

Complaints Procedure:

What is a complaint?

A complaint is a statement that something is wrong or not satisfactory.

South Uist Medical Practice is committed to providing high quality care and treatment to our patients through the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care. We understand, however, that sometimes things go wrong. If you are dissatisfied with something we have done, or have not done, please tell us and we will do our best to put things right.

Dr Bird and his staff make every effort to give the best service possible to everyone who attends the Practice.

However, we are aware that things can go wrong, resulting in a patient feeling that they have a genuine cause for complaint. If this is so, we would like the matter to be settled as quickly, and as amicably, as possible.

If you have any comments, complaints or suggestions about the service that you have received from the doctors or staff working please speak to any of the staff, who will pass your comments to our Practice Manager. If you would prefer to speak with the Practice Manager directly, please ask at Reception. We operate an in-house complaints procedure in accordance with national guidelines. Our Practice Manager will give you a copy of NHSWI complaints leaflet. Our aim is to give the highest possible standard of service and we deal swiftly with any problems that may occur.

You can complain to the Practice Manager by letter, e-mail in person or by phone.

Please tell us your: Full name and address (or e-mail address if this is your preferred method of contact). The full name, date of birth and address of the person affected if you are complaining on behalf of somebody else.

- As much detail as you can with regard to the complaint.
- What has gone wrong.
- When it happened.
- How you would like the Practice to make things better.

We can arrange a Face-to-Face meeting if this is helpful.

We will endeavour to:

1. Acknowledge any letter or e-mail within three working days of its receipt.
2. Deal with the matter as promptly as possible – usually within 20 working days – dependent on the nature of the complaint.

Who may complain:

- Complainants may be current or former patients, or their nominated or elected representatives (who have been given consent to act on the patient's behalf).
- Patients over the age of 16 whose mental capacity is unimpaired should normally complain themselves, or authorise someone to bring a complaint on their behalf.
- Children under the age of 16 may also make their own complaint, if they're able to do so.

If a patient lacks capacity to make decisions, their representative must be able to demonstrate sufficient interest in the patient's welfare and be an appropriate person to act on their behalf. This could be a partner, relative or someone appointed under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 with lasting power of attorney.

Appropriate person

In certain circumstances, we need to check that a representative is the appropriate person to make a complaint.

- For example, if the complaint involves a child, we must satisfy ourselves that there are reasonable grounds for the representative to complain, rather than the child concerned.
- If the patient is a child or a patient who lacks capacity, we must also be satisfied that the representative is acting in the patient's best interests.

If we are not satisfied that the representative is an appropriate person, we will not consider the complaint and will give the representative the reasons for our decision in writing.

Time limits

A complaint must be made within 12 months, either from the date of the incident or from when the complainant first knew about it.

Regulations state that a responsible body should only consider a complaint after this time limit if:

- the complainant has good reason for doing so, and
- it's still possible to investigate the complaint fairly and effectively, despite the delay

Complaining on behalf of someone else

We keep strictly to the rules of medical confidentiality. If you are not the patient, but are complaining on their behalf, you must have their permission to do so. A Letter of Authority signed by the person concerned will be required, unless they are incapable (because of illness or infirmity) of providing this. A Third Party Consent Form can be requested from Reception. Once this Form is completed, we can then proceed with the complaint.

Procedure

We have a two stage complaints procedure. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly; however, if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will notify you and then keep you updated on our progress.

Stage One – early, local resolution

We will try to resolve your complaint within five working days if possible. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to escalate your complaint to Stage Two.

Stage Two – Investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage One.

We also escalate some complaints straight to this stage, if it is clear that it is complex or needs detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days, and we will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be within 20 working days unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time to respond.

Your Rights

If, after receiving our final decision, you remain dissatisfied, you may contact the [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman \(SPSO\)](#) and ask them to consider your case.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

Tel: 0800 377 7330

Tel: 0800 377 7331

E: ask@spsso.org.uk

W: www.spsso.org.uk

Address for appointments or visiting:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh EH7 4NS

If posting please write Freepost SPSO - you don't need to use a stamp.

However, before considering taking this step, we hope you would let us know what aspect of the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily and provide an opportunity for us to consider whether there is anything further that could be done locally to resolve matters.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Where the investigation of the complaint requires consideration of the patient's medical records, we will inform the patient or person acting on his/her behalf if the investigation will involve disclosure of information contained in those records to a person other than the Practice or an employee of the Practice.

We keep a record of all complaints and copies of all correspondence relating to complaints, but such records will be kept separate from patients' medical records.

Statistics and reporting

The Practice must submit to the local primary care organisation periodically/at agreed intervals details of the number of complaints received and actioned.

Note: If you make a complaint, it is practice policy to ensure you are not discriminated against, or subjected to any negative effect on your care, treatment or support.