**ST GEORGES SURGERY**

**62 HASLINGDEN ROAD**

**BLACKBURN**

**BB2 3HS**

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE PROTOCOL**

**PURPOSE**

The protocol sets out the approach of St Georges Surgery to the handling of complaints.

This protocol is relevant to all employers and anyone who works at St Georges Surgery including non-clinical staff. Individuals on training placements and visitors/observers on the premises must also adhere to this.

This protocol will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains effective and relevant.

**IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

In spite of efforts of all staff it is likely that a complaint will be made by a patient at some point. To reduce the anxiety and apprehension for both patients and staff it is crucial to have a procedure for handling complaints.

**HOW COMPLAINTS CAN BE MADE**

Complaints may be received in writing or orally. Where a patient is unable to communicate a complaint by either means on their own then arrangements will be made to facilitate the making of the complaint.

**PERSONS WHO CAN COMPLAIN**

Complaints can be made by patients, former patients, someone who is affected, or likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of individuals working at the practice or by a representative of a patient who is incapable of making the complaint for themselves.

When a complaint is made on behalf of a child, there must be reasonable grounds for the complaint being made by the representative rather than the child and the complaint must be being made in the best interests of the child. If this is not the case, then written notification of the decision not to investigate the complaint must be sent to the representative.

**TIME LIMIT FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT**

Complaints can be made up to 12 months after the incident that give rise to the complaint, or from when the complainant was made aware of it. Beyond this timescale it is at the discretion of the practice as to whether to investigate the matter.

**PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

**Responsible Person:** Is a neutral GP partner responsible for the supervision of the complaint’s procedure, responding to complaints and making sure that action is taken considering the outcome of any investigation.

**Complaints Manager:** Is the Practice Manager; Kelly Maxwell. Kelly Maxwell is responsible for the acknowledging complaints, assigning complaints to the Responsible Person (neutral GP Partner) and attending investigation meetings, taking minutes. The complaints manager also seeks further support if needed from Defence Unions/Local Medical Committees (LMC).

**INITIAL HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS**

1. When a patient wishes to make an oral complaint then the Complaints Manager is to arrange to meet the complainant in private to make an assessment of the complaint. The complainant is to be asked whether they would like to be accompanied at this meeting.
2. The complaint should be resolved at this meeting if possible. If the complaint is resolved then it should be recorded in the complaints register and the implicated staff member is to be told of the details of the complaint.
3. When the complaint cannot be resolved, the patient is to be asked to make a written complaint. If necessary the Complaints Manager is to write down the complaint on their behalf. The written complaint is to be recorded in the complaints register.
4. The Complaints Manager is to acknowledge a written complaint in writing within 3 working days, stating the anticipated date by which the complainant can expect a full response.

**INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS**

1. The Complaints Manager is to discuss the complaint with the implicated member of staff to establish their recollection of events.
2. If the complaint is against the Complaints Manager, then the complaint is to be referred to the Responsible Person for investigation.
3. The complainant is to be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint with the Complaints Manager and Responsible Person and asked if they would like to be accompanied at this meeting. If appropriate and with prior consent from the complainant the staff member complained about can be present at that meeting. Minutes should be taken.
4. The timescale to respond (maximum of 6 months) is to be agreed with the complainant at that meeting and documented in the complaints register.
5. The full response to the complainant is to be signed by the responsible person, and include:-
6. An explanation of how the complaint was considered
7. The conclusions reached in relation to the complaint and any remedial action that will be needed
8. Confirmation as to whether the practice is satisfied that nay action has been taken or will be taken.
9. If it is not possible to send the complainant a response in the agreed period it is necessary to write to them explaining why. Then a response is to be sent to the complainant as soon as is reasonably practicable.
10. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the handling of the complaint, then they are to be advised to contact the Health Service Ombudsman and how to do so.

**RECORDING COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATIONS**

A record must be kept of:

1. Each complaint received
2. The subject matter of the complaint
3. The steps and decisions taken during an investigation
4. The outcome of each investigation
5. When the practice informed the complainant of the response period and any amendment to that period
6. Whether a report of the outcome of the investigation was sent to the complainant within the response period or any amended period

**REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS**

Complaints received by the practice are to be reviewed at staff meetings to ensure that learning points are shared.

A review of all complaints will be conducted annually by the Complaints Manager to identify any patterns that would require action.

The Complaints Manager will notify the Responsible Person of any concerns about a complaint leading to non-compliance. The Responsible Person will identify ways for the practice to return to compliance.

**UNSATISFIED RESPONSE FROM COMPLAINTS**

The Practice is obliged to inform you that if you are not satisfied with how your complaint was handled and resolved; then should you wish to escalate your complaint to the next level, you can contact the Parliamentary and Healthcare Ombudsman on 0345 015 4033 or at Millbank Tower, Millbank London SW1P 4QP.