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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

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

1.2 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This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time.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.

1.3 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.

2 Scope

2.1 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.

2.2 Why and how it applies to them

All staff at Almond Road 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. Almond Road 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.

3 Guidance

3.1 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.

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This practice adopts a patient-focused approach to complaint handling in accordance with the [National Health Service England Complaints Policy \(2017\)](#), whilst also conforming to guidance detailed in:

1. [Good Practice Standards for NHS Complaints Handling 2013](#)
2. [Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman's Principles of Good Complaints Handling 2009](#)
3. [My Expectations 2014](#)
4. [The NHS Constitution](#)
5. [Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(Regulated Activities\) Regulations 2014: Regulation 16](#)

3.2 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 response¹.

There is no difference between a 'formal' and an 'informal' complaint. Both are expressions of dissatisfaction².

3.3 Complaints procedure promulgation

Almond Road Surgery has prominently displayed notices in the Practice Waiting Room detailing the complaints process. In addition, the process is included on the practice website, and a complaints leaflet is also available from reception. The information provided is written in conjunction with this policy and refers to the legislation detailed in paragraph one.

3.4 Responsible person

At Almond Road Surgery, the responsible person is Dr NA Bacon, GP Partner. They are responsible for ensuring compliance with the complaints regulations and making sure action is taken as a result of the complaint.

3.5 Complaints manager

At Almond Road Surgery, the complaints manager is Julia Boyd, Practice Manager. They are responsible for managing all complaints procedures and must be readily identifiable to service users. The responsible person and complaints manager can be the same person³.

3.6 Complainant options

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

- a. This practice via the complaints manager
- b. NHS England: Telephone 03003 112233, email england.contactus@nhs.net or in writing: NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT. In British Sign Language (BSL) patients can talk to NHS England via a video call to a BSL interpreter

¹[NHS\(E\) Complaints Policy 2017](#)

²[Good Practice for Handling NHS Complaints 2013](#)

³[A Guide to Effective Complaints Resolution England](#)

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3.7 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.

3.8 Response times

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

- An initial response to acknowledge **any** complaint within three working days after the complaint is received
- 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).

3.9 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 16⁴, all staff at Almond Road 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 Julia Boyd, 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.

⁴[Heath & Social Care Act 2008 Regulation 16](#)

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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.

3.10 Investigating complaints

Almond Road Surgery will ensure that complaints are investigated effectively and in accordance with extant legislation and guidance. This practice will follow eight standards⁵ 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.

3.11 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 or the Responsible Officer will clearly stipulate that this response is the final response to be issued by Almond Road Surgery, and if the complainant is not satisfied then they should contact the ombudsman.

⁵[The Patients Association Good Practice Standards](#)

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3.12 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.

3.13 Persistent and unreasonable complaints

The management of persistent and unreasonable complaints at Almond Road Surgery, is achieved by following the guidance detailed at [Appendix 2](#) of the NHS England Complaints Policy.

3.14 Complaints involving locum staff

Almond Road 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.

3.15 Summary

The care and treatment delivered by Almond Road 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.

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Annex A – Patient Complaint Form

SECTION 1: PATIENT DETAILS

Surname		Maiden name	
Forename		Title (i.e. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr)	
Date of birth		Address:	
Telephone No.		Postcode:	
NHS number (if known)		Hospital number (if known)	

SECTION 2: COMPLAINT DETAILS

Please give full details of the complaint below, including dates, times, locations and names of any practice staff (if known). Continue on a separate page if required.

--

SECTION 3: SIGNATURE

Surname & initials		Title (Mr,Mrs,Ms,Dr)	
Signature		Date	

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Annex B – Third Party Patient Complaint Form

SECTION 1: PATIENT DETAILS

Surname		Maiden name	
Forename		Title (i.e. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr)	
Date of birth		Address:	
Telephone No.		Postcode:	
NHS number (if known)		Hospital number (if known)	

SECTION 2: THIRD PARTY DETAILS

Surname		Forename	
Title (i.e. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr)		Address:	
Telephone No.		Postcode:	

SECTION 3: DECLARATION

I hereby authorise the individual detailed in Section 2 to act on my behalf in making this complaint and to receive such information as may be considered relevant to the complaint. I understand that any information given about me is limited to that which is relevant to the subsequent investigation of the complaint and may only be disclosed to those people who have consented to act on my behalf.

