

## WEST HERTS MEDICAL CENTRE

### PRACTICE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Staff at West Herts Medical Centre recognise that, occasionally, things go wrong and patients can be left feeling unhappy with some aspect or aspects of the care or treatment. Although we endeavour to provide the kind of service our patients would like, we appreciate that this is not always possible.

We feel that the only way to improve the service we provide is to actively encourage our patients to complain about the things that they are unhappy about.

If you are unhappy about the service, staff or any other aspect of the surgery, PLEASE TELL US. We operate a practice complaints procedure, which is part of the NHS system for dealing with complaints and meets national criteria. We aim to resolve complaints easily and quickly. In many cases we try to solve problems as they arise.

The complaints manager at West Herts Medical Centre is Mrs Nina Hannagan, Practice Manager and the Clinical Lead for Complaints is Dr Maria Godfrey.

#### **Making a Complaint**

All complaints should be addressed to the Practice Manager and you can do this by:

- Writing a letter outlining your concerns to:  
West Herts Medical Centre  
Jubilee Wing  
Hemel Hempstead General Hospital  
Hillfield Road  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire  
HP2 4AD
- Sending an email to:  
[Y02638.westhertsmedicalcentre@nhs.net](mailto:Y02638.westhertsmedicalcentre@nhs.net)

Whichever way you choose to raise your concerns, we will acknowledge your complaint within two working days. Please state in your complaint how you would prefer to be contacted and ensure that you provide details so we can contact you via your preferred method.

If your complaint pertains to administrative or practice procedures, you will be offered a meeting with the Practice Manager to discuss further. This will usually take place within 10 working days of receipt of your complaint. You may prefer not to do this and receive a letter from the practice instead.

Where the complaint is against a doctor or nurse or is around clinical care, the practice manager and a clinician not involved in your complaint will investigate the concerns you have raised. You may then be asked to attend an appointment with the practice manager and any relevant parties at a mutually agreed time. The purpose of this meeting is to take a detailed record of your concerns (you will be asked to read and sign this). A copy of this record will be given for you to keep. No complaint will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, colour, religious beliefs, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or on the basis of gender re-assignment.

If the complaint is relatively straightforward, we will be in a position to investigate your complaint and can offer you an explanation. If however, you are not satisfied or your complaint is of a more complicated nature we will explain the next step in the complaints procedure and the time limits you should expect. In all instances the Practice Manager will ensure that your concerns are dealt with as soon as possible.

### **Help making a complaint**

If you feel you would like to have help and support whilst making a complaint you may seek the help of advocacy services. In Hertfordshire, POhWER offer independent advocacy services to patients wanting to make a complaint about any NHS services. You can contact them in a variety of ways:

- Post - PO Box 14043, Birmingham, B6 9BL
- Email - [pohwer@pohwer.net](mailto:pohwer@pohwer.net)
- Telephone - 0300 456 2370 (charged at local rate)

### **What can you expect from POhWER:**

- Support you to make a complaint about the service, care or treatment provided by the NHS, including complaints about your GP, dentist, local hospital, ambulance service or pharmacy
- Support you with a complaint about health and social care
- Support you to make an NHS complaint on someone else's behalf, including if someone has died
- Listen to your concerns
- Signpost you to the right organisation if we think that someone else can be of more help than we can
- Answer questions about the NHS complaints procedure and explain your options
- Provide a step by step guide to making an NHS complaint and offer some tips
- Provide you with a POhWER advocate, an experienced worker who can help you make your complaint and support you through the NHS complaints process
- Support you to write a complaint letter, attend a complaint meeting, request access to medical records and refer your complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) if the local service is unable to resolve your complaint.

### **Complaining on behalf of someone else**

If the situation arises where you need someone to make a complaint on your behalf or someone else requests that you make a complaint on their behalf then you need to be aware that we keep strictly to the rules of medical confidentiality.

We would always need the written consent of the patient before we could accept the complaint. If you need to complain on behalf of someone we will send a letter and consent form to the complainant and the person complaining for them to sign and send back to the practice. Please note we cannot begin any investigation until the consent form is received at the practice.

### **Resolution Meeting – Can I bring someone with me?**

During these meetings you have the right to have another person, an advocate present. This person can be anyone of your choosing with the exception of a solicitor engaged for a fee.

### **Complaints Investigation - What will we do?**

During our investigations we shall:

- Find out exactly what happened and what went wrong
- Ensure that the problem has been discussed with all the appropriate members of staff and provide feedback
- Offer an apology if we are found to be at fault
- Take steps to ensure that the problem does not happen again
- Put in place any actions that are highlighted as a result of your complaint

### **How long after the event can I make a complaint**

You have:

- 12 months from the original date of the incident or
- 12 months from the date of discovering a problem
- 12 months within the date of a patient's death to make a complaint.

After this, facts and conversations become muddled and so a satisfactory conclusion is unlikely.

### **What if I am not happy with the outcome**

We believe that raising your concerns with us will give us the best chance to improve our service. Whilst we hope that we can give a satisfactory explanation or solution, we appreciate that this may not always be the case.

If you remain dissatisfied once the practice based complaints procedure (local resolution) has been fully utilised, you have the right to request an independent review of your complaint by contacting the Health Service Ombudsman. You can contact the health service ombudsman on: 0345 015 4033.

Or write to them at:

The parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman  
Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London  
SW1P 4QP

Or Visit their website at:

<http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>