

## **BELLEVUE GROUP PRACTICE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Bellevue Group Practice aim to provide the very best care and treatment. We welcome all of your views and want to learn from your experiences, good or bad. We value your comments and whether you have a compliment, suggestion or concern we would like to hear from you. A patient leaflet is given at Appendix A.

### ***Raising a Concern (Complaint)***

A concern should be notified no later than 12 months from:

- The date on which the concern occurred, or
- If later, 12 months from the date the person raising the concern realised they had a concern.

To investigate a concern after the 12-month deadline, we would consider whether the person raising the concern had good reason not to notify the concern earlier and whether, given the time lapse, is it still possible to investigate the concern thoroughly and fairly.

The discretion to consider a concern that has been notified outside the 12-month period referred to above is subject to these conditions: A concern cannot be notified three years or more from the date the person became aware of the matter. This time limit was chosen as it is consistent with the limitation period which is in place for the consideration of clinical negligence claims (which is usually three years), but there are exceptions to the rule such as:

- if the person who raised the concern is a child at the time of the injury and the three-year period does not begin to run until the individual reaches the age of 18. In these cases, the period will expire on the eve of the person's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.
- if the person who raised the concern lacks capacity under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, in which the three-year period may never begin to run, or it can start at the date of recovery.

In some cases where there is an exception to the rule, we will make it clear to the person who has raised the concern that the investigation may be limited in some respects based on the information available, particularly in situations where key staff have left the organisation.

### ***What happens next?***

We will let you know that we have received your concern within two working days after the day it is received (weekends and Bank Holidays not included).

At the same time, we will ask you if you have any particular needs that we should be aware of in dealing with your concern. The practice will nominate:

(a) a person (the ‘Complaints Officer’) to be responsible for the operation of the complaints procedure and the investigation of complaints; and

(b) a GP Partner, or other senior person associated with the practice, to be responsible for the effective management of the complaints procedure and for ensuring that action is taken in the light of the outcome of any investigation.

The current Complaints Officer is James Sadler, Care Quality Manager; the lead GP Partner for complaints is Dr Alison Bell.

Complaints may be received either verbally or in writing and must be forwarded to the Complaints Officer, who must:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint with the complainant, including a summary of the complaint and a complaints plan. This should be sent within a period of 2 working days beginning with the day on which the complaint was received. The complainant must be offered an opportunity to give feedback on the complaint summary and plan.
- ensure the complaint is properly investigated
- provide a full response to the patient within the agreed time frame in the complaints plan. Where that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable, the complainant must be given a written statement of the reason for the delay and an indication of when a response will be available.

We will investigate your concern, and we will let you know what we have found and what we are going to do about it.

### **Review of complaints**

Complaints received by the practice will be reviewed to ensure that learning points are shared with the whole practice team:

- complaints received during the month will be reviewed at meetings of practice staff to ensure any actions required are put into practice.
- A full review of all complaints will be carried out annually to identify any trends or additional actions/learning points.
- 

In most cases, we will reply in writing within 30 working days of the date we first received your concern (weekends and Bank Holidays not included). If we are unable to reply to you within that timescale, we will give you the reasons why and let you know when you can expect a reply wherever possible.

Your concerns will be investigated promptly and in confidence and you will be offered the opportunity of discussing the matter in person.

## **Confidentiality**

All complaints must be treated in the strictest confidence.

Where the investigation of the complaint requires consideration of the patient's medical records, the Complaints Officer must 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.

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

## **Escalation**

Complaints must be handled locally within the practice at the initial stages.

Where the patient remains unhappy with the outcome, they may take the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Practices may also refer matters to the Ombudsman if they feel that the complaints administration or process has been managed unfairly. The Ombudsman will not normally accept complaints older than 12 months without good reason.

# BELLEVUE GROUP PRACTICE PATIENT LEAFLET

for

## Comments, Complaints and Suggestions

**Our aim is to provide the highest level of care for all our patients. We will always be willing to hear if there is any way that you think that we can improve the service we provide.**

### **Making a complaint**

If you have any complaints or concerns about the service that you have received from the doctors or staff working for this practice, please let us know.

We hope that most problems can be sorted out easily and quickly, often at the time they arise and with the person concerned. If your problem cannot be resolved in this way and you wish to make a formal complaint, we would like you to let us know **as soon as possible** – ideally within a matter of days or at most a few weeks – because this will enable us to establish what happened more easily. If it is not possible to do that, please let us have details of your complaint:

- Within 12 months of the incident that caused the problem; or
- Within 12 months of discovering that you have a problem, provided that is within 36 months of the incident.

James Sadler, Practice Care Quality Manager, will be pleased to deal with any complaint. He will explain the procedure to you and make sure that your concerns are dealt with promptly. You can make your complaint:

***Verbally - in person or on the telephone*** – ask to speak to James Sadler, Practice Care Quality Manager

***In writing – via letter or email*** – some complaints may be easier to explain in writing - please give as much information as you can, then send your complaint to the practice for the attention of James Sadler, Care Quality Manager, as soon as possible, either via post or email.

### **What we will do**

Our complaints procedure is designed to make sure that we settle any complaints as quickly as possible.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days and agree a complaint plan with you. We aim to have looked into your complaint within the agreed time set in the plan. We will then be in a position to offer you an explanation..

When we look into your complaint, we aim to:

- find out what happened and what went wrong
- make sure you receive an apology, where appropriate
- identify what we can do to make sure the problem doesn't happen again.

At the end of the investigation, you will receive a formal response to your complaint.

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

Please note that we keep strictly to the rules of medical confidentiality. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, we have to know that you have his or her permission to do so. A consent form signed by the person concerned will be needed, unless they do not have capacity to provide this this.

### **What you can do next**

We hope that, if you have a concern, you will use our practice complaints procedure. We believe that this will give us the best chance of putting right whatever has gone wrong and the opportunity to improve our practice.

If you remain dissatisfied with the responses to your complaint under the first 2 stages, you have the right to ask the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to review your case (see below).

#### **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales:**

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae,  
Pencoed,  
CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203

Email: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Web Address: [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Bellevue Group Practice  
Bellevue Terrace,  
Newport,  
South Wales NP20 2WQ

Telephone: 01633 222856

**Version 4 – June 2023**

Email: [Bellevue.Enquiries@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Bellevue.Enquiries@wales.nhs.uk)

**Policy author:** Dr Alison Bell, GP Partner

**Review date:** June 2024