This authority is for an indefinite period/for a limited period only*. Where a limited period applies, this authority is valid until/...../..... (insert date).

(* Delete as necessary)

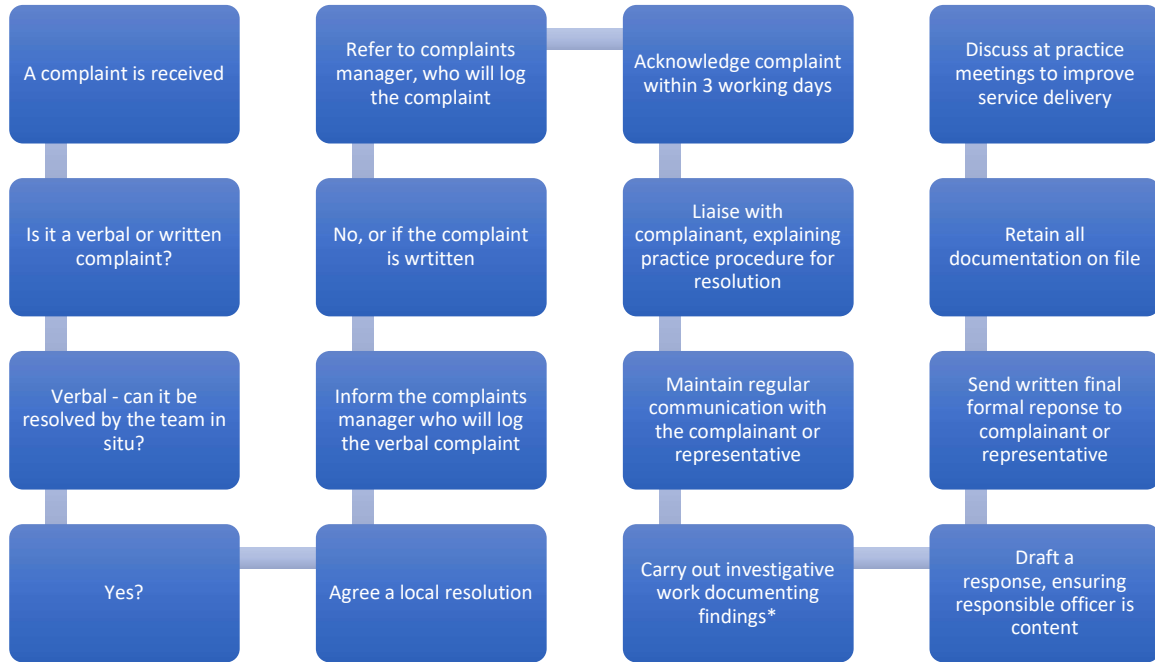
SECTION 4: SIGNATURE

Surname & initials		Title (Mr,Mrs,Ms,Dr)	
Signature		Date	

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Annex C – Complaint Handling Desktop Aide-Memoire



* It may be necessary to liaise with external third parties such as hospitals in order to gather additional information or to formulate a joint response. Where this is the case the patient or their representative must be advised accordingly.

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Annex D – Annual Complaints Report

Introduction

The purpose of the Annual Complaints Report (ACR herein) is to detail the complaints received by Almond Road Surgery during the year [01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018]. The practice takes a proactive approach to the management of complaints, a process that is aimed at improving the quality of service and delivering a better patient experience.

Purpose

The purpose of the ACR is to:

- Specify the number of complaints received during the reporting period
- Specify the number of complaints that were warranted, unwarranted or partially warranted
- Specify the nature of the complaints (source, staff group, categorisation)
- Specify the number of referrals to the ombudsman
- Identify trends that can be analysed and audits undertaken
- Identify remedial actions and learning points
- Notify patients of any changes to policy as a result of complaints

In accordance with NHS(E) directives regarding the complaints process, the ACR for Almond Road Surgery will be available to the public upon request.

Tabular representation

For ease of reading, the ACR is presented in tabular form and illustrated overleaf.

