

FACTSHEET 4: COMPLAINTS IN PHARMACY PRACTICE

All pharmacies must have a complaints procedure in place, as described in the current Terms of Service, to deal with any complaints made by anyone who has received pharmaceutical services.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

HSCB defines it as “**Any expression of dissatisfaction which requires a response**”. Complaints identify risks, highlight learning needs and improve pharmacy services.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (as outlined in current Terms of Service)

- Each pharmacy must specify a person to be responsible for receiving and investigating all complaints
- The pharmacy practice leaflet must contain details of how service users can comment/make a complaint
- Provision of information within the pharmacy about the complaints procedure e.g. HSCB complaints leaflet and poster
- The pharmacy should keep a record of all complaints and copies of all correspondence relating to complaints
- All complaints should be:
 - ✓ recorded in writing
 - ✓ acknowledged, either orally or in writing, within 3 working days
 - ✓ properly investigated and responded to within 10 working days (the complainant should be given a written summary of the investigation and its conclusions)
- Patients should be made aware that records relating to the complaint may need to be disclosed to HSCB or the Ombudsman

An example of a template complaint recording form and complaints flow chart, have been added to the members' section of CPNI's website.

HSCB COMPLAINTS POLICY

The HSCB also has a policy for the management of complaints which is not included in your Terms of Service, but pharmacies may wish to comply with this policy at their discretion.

Requirements of the HSCB procedure:

- A practice based complaints procedure:
 - ✓ Name of Complaints Officer and how they can be contacted
 - ✓ The availability of support services
 - ✓ What the complainant can do if they remain dissatisfied after attempting to resolve the complaint at local level
- A complaints leaflet that is readily available to patients including information on:
 - ✓ Who can complain
 - ✓ How they can complain (face to face, telephone, letter or email)
 - ✓ Timescales for making a complaint and receiving a response
 - ✓ Name of the designated Complaints Officer
 - ✓ Role of the Health and Social Care Board and the Patient and Client Council
 - ✓ What to do if they are still not happy (i.e. Ombudsman)

Once a written complaint has been resolved locally, under the HSCB complaints policy, pharmacies are required to forward an anonymised copy of the complaint and the pharmacy response to the HSCB within 3 working days of the response being issued. Only patient details should be anonymised however, pharmacy details must be included.

Pharmacies are also required to forward any other significant correspondence relating to the complaint and copies of any correspondence received from the Ombudsman.

Guidance and training on the HSCB policy is available at:

<https://bso.hscni.net/directorates/operations/family-practitioner-services/pharmacy/contractor-information/contractor-communications/hscb-services-and-guidance/complaints/>

