

VITALEUROPE

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 18 JANUARY 2010

This Policy is due for review in January 2017

VITALEUROPE

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Board recognises that patients and customers may from time to time be dissatisfied with the treatment and care they have received. The Board recognises such concerns and complaints must be taken seriously and dealt with promptly and sympathetically. This policy has been produced in recognition of the rights of patients and customers to complain when dissatisfied, and in appreciation of the time and effort involved in resolving such matters.
- 1.2 The policy has been developed to meet the requirements of the General Dental Council Standards Guidance, Standards for Dental Professionals and Principles of Complaint Handling, along with the general guidance provided by the Dental Complaints Service.
- 1.3 The objectives of our system are to:
 - 1.3.1 enable patients to express comments, suggestions and complaints when they feel dissatisfied with the service provided;
 - 1.3.2 provide patients with an explanation of what has happened; where appropriate, an apology; and an assurance that we have taken steps to prevent the problem recurring, where this is possible.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board has a responsibility to designate a Director, who is responsible for overseeing the complaints procedure in VitalEurope. This is the Complaints Director.
The VitalEurope Complaints Manager in Budapest is Mr. Gergely Bánhalmi.

- 2.1 Each VitalEurope Practice Manager is responsible for the initial handling and investigation of complaints, and for ensuring there are proper procedures implemented at clinic level for dealing with complaints, in line with this policy document.
- 2.2 Complaints regarding services or treatment provided by General Dental Practitioners, should be directed initially to the practice where the service or treatment was performed. If the complainant is unable to contact the practice concerned, the complainant should contact VitalEurope's Customer Care Department on 0203 432 5957 or customercare@vitaleurope.com. All clinics are required to have a practice based complaints procedure.
- 2.3 As part of the overall performance management arrangements the Complaints Manager is responsible for ensuring that regular quarterly reports are prepared for submission to the Complaints Director on complaints received. The Complaints Director shall have responsibility for monitoring and reviewing complaints in more detail to ensure best practice and ongoing quality review is in place to improve services for patients.

3. LOCAL RESOLUTION

3.1 Our key objective is to try and resolve all complaints at the local resolution stage in a manner which is open, fair, flexible and conciliatory.

3.2 Oral Complaints

Complaints are most likely to be initiated with front line staff. Oral complaints should be dealt with promptly in an informal and sensitive manner by the most appropriate staff member available at the time and recorded in the Complaints Register. Where the recipient of the complaint is unable to deal with the complaint adequately, or feels unable to give the assurances that the complainant is looking for, then the complaint should be recorded and referred on to the appropriate senior manager. An electronic Incident Report Form should be completed.

3.3 Where an oral complaint is considered to be sufficiently serious or difficult to resolve, the acknowledgment and written response procedure set out in paragraph 3.4 should apply.

3.4 Written Complaints

All written complaints should be acknowledged in writing within **three** working days. All written complaints received must be notified to the Complaints Manager. Recipients of a formal complaint, other than the relevant Complaints Manager, are advised not to enter into direct correspondence with the complainant.

A copy of the letter of complaint should be forwarded without delay to the Complaints Manager, along with a copy of the letter of acknowledgement.

Following investigation, a full response should be sent, under the signature of the Complaints Manager, within **ten** working days (**after receiving the written complaint**). A copy of the signed letter will be returned to the Complaints Director for record purposes.

The response should provide patients with an explanation of what has happened, an apology where appropriate, assurance steps have been taken to prevent reoccurrence, where possible, and information on the right of the complainant to seek an independent review.

If a full response cannot be completed within ten working days, an **interim** response should be sent by the recipient of the complaint informing the complainant of the delay, the reasons for it and the likely timescale for providing a full response.

4. REFERRAL TO THE REGULATORY BODY

4.1 Complainants who remain dissatisfied as a result of the local resolution process may refer their complaint to the Dental Complaints Service of the General Dental Council. Further advice can be found on the General Dental Council's website www.gdc-uk.org or by calling 0207 887 3800 or email complaints@gdc-uk.org.

