



# BIRTLEY MEDICAL GROUP

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Scope: This protocol sets out the approach at Birtley Medical Group for the handling of complaints.

Objective: To provide guidelines to all staff at the Birtley Medical Group to allow for consistency on the handling of complaints at the practice

Procedure: The following guidelines should be followed:

Birtley Medical Practice is committed to providing a high quality, efficient, professional service. In the event of a patient of the Medical Practice experiencing dissatisfaction with any area of the service, the problem should be addressed efficiently and in an appropriate manner.

- Complaints should first be addressed by the person in receipt of the complaint.
- If they are unable to resolve the complaint then it should be brought to the attention of the appropriate Team Leader
- The Clinical Governance Lead is responsible for handling and investigating complaints re clinical matters at Birtley Medical Group.
- The practice has a complaints management log to record all complaints made at the practice. The Senior Administrator is responsible for recording the complaint details in the complaints log. All complaints must be treated in a professional and confidential manner. A description, the subject matter, steps taken and outcome of the investigation should be noted. All dates of letters/reports sent to the complainant should also be recorded. A copy of letters/reports should be taken.

### Initial handling of complaints:

When a patient wishes to make a complaint then the member of staff receiving the complaint is to:

- Listen/record details of complaint
- Apologise for any distress/inconvenience
- Attempt to resolve the complaint if immediately possible e.g. rearranging appointment etc.
- Thank the complainant for pointing out a problem (where appropriate)

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- If the complainant is unsatisfied or the complaint cannot be resolved, then the complainant should be referred to the appropriate team leader or the senior administrator
- If the Team Leader/Senior Administrator is unable to resolve the complaint, the complainant can make a formal complaint to the Practice in the following manner:
- Providing details to the Team Leader or the Senior Administrator by phone or in person
- By letter or by completing the Practice Complaints form (available from Reception) or
- By using the Contact Form on the Practice website <http://birtleymedicalgroup.nhs.uk>

A response will be sent by the Senior Administrator within three working days of receiving the complaint, acknowledging the complaint and advising we will aim to respond within 28 working days. This correspondence will also include a copy of the Patient Complaints Leaflet (Appendix 1)

Following investigation, the Practice Manager or the Clinical Lead (as appropriate) will write to the complainant detailing the outcome of the investigation *or*

Will telephone the complainant and invite them to attend a meeting at the Practice to further discuss their complaint. The complaint should be resolved at this meeting if possible.

**Investigation of complaint:**

- The Team Leader should discuss the complaint with the implicated member of staff to establish their recollection of events.
- If the complaint is against the Team Leader, then the complaint should be referred to the Practice Manager for investigation.
- The full response to the complainant is to be signed by the responsible person, and include:
  1. An explanation of how the complaint was considered;

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2. The conclusions reached in relation to the complaint and any remedial action that will be needed;
3. If it is not possible to send the complainant a response in the agreed period it is necessary to write to the complainant explaining why. Then a response is to be sent to the complainant as soon as is reasonably practicable.

**Further Action:**

If a complainant isn't satisfied with the outcome of their complaint they should be advised they can write to the Ombudsman at

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

Telephone: 0345 015 4033  
<https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>

All complainants are also entitled to access if they so wish, the North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA), should they need assistance with making a complaint. They can be contacted at:

Aidan House  
Sunderland Road  
Gateshead  
NE8 3HU

Telephone 0808 802 3000  
Email: [ica@carersfederation.co.uk](mailto:ica@carersfederation.co.uk)

**Review of complaints:**

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Complaints received by the practice are to be reviewed at staff meetings to ensure that learning points are shared. A report on complaints is to be submitted to the NHS England annually (year ending 31st March).

**Please note:** 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 should be made to facilitate the giving of the complaint.

Complaints can be made up to 12 months after the incident that gave 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.

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## Appendix 1 Birtley Medical Group Complaints Procedure

If you're not happy with the care or treatment you've received you have the right to complain, have your complaint investigated, and be given a full and prompt reply. Most issues can be resolved informally. We would suggest you first try to have a discussion with your doctor or a member of staff. A formal complaint takes time and minor issues are often resolved quicker if you can speak to someone.

NHS England calls this informal process 'local resolution' and urges everyone to see if things can be solved there and then before they escalate to a real problem. However, if despite everything this doesn't solve your problem, or even if it does but you would still like to make a formal complaint, you can follow the NHS complaints procedure as described below.

### The NHS Complaints Process

#### Stage one: Making a complaint

If you don't feel like you can solve issues informally then you can make a formal complaint to the Practice. We aim to acknowledge complaints within 3 working days. If you cannot make a complaint yourself, then you can ask someone else to do it for you. You can also contact North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA), should you need assistance with making a complaint. They can be contacted on 0808 802 3000 or by email at [ica@carersfederation.co.uk](mailto:ica@carersfederation.co.uk)

The Practice Manager and the Clinical Governance Lead GP meet every week to look at any complaints received and to discuss any actions necessary. At this stage we may write to the complainant advising of actions taken or a meeting may be offered to discuss the complaint in more detail.

The doctor may need to review the notes, reflect on the case, and sometimes request advice from a professional body. Occasionally it may be necessary to gain information from other sources, for example, hospital letters. Once all the information is available the case is then discussed again with the Clinical Lead GP who then writes to the complainant stating the findings, offering apologies on behalf of the Practice or staff where appropriate, and offering a meeting with the complainant. Where it is clear something should be done differently in future or where there is a useful learning point, these are further discussed in Significant Event meetings held at the Practice.

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However, if you feel too uncomfortable to complain to the Practice directly then you can make a complaint to the commissioner of the services instead. Such complaints should be directed to:

NHS England  
PO Box 16738  
Redditch  
B97 9PT

Or by telephone to 0300 311 22 33  
Or by email to: [england.contactus@nhs.net](mailto:england.contactus@nhs.net)

Please ensure you state 'For the attention of the complaints manager' in the subject line.

**Please Note:** if you have already complained to the Practice then NHS England will not be able to reinvestigate the same concerns. In this case you should proceed to stage two of the complaints process.

### **Stage two: I am not happy with the outcome of my complaint**

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint you can refer the matter to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, who is independent of the NHS and government. Complaints should be addressed to

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

Telephone: 0345 015 4033  
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### **When should I complain?**

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As soon as possible. Complaints should normally be made within 12 months of the date of the event that you're complaining about, or as soon as the matter first came to your attention.

The time limit can sometimes be extended (so long as it's still possible to investigate the complaint). An extension might be possible, for instance in situations where it would have been difficult for you to complain earlier, for example, when you were grieving or undergoing trauma.

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