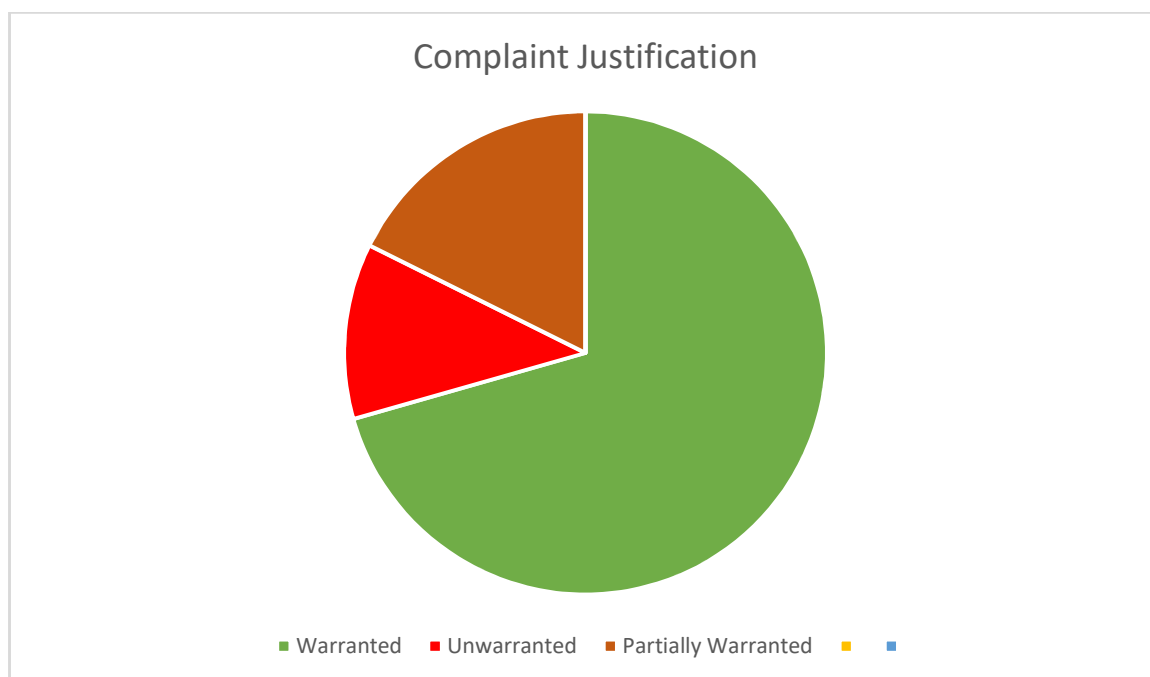
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Table 1 – Complaints received during reporting year [01 Apr 17 – 31 Mar 18]

MONTH	Number of complaints received	Warranted	Unwarranted	Partially warranted
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				
January				
February				
March				



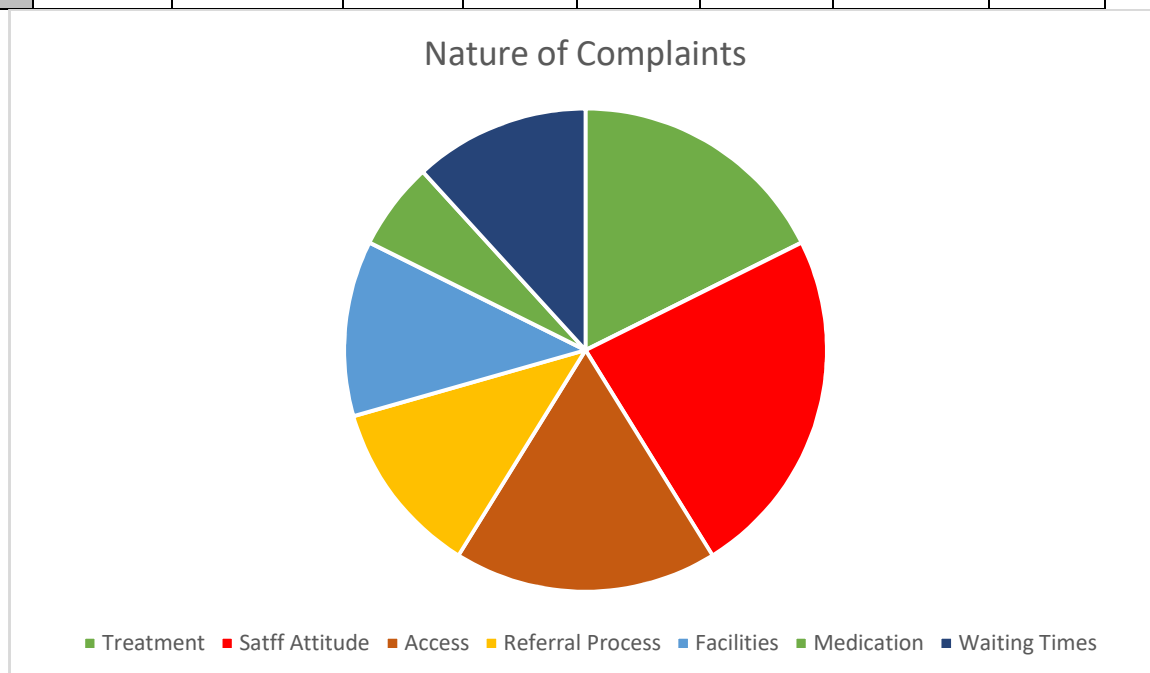
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Table 2 – Nature of complaints during the reporting year [01 Apr 17 – 31 Mar 18] –

