

June 2018



For Practices to learn from patient experience they need to encourage feedback, in all its forms, which includes making sure people can make a complaint easily.

Executive Summary

One Year On Complaints Information on West Sussex GP Websites

Revisiting the improvements in the digital accessibility of the complaints information on West Sussex General Practice (GP) websites

Our first [report](#) on this subject, showed many of our General Practices needed to look at the accessibility and content of their information on their website about giving feedback and raising a concern/complaint. We wanted to see what has changed since publishing this report.

In March 2018 we wrote to all Practices letting them know of our intentions to audit their website's complaints information. They received a copy of the audit template, to help them to understand what we would be looking at/and for.

We undertook the audits in April 2018.

Individual Practice reports have since been compiled and quality checked to ensure fairness. The reports use a **traffic light rating system**, detail what we found, our observations and any suggestions for improvement.

Question	Green	Amber	Red
1. How easy is it to find information about how to make a complaint?	Within 2 clicks from homepage using the navigation by clicking on the word 'complaints' - compliance to 100% criteria is met	Link found from homepage navigation but takes more than 2 clicks. Found through menu of heading which does not include the word 'complaints' and may not be able to a patient to find	
What we found	Found to 1 click under Practice Policies and Complaints as the second item on the page. Using the search facilities also brought up a link to the same Practice Policies and Complaints page as the fourth item in the search results.		
Observations / Suggestions for improvement			

We found:

- ✓ **9 out of 10 practices** had complaints information on their website that could be found within two clicks from the homepage.
 - Whilst many met the two-click criteria for this audit, a large number had information hidden behind other menu options, so people must explore these to get the information. Having a search facility can mitigate these issues.
 - Several Practices use the same website design company and similar wording. There is a risk to this, in replicating omissions and/or errors. We suggest this also represents a lack of management commitment to the complaints process.
 - Searching complaints resulted a return in some cases of 'medical complaints', prioritised over making a service complaint.
- **Under half** of the practices had a clearly identified process to making a complaint, with language that was easy to understand and with an appropriate tone.
 - ✓ In most case, patients are asked to speak to the staff member involved first to attempt to resolve the issues, before contacting the Practice Manager, which makes sense, provided there are alternatives for patients and that a complaints procedure is visible.
 - The wording used on many websites was not supportive or encouraging people to make a complaint and many of the processes were not compliant with the Accessible Information Standard principles.
 - The downloading process did not work in some cases (clicking on some downloads returned either a document that was unreadable or no document at all).
 - The right for patients to go directly to NHS England with a complaint, is not stated on a lot of the websites.
 - We only found a few examples of offering information in different formats.
- **Under half** of the practices had the correct information on the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS) and Healthwatch West Sussex., with a description of what these services offer.

What next?

- We expect Practice staff to take the time to review their individual reports and where there are areas for improvement and suggestions provided, we would hope that attention is given to this.
- We expect the Clinical Commissioning Groups to have the appropriate discussions with the Practices who have *Red Ratings* for questions 2 and 3 to be assured that appropriate action has happened to improve this position.

Policies and procedures, however exhaustive and detailed, are only as good as the people who implement them. Practices may wish to assure themselves that their staff are well-informed and supported so the Practice can benefit from the learning that can come from complaints and feedback. With many part-time/job-sharing roles and Locum within local Practices, senior partners may wish to explore:

- How knowledgeable are staff members about the Practice's complaints procedures?
- How good is the recording of complaints (a CQC requirement)?
- What is the evidence that Practices implement the lessons learned from the complaints process?

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