



Complaints Handling Policy and Patient Complaints Procedure

Purpose

At Finkle Hill Dental, we are committed to providing high standards of patient care and customer service. We aim to ensure that patients are satisfied with the treatment and service they receive and that any concerns or complaints are handled promptly, fairly, sensitively and effectively. We welcome feedback and regard complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve. Patients who raise concerns will never be treated unfairly or discriminated against as a result of making a complaint. Complaints should normally be raised within 12 months of treatment or becoming aware of the issue.

Complaints Manager

Cassy Pearson (Practice Manager) is the designated Complaints Manager and has overall responsibility for the management of complaints and ensuring compliance with this policy and procedure. Information about this procedure is displayed within the practice, included in patient information materials and available on the practice website.

Feedback and Complaints Framework

We value all patient feedback and encourage patients to raise concerns whenever they are dissatisfied with any aspect of our service. We aim to:

- Make it easy for patients to raise concerns.
- Ensure patients feel listened to and respected.
- Investigate concerns fairly and objectively.
- Communicate openly and honestly.
- Keep complainants informed throughout the process.
- Resolve concerns wherever possible.
- Use feedback and complaints to improve our services.

Recognising Complaints

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, regarding treatment, service, facilities, communication or any aspect of care provided by the practice. Complaints may be made in person; by telephone; by email; by letter or via an authorised representative. We **do not** respond to complaints via online platforms.

All complaints, including those resolved quickly, will be recorded



Making a Complaint

Patients are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as possible so that issues can be resolved quickly and effectively. In the first instance, concerns may be discussed with any member of the practice team, who will endeavour to resolve the matter informally. If the concern cannot be resolved to the patient's satisfaction, or if the patient wishes to make a formal complaint, this should be directed to:

Cassy Pearson
Complaints Manager
Email: cassy.pearson@finklehilldental.co.uk

Complaints may also be submitted in writing to the practice address.

Where a complaint is made by a representative, appropriate patient consent will be obtained before confidential information is disclosed.

Process Overview

The practice aims to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity wherever possible. All complaints are logged, investigated proportionately, and reviewed to identify opportunities for service improvement. Outcomes and learning points are discussed at practice meetings and incorporated into ongoing quality assurance activities.

We will:

- Acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 5 working days.
- Conduct a full and fair investigation.
- Aim to provide a written response within 15 working days of receipt of the formal complaint.

Where an investigation requires additional time, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay, progress made and the anticipated completion date. Patients will be kept informed throughout the investigation process.

Investigation Process

Investigations may include: reviewing clinical records; reviewing policies and procedures; interviewing relevant members of staff; examining correspondence and documentation and obtaining additional information required. Upon completion of the investigation, the findings and outcome will be provided in writing. Where appropriate, patients may be offered a telephone discussion or face-to-face meeting to discuss the outcome and agree any further actions.



Possible Resolutions

Every complaint is considered on its individual merits. Following our investigation, we will discuss the findings with you and work towards a fair and appropriate resolution. This may include an explanation, an apology, addressing concerns about the service provided, considering treatment options where appropriate, or agreeing other actions to help resolve the matter and improve your experience.

Patients who raise concerns or make complaints will be treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination. Making a complaint will not, in itself, affect a patient's access to appropriate care and treatment. However, where a complaint results in a significant breakdown in trust and confidence between a patient and a particular clinician, the practice may offer treatment with an alternative clinician where appropriate. In rare circumstances, where the professional relationship has irretrievably broken down and the practice can no longer provide care safely or effectively, the patient may be advised to seek treatment from another dental provider. Any such decision will be made fairly, documented appropriately and communicated in writing.

Openness and Honesty

If a concern relates to an unexpected outcome or problem with care, we believe in being open and honest with our patients. We will listen carefully, explain our findings clearly, answer any questions you may have and offer an apology where appropriate. We are committed to learning from concerns and using feedback to improve the care and service we provide.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All complaints are treated as confidential. Complaint records, investigation notes and correspondence will be stored securely and accessed only by authorised personnel. Records will be maintained in accordance with legal, regulatory and data protection requirements. Complaints will also be recorded within the practice Significant Events process where appropriate.

Online Reviews and Feedback

Joanne Town is responsible for monitoring online reviews and feedback. Responses to online reviews will never disclose confidential patient information. Relevant concerns identified online will be reviewed and included within the practice quality improvement processes where appropriate.

Accessibility and Equality

Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure all patients can access and use this complaints procedure regardless of disability, language, communication needs or individual circumstances.



Staff Responsibilities

Our team understands that making a complaint can sometimes feel difficult, and we are committed to ensuring that patients feel listened to, respected and supported throughout the process. Any concerns raised will be handled sensitively, professionally and without judgement. We will take the time to understand the issues that have been raised, keep patients informed about the progress of their complaint, and work collaboratively towards a fair and reasonable resolution. Where appropriate, we will acknowledge when things could have been done better and offer a sincere apology.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

We view complaints and feedback as valuable opportunities to learn and improve. Every complaint is reviewed carefully to help us understand what has happened, identify whether any improvements can be made, and ensure that lessons are shared with the wider team. The insights gained from patient feedback help us enhance the quality of care we provide, improve communication, review our processes and support ongoing staff development. Our aim is not only to resolve concerns, but also to continually improve the experience of all our patients.

If You Are Not Satisfied with the Outcome

We hope that we will be able to resolve any concerns directly and to your satisfaction. However, if you remain unhappy after we have completed our investigation, we will be happy to provide information about organisations that may be able to offer further advice or review your complaint independently. These include:

Dental Complaints Service
020 8253 0800
www.dentalcomplaints.org.uk

General Dental Council (GDC)
020 7167 6000
www.gdc-uk.org

Care Quality Commission (CQC)
www.cqc.org.uk

Financial Ombudsman Service: 0800 023 4567 / 0300 123 9 123
Website: www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk

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