Month	Number of complaints	Treatment	Staff attitude	Access	Referral process	Facilities	Medication	Waiting times
April								
May								
June								
July								
Aug								
Sept								
Oct								
Nov								
Dec								
Jan								
Feb								
Mar								



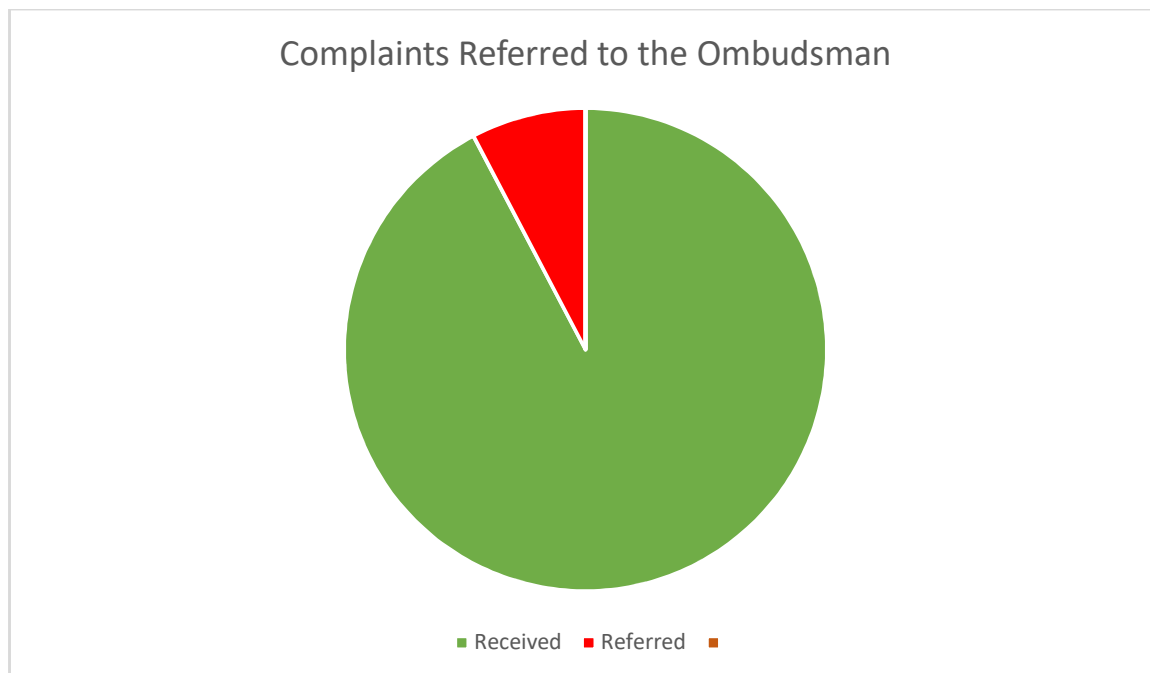
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Table 3 – Referrals to the ombudsman during the reporting year [01 Apr 17 – 31 Mar 18]