5. DISCIPLINARY AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

5.1 If any complaint received indicates a need for referral to any of the following:

- (i) an investigation under the disciplinary procedures;
- (ii) referral to the professional regulatory body;
- (iii) an independent enquiry into a serious incident; or
- (iv) an investigation of a criminal offence;

the person in receipt of the complaint should at once pass the relevant information to the Complaints Manager and/or Complaints Director who will inform the Board of

Directors so that appropriate action may be taken.

- 5.2 The Complaints Procedure will not deal with matters which are the subject of disciplinary investigation. If such action is initiated, the complainant should be advised accordingly, so that appropriate action under the Complaints Procedure can be pursued in respect of matters raised in the complaint which do not relate to disciplinary investigation.
- 5.3 If a complaint reveals a prima facie case of negligence, or if it is thought that there is likelihood of legal action being taken, the person in receipt of the complaint should inform the Complaints Manager immediately. The Complaints Procedure should cease if the complainant explicitly indicates an intention to take legal action in respect of the complaint.

6. PUBLICITY

- 6.1 VitalEurope's Complaints Policy and Procedure will be made available to all Patients at their Initial Assessment. This information should set out how to make a complaint and how to access appropriate advocacy and advice services to assist in making a complaint.
- 6.2 For patients whose first language is not English, the Community Health Council may be able to help.

7. COMPLAINING ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE

- 7.1 VitalEurope adheres strictly to the rules of confidentiality. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, that Patients signed consent will be needed, unless they are incapable (because of physical or mental illness) of providing this.

8. TRAINING

- 8.1 All staff members of VitalEurope should be familiar with the content of the Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- 8.2 Practice Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff have training in complaints handling as part of their induction training and at yearly intervals thereafter to ensure that they understand how the procedure should be applied and what their responsibilities are.
- 8.3 This training should be within the wider customer care agenda so staff can acquire skills in dealing with difficult situations and to diffuse these in order to avoid formal complaints.

9. REVIEW DATE

This policy will be reviewed in January 2017.

VitalEurope

Patient Complaints Information Leaflet

Practice Complaints Procedure

If you have a concern about the service or treatment you have received from the dentist or any of the staff working in this practice, please let us know. We operate a practice complaints procedure that has been developed to meet the requirements of the General Dental Council Standards Guidance, Standards for Dental professionals and Principles of Complaint Handling, along with the general guidance provided by the Dental Complaints Service.

How to complain

We hope that most concerns can be resolved easily and quickly, often at the time they arise and with the person concerned. If your concern cannot be dealt with in this way and you wish to make a complaint, we would like you to let us know **as soon as possible**. This will enable us to establish what happened more easily. If it is not possible to do so, please let us have details of your complaint;

- within 6 months of the incident that caused the problem; or
- within 6 months of discovering that you have a problem, provided this is within 12 months of the incident.

Complaints should be addressed to the Practice Manager or senior staff member available at the time. Alternatively, you may ask for an appointment with the Practice Manager in order to discuss your concerns. He/she will explain the complaints procedure to you and will ensure that your concerns are dealt with promptly. It will be a great help if you are as specific as possible with your complaint.

What we shall do

We shall acknowledge your complaint within three working days and aim to have investigated the circumstances within ten working days of the date the concern was brought to our attention. We shall then be in a position to offer you an explanation, or a meeting, if required, with those involved.

In investigating your complaint, we shall aim to:

- find out what happened and what went wrong;
- ensure it is possible for you to discuss the problem with those concerned, if you would like this;
- ensure you receive an apology, where this is appropriate;
- identify what we can do to make sure the problem does not happen again.

Complaining on behalf of someone else

Please note that we adhere strictly to the rules of confidentiality. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, we must know you have permission to do so. A letter signed by the person concerned will be needed, unless they are incapable (because of physical or mental illness) of providing this.

Complaining to the Regulatory Body

We hope that your concerns can be dealt using our practice complaints procedure. We believe this will provide the best chance of putting right any problem and an opportunity to improve our practice. However, this does not affect your right to approach the Dental Complaints Service of the General Dental Council if you feel you cannot raise your complaint with us or you are dissatisfied with the result of our investigation. Further advice can be found on the General Dental Council's website www.gdc-uk.org or by calling 0207 887 3800 or email complaints@gdc-uk.org.