**Complaint Procedure**

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# Introduction

## Policy statement

The purpose of this document is to ensure that all staff are aware of the complaint procedure within Rough Hay Surgery affording patients or their representatives the opportunity to make a complaint about the care or treatment they have received at the practice.

## Status

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment.

## Training and support

The practice will provide guidance and support to help those to whom it applies understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Additional support will be provided to managers and supervisors to enable them to deal more effectively with matters arising from this policy.

# Scope

## Who it applies to

This document applies to all employees of the practice and other individuals performing functions in relation to the practice, such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

## Why and how it applies to them

All staff at Rough Hay Surgery are to be fully conversant with this policy and are to understand that all patients have a right to have their complaint acknowledged and investigated properly. Rough Hay Surgery takes complaints seriously and ensures that they are investigated in an unbiased, transparent, non-judgemental and timely manner. We will maintain communication with the complainant (or their representative) throughout, ensuring they know the complaint is being taken seriously.

The practice aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have in regard to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

# Guidance

## Legislation

Every NHS facility has a complaints procedure; this permits a patient (or their nominated representative) to submit a complaint either to the NHS organisation or the organisation that has been commissioned by the NHS to provide a service.

This practice adopts a patient-focused approach to complaint handling in accordance with the [National Health Service England Complaints Policy (2017)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/nhse-complaints-policy-june-2017.pdf), whilst also conforming to guidance detailed in:

1. [Good Practice Standards for NHS Complaints Handling 2013](https://www.patients-association.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Good-Practice-standards-for-NHS-Complaints-HandlingSept-2013.pdf)
2. [Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman’s Principles of Good Complaints Handling 2009](https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/sites/default/files/page/0188-Principles-of-Good-Complaint-Handling-bookletweb.pdf)
3. [My Expectations 2014](https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/sites/default/files/Report_My_expectations_for_raising_concerns_and_complaints.pdf)
4. [The NHS Constitution](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england)
5. [Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: Regulation 16](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england)

## Definitions of a complaint

A complaint or concern is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision of NHS England, either verbal or written, and whether justified or not, which requires a response[[1]](#footnote-1).

There is no difference between a ‘formal’ and an ‘informal’ complaint. Both are expressions of dissatisfaction[[2]](#footnote-2).

## Complaints procedure promulgation

Rough Hay Surgery has prominently displayed in practice leaflet and website . complaints leaflet is also available from leaflet display in main waiting area. The information provided is written in conjunction with this policy and refers to the legislation detailed in paragraph one.

## Responsible person

At Rough Hay Surgery the responsible person is Dr Uzma Ahmad. They are responsible for ensuring compliance with the complaints regulations and making sure action is taken as a result of the complaint.

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## Complaints manager

At Rough Hay Surgery the complaints manager is Lauren Burgess-Edwards – Practice Manager. They are responsible for managing all complaints procedures and must be readily identifiable to service users.

## Complainant options

The complainant, or their representative, can complain about any aspect of care or treatment they received at this practice to:

1. This practice via the complaints manager
2. BCICB time2talk team NHS Black Country Integrated care board (icb) Civic centre st peters square Wolverhampton WV1 1SH phone number 03000120281

## Timescale

The time constraint on bringing a complaint is 12 months from the occurrence giving rise to the complaint, or 12 months from the time that they become aware of the matter about which they wish to complain.

If, however, there are good reasons for complaints not being made within the timescale detailed above, consideration may be afforded to investigating the complaint if it is still feasible to investigate the complaint *effectively* and *fairly.* Should any doubt arise, further guidance should be sought from NHS England by the complaints manager.

## Response times

The complainant has a right to be regularly updated regarding the progress of their complaint. The complaints manager at Rough Hay Surgery will provide:

* An initial response to acknowledge **any** complaint within three working days after the complaint is received
* Aim to look into complaint within 14 working days of when it was raised depending on nature and complexity of complaint
* Regular updates during the investigation
* Resolution of the complaint within 40 days

The complaints manager will negotiate a complaints plan with the complainant or their representative which will detail the agreed timescales for investigation. In many cases a prompt response, including an explanation and an apology, will suffice and prevent the complaint from escalating (an apology does not constitute an admission of organisational weakness).

## Verbal and written complaints

Patients will opt to complain either verbally or in writing. No matter what the cause of the complaint, all staff are to offer empathy when entering into discussions with the complainant. In accordance with Regulation 16[[3]](#footnote-3), all staff at Rough Hay Surgery will fully understand the complaints process.