MONTH	Number of complaints received	Referrals to ombudsman
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		



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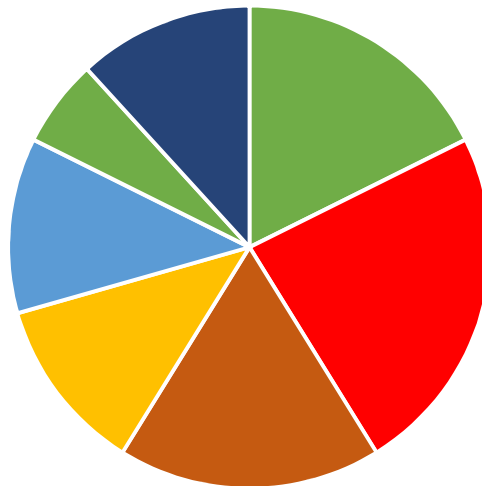
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Table 4 – Categorisation of complaints by staff group during the reporting year [01 Apr 17 – 31 Mar 18]

MONTH	Number of complaints	GP	Nurse	HCA	Pharmacy	Reception	Admin	Locum
April								
May								
June								
July								
August								
September								
October								
November								
December								
January								
February								
March								

Categorisation by Staff Group



■ GP ■ Nurses ■ HCA ■ Pharmacy ■ Reception ■ Admin ■ Locum

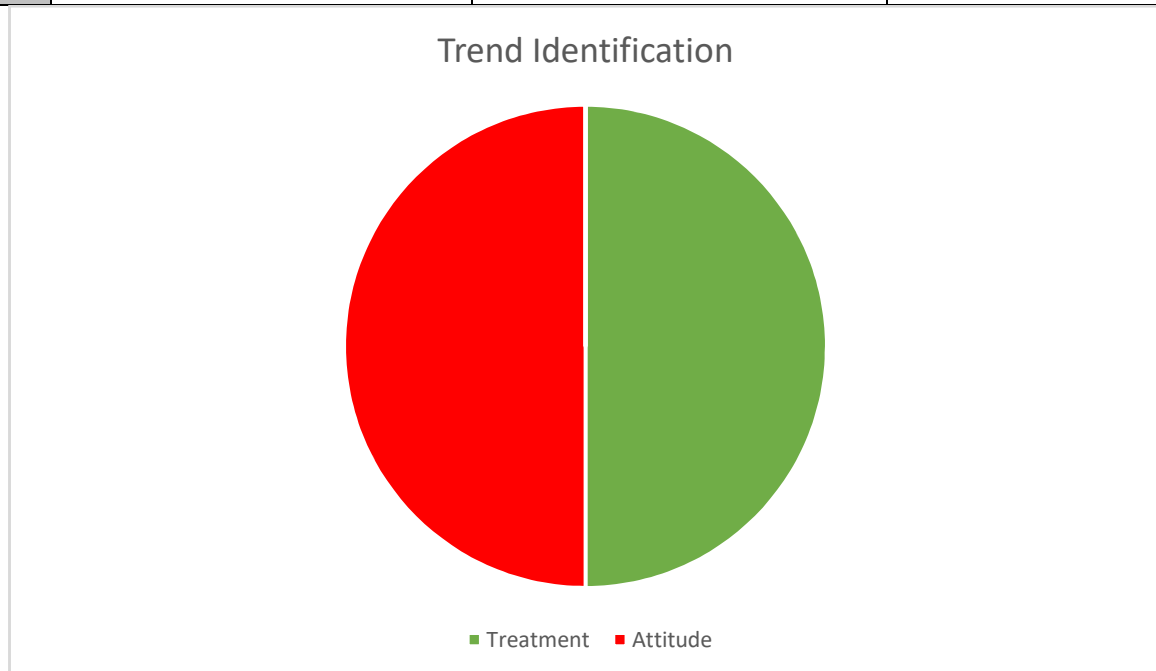
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Table 5 – Complaint trends identified during the reporting year [01 Apr 17 – 31 Mar 18]

MONTH	Number of complaints received	Trends by category	Trends by staff group
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			
January			
February			
March			



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Table 6 – Remedial actions/lessons identified

MONTH	Number of complaints received	Remedial actions	Lessons identified	Comments
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				
January				
February				
March				

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Table 7 – Changes to practice policy

MONTH	Number of complaints received	Changes to policy
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		

SUMMARY

This ACR ensures transparency between Almond Road Surgery and its patients. The information is accurate and reflects the complaints received during the reporting year [01 April 17 to 31 March 18]. This information is available to the public upon request and also discussed at the PPG meeting.

