The HSC Complaints Procedure, was implemented in April 2009, however revised and updated in April 2019. This version, replaces any previous or existing guidance and continues to provide a streamlined complaints process which applies equally to all HSC Organisations. As such, it presents a simple, consistent approach for both HSC staff who handle complaints and for the public who may wish to raise a complaint across all HSC services.

The HSC Complaints Procedure continues to promote an organisational culture in health and social care that fosters openness and transparency for the benefit of all who use it or work in it. Complaints offer an opportunity to identify learning to improve the quality of services provided and safeguard high standards of treatment and care.

The HSC Complaints Procedure has been developed around four key principles;

Openness and accessibility

- Flexible options for pursuing a complaint and effective support for those wishing to do so

Responsiveness

- Providing an appropriate and proportionate response

Fairness and independence

- emphasizing early resolution in order to minimize strain and distress for all; and

Learning and improvement

- ensuring complaints are viewed as a positive opportunity to learn and improve services

Practice-based Complaints Procedure

All family practitioner services must have in place a practice-based complaints procedure for the handling of complaints. This procedure must advise that for monitoring purposes, anonymised copies of complaints and Practice responses will be shared with the Board. Should a complainant have any objection to this, the Practice Manager should be informed accordingly. FPS should note that posters should be displayed within the practice, highlighting the various mechanisms of how to raise a complaint. This practice-based complaints procedure is the local resolution mechanism for resolving complaints at practice level.

Concluding Local Resolution

Complainants should be reminded to contact the Practice, within one month following receipt of the response if they are dissatisfied or require further clarity. Anonymised copies of all complaints and the responses should be provided to the Complaints Department of the Board, within **3 working days of the response being issued**.

If local resolution has been exhausted complainants should be notified of their right to approach the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT16HN, within 6 months of the final response being issued.

The Health and Social Care Board

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) Complaints Department can provide you with help, support and advice, in terms of complaints handling arrangements, and we can review practice based complaints procedures, leaflets. We can arrange a visit to your Practice or you can contact us by phone or email: complaints.hscb@hscni.net; Tel: (028) 9536 3893.

A copy of "Guidance in Relation to the Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure" (April 2019) is available on the DOH website: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/hsc-complaints-standards-and-guidelines>