If a patient wishes to complain verbally, an appointment is to be made for them to meet the complaints manager who is Lauren Burgess-Edwards – Practice Manager. An acknowledgement of the verbal complaint by the complaints manager, or nominated deputy in their absence, will suffice as an acknowledgement. The complaints manager does not need to respond in writing, but must record the verbal complaint in the complaints log; this will enable any trends to be identified and improvements to services made if applicable. The complaints manager should record notes of the discussion (for reference only) which may be used when discussing complaints at practice meetings.

Discussing the nature of the complaint with the complainant in person or via telephone may enable a local resolution, which is the quickest method of resolving a complaint and will negate the requirement for the complaint to proceed through the formal complaint process.

If a patient opts to complain in writing (letter or email), the complaints manager is to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days. This acknowledgement will offer the complainant the opportunity to have a discussion about their complaint, while explaining the process and enabling the complaints manager to determine if local resolution is achievable. Where possible, patients and/or their representatives should be encouraged to use the complaint form at Annex A of this policy.

If local resolution is not an option, the complaints manager will then discuss with the complainant a complaints plan and an agreed time frame for an investigation. Complainants should be advised that this timescale is merely indicative and there may be, on occasion, the need to liaise with other service providers, i.e. secondary care, which could delay the process. However, reassurance will be provided that the complainant will be provided with regular updates by the complaints manager regarding their complaint.

## Investigating complaints

Rough Hay Surgery will ensure that complaints are investigated effectively and in accordance with extant legislation and guidance. This practice will follow eight standards[[4]](#footnote-4) when addressing complaints:

1. The complainant has a single point of contact in the organisation and is placed at the centre of the process. The nature of their complaint and the outcome they are seeking is established at the outset.
2. The complaint undergoes initial assessment and any necessary immediate action is taken. A lead investigator is identified.
3. Investigations are thorough, where appropriate obtain independent evidence and opinion, and are carried out in accordance with local procedures, national guidance and within legal frameworks.
4. The investigator reviews, organises and evaluates the investigative findings.
5. The judgement reached by the decision maker is transparent, reasonable and based on the evidence available.
6. The complaint documentation is accurate and complete. The investigation is formally recorded, the level of detail appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the complaint.
7. Both the complainant and those complained about are responded to adequately.
8. The investigation of the complaint is complete, impartial and fair.

## Final formal response to a complaint

Upon completion of the investigation, a formal written response will be sent to the complainant and will include the following information:

* An explanation of how the complaint was considered
* An apology if appropriate
* An explanation based on facts
* Whether the complaint in full or in part is upheld
* The conclusions reached in relation to the complaint, including any remedial action that the organisation considers to be appropriate
* Confirmation that the organisation is satisfied that any action has been or will be actioned
* Where possible, we will respond to people about any lessons learnt
* Information and contact details of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman as the next stage of the NHS complaints process

The complaints manager will clearly stipulate that this response is the final response to be issued by Rough Hay Surgery and if the complainant is not satisfied then they should contact the ombudsman.

## Confidentiality in relation to complaints

Any complaint is investigated with the utmost confidence and all associated documentation will be held separately from the complainant’s medical records. Complaint confidentiality will be maintained, ensuring only managers and staff who are involved in the investigation know the particulars of the complaint.

## Persistent and unreasonable complaints

The management of persistent and unreasonable complaints at Rough Hay Surgery is achieved by following the guidance detailed at [Appendix 2](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/nhse-complaints-policy-june-2017.pdf) of the NHS England Complaints Policy.

## Complaints involving locum staff

Rough Hay Surgery will ensure that all locum staff, be it GPs, nurses or administrative staff, are aware of the complaints process and that they will be expected to partake in any subsequent investigation, even if they have left the practice (keeping in mind the 12-month time frame to complain). Locum staff must receive assurance that they will be treated equally and that there is no discrepancy between locum staff, salaried staff or partners.

## Summary

The care and treatment delivered by Rough Hay Surgery is done so with due diligence and in accordance with current guidelines. However, it is acknowledged that sometimes things can go wrong. By having an effective complaints process in place, this practice is able to investigate and resolve complaints in a timely manner, achieving the desired outcome for service users, whilst also identifying lessons learnt and ultimately improving service delivery.

1. [NHS(E) Complaints Policy 2017](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/nhse-complaints-policy-june-2017.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Good Practice for Handling NHS Complaints 2013](https://www.patients-association.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Good-Practice-standards-for-NHS-Complaints-HandlingSept-2013.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Heath & Social Care Act 2008 Regulation 16](http://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/regulations-enforcement/regulation-16-receiving-acting-complaints#guidance) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [The Patients Association Good Practice Standards](https://www.patients-association.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Good-Practice-standards-for-NHS-Complaints-HandlingSept-2013.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)