[Signed]

[Insert name]

[Insert role/position]

[Insert date]

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Annex E – Complaint Review Form

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the complaint review form is to enable Almond Road Surgery to conduct a detailed analysis of every complaint received with a view to making recommendations for improvements to services and enhancing patient experience within the practice.

Any key points will be used to populate the Annual Complaints Review, identifying trends and learning points for further development in the handling of complaints and routines within the practice.

USAGE

This form can be used by the Complaints Manager and Responsible Officer and any other parties involved in the management of complaints at Almond Road Surgery. Where the complaint involves more than one NHS organisation, discussions will take place between the bodies concerned about the most appropriate body to take the lead in coordinating the complaint and communicating with the complainant⁶.

COMPLAINT REVIEW FORM is shown overleaf.

⁶[NHS England Complaints Policy](#)

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COMPLAINT REVIEW FORM ALMOND ROAD SURGERY

Complaint reference number	Patient identifying number	Date of review

Summary of complaint:

Summary of learning points (explain how this will be communicated to the team):

Action points:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

By whom:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Complaint category (please delete as appropriate):

- Treatment
- Staff attitude
- Access
- Referral process
- Facilities
- Medication
- Waiting times

Complaint staff group (please delete as appropriate):

- GP
- Nurses

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- HCA
- Pharmacy
- Receptionists
- Admin
- Locum staff

Date team meeting held to discuss complaint (detail those present):

Review date (detail when the complaint was reviewed to ensure actions completed):

Complaints manager signature:

Complaints manager name:

Date:

Responsible officer signature:

Responsible officer name:

Date:

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Annex F – Practice Leaflet

A patient information leaflet regarding complaints is shown overleaf.

Further actions

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint you can seek further guidance from:

NHS England
PO BOX 16738
Redditch B97 9PT
Tel: 03003 112233
england.contactus@nhs.net

[Or alternatively complain to the:](#)

Parliamentary Health Service
Ombudsman
Milbank Tower
Milbank
London SW1P 4QP
Tel: 0345 015 4033
www.ombudsman.org.uk

Almond Road Surgery

Almond Road,

St Neots, Cambs, PE19 1DZ

01480 473413, email hcddata.almondroadsurgery@nhs.net

The Complaint Process

Almond Road Surgery





Talk to us

Every patient has the right to make a complaint about the treatment or care they have received at Almond Road Surgery.

We understand that we may not always get everything right and by telling us about the problem you have encountered, we will be able to improve our services and patient experience.

Who to talk to

Most complaints can be resolved at a local level. Please speak to a member of staff if you have a complaint; all our staff are trained to handle complaints effectively. Alternatively, ask to speak to the Complaints Manager, Julia Boyd, Practice Manager.

At Almond Road Surgery the Complaints Manager is :
Julia Boyd, Practice Manager and they are supported by the Responsible Officer who is:
Dr NA Bacon, GP Partner.

A complaint can be made verbally or in writing. A Complaints Form is available from reception. Additionally, you can complain via email to:

hhcdata.almondroadsurgery@nhs.net

Timeframes for complaints

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

The complaints manager will respond to all complaints within three business days. Furthermore, they will provide regular updates for you regarding your complaint, whilst aiming to have the complaint completely resolved within 40 days.

Investigating complaints

Almond Road Surgery will investigate all complaints effectively and in conjunction with extant legislation and guidance.

Confidentiality

Almond Road Surgery will ensure that all complaints are investigated with the utmost confidentiality and any documents are held separately from the patient's healthcare record.

Third party complaints

Almond Road Surgery allows a third party to make a complaint on behalf of a patient. The patient must provide consent for them to do so. A Third Party Patient Complaint Form is available from reception.

Final response

Almond Road Surgery will issue a final formal response to all complainants which will provide full details and the outcome of the complaint. Further information is detailed in our practice policy.

