

Complaints Policy and Procedure

What is a complaint?

A complaint is “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about an organisation’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of an organisation.”

Why make a complaint? -

If you are disappointed in the standard of the service, care or treatment provided at Cassidy Dental. For example:

- inadequate quality or standard of care and treatment, or an unreasonable delay in the provision of care
- failure to properly implement or follow policy, procedures and standards
- poor conduct, behaviour or attitude of a member of staff

What can’t be dealt with through the complaint’s procedure?

There may be a small number of issues that cannot be processed as part of the complaint’s procedure (for example, a case that is subject to legal proceedings in court). However, we do encourage raising any issues of concern, and if it is strictly outside the complaint’s procedure, this can be advised on a case-by-case basis.

How do we view complaints? -

We are sorry that you feel a complaint is justified. Complaints are an opportunity for us to review our procedures and ensure that the high standards of care, service and ethics are maintained.

In a busy practice, we acknowledge that despite our best efforts, mistakes can be made. We welcome the opportunity to graciously resolve any issues that have arisen and to learn from these experiences.

However, please be aware that unreasonable or aggressive behaviour is not tolerated within Cassidy Dental.

Timescales

Complaints should normally be made **within 6 months** of the incident occurring or within 6 months of the complainant becoming aware that there was cause for complaint. However, we do recognize that issues such as bereavement, poor health etc may have delayed the complaint and we will apply discretion outside these limits.

What is our code of Practice?

Our Code of Practice is in line with the 'MCHP. The Health and Social Care Model Complaints Handling Procedure.' NIPSO (1 July 2025), a copy of which is held at reception. It is based on the six core principles of good complaints handling which are: 'start off right', 'fix it early', 'focus on what matters,' 'be fair', 'be honest', 'learn and improve.'

All complaints, however, or wherever received, are:

- Taken seriously.
- Treated confidentially.
- Dealt with in a timely manner.
- Investigated fully and internally by our 'complaints team.'
- Handled in a fair, honest and reasonable way.
- Dealt with promptly and courteously.
- Not biased by age, sex, race, religion, medical / family / social history.
- Not biased by NHS or private care.
- Recorded in comprehensive detail to ensure monitoring and assessed according to risk.

Who are the 'complaints team'?

Paul Suiter (Practice principal & Business Owner of Cassidy Dental)

Tel: 02879631924 Email: info@cassidydental.co.uk

Charlene Palmer (Practice Manager @ Cassidy Dental)

Tel: 02879631924 Email: cassidydental1@gmail.com

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Paul Suiter is complaints lead and assumes overall responsibility and accountability for complaints handling within the organization.

Who can complain?

Any person can complain about any matter connected with the provision of services.

Complaints may be made by:

- a patient or client;
- former patients, clients or visitors using services and facilities;
- someone acting on behalf of existing or former patients or clients, providing they have obtained the patient's or client's consent;
- parents (or persons with parental responsibility) on behalf of a child; and
- any appropriate person in respect of a patient or client unable by reason of physical or mental capacity to make the complaint himself or who has died e.g. the next of kin.

Consent

Complaints by a third party should be made with the written consent of the individual concerned. There will be situations where it is not possible to obtain consent, such as when the:

- individual is a child and not of sufficient age or understanding to make a complaint on their own behalf;
- individual is incapable (for example, rendered unconscious due to an accident; judgement impaired as a result of a learning disability, mental illness, brain injury or serious communication problems);
- subject of the complaint is deceased; and
- delay in the provision of consent may result in a delay in the resolution of the complaint.

How do I make a complaint?

Complaints can be made verbally or in writing, including face-to face, by telephone, by letter

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(including email: cassidydental1@gmail.com), in a way the complainant feels comfortable. Where possible, arrangements will be made as necessary for the specific needs of those who wish to complain, including provision of interpreting services. If you wish to make a complaint in writing, please return the letter in the SAE provided to the 'complaints team.'

Cassidy Dental generally will not respond to complaints on social media platforms. The complainant will be contacted privately and given information on how they can complain. Anonymous complaints will be investigated as far as is practicable and appropriate.

Consent

If you are making a complaint on another person's behalf, you will be required to supply them written consent to the complaint being made.

What happens next?

Complaint received by the practice.

Stage 1: Frontline Response

Your complaint will be acknowledged, and a response will be provided within 5 working days (can be extended to another 5 working days if required). You will be notified if there are any unavoidable delays (such as the availability of a key staff member).

If necessary, a suitable appointment will be made with you to discuss the matter, or if more appropriate you will receive a telephone call or a response in writing (letter or e-mail).

Responses will be clear, accurate, balanced, simple, fair and easy to understand. All the issues raised in the complaint will be addressed and, where appropriate, the response will contain an apology.

If we conclude that your complaint is justified:

- We will apologise unreservedly.
- Attempt to resolve the problems to mutual satisfaction either through further correspondence or a further meeting. Where possible, you will be involved in decisions about how the complaint is handled and considered.

If we conclude that the complaint is not justified, your future care at Cassidy Dental will

not be adversely affected.

It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be addressed at Stage 1. However, if a resolution is not possible, a written response will be provided, including how to escalate the complaint to stage 2.

What if I am still not satisfied?

If you are unhappy with our response to your complaint, we would encourage you to contact us again, with any outstanding issues and request that we investigate your complaint at Stage 2.

We kindly request that any requests to progress to stage 2 are made within 30 days of receipt of a stage 1 response. However, we do acknowledge that other external factors may make this difficult and we will apply discretion outside these limits.

Stage 2: Investigation

We will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days, in an accessible format, and provide a response within 20 working days (can be extended if required). If the timescale is extended, we will write you to advise you of the reason for extension and an expected date of response.

Every attempt will be made to resolve the problems to mutual satisfaction either through further correspondence or a further meeting. Where a complaint is resolved at stage 2, you will receive a written response setting out the agreed resolution. Responses will be clear, accurate, balanced, simple, fair and easy to understand. All the issues raised in the complaint will be addressed and, where appropriate, the response will contain an apology.

If the complaint is not resolved on completion of Stage 2, you will receive a written response within two weeks of the complaint's procedure being exhausted, where you will be signposted to NIPSO (if you are an NHS patient), to consider your complaint.

Reporting and Recording Complaints Information

Written records will be kept of all complaints, including those resolved verbally at stage one.

We will record the outcomes for all complaints and will keep a full and accurate record of any resolutions agreed. As a minimum, we will record the following for each complaint;

- the date the complaint was received
- the service user's name and contact details
- the issue/nature of the complaint
- the service the complaint refers to
- staff member responsible for handling the complaint
- action taken and outcome at Stage One response
- any extension authorised at Stage One (if applicable)
- the date Stage One response was issued
- the date request for Stage Two was received (if applicable)
- any extensions authorised at Stage Two (if applicable)
- action taken and outcome at Stage Two (if applicable)
- whether the complaint was resolved, upheld, partially upheld, not upheld
- date the investigation response was issued at Stage Two (if applicable)
- the underlying cause of the complaint and any remedial action taken
- any organisational learning as a result of the complaint

All information related to complaints, as detailed above, must be reported to **Paul Suiter** for monitoring. In addition, information on complaints' outcomes and actions taken to improve services i.e., good practice and lessons learned, will be reported at each staff meeting. This will also include the outcome of any relevant NIPSO investigation.

Monitoring Complaints and Learning

Cassidy Dental view complaints as a means to continually improve the quality of our services and safeguard high standards of care and treatment. We will monitor the nature and volume of complaints so that trends can be identified and acted upon. We will ensure any identification of learning from complaints is shared locally and regionally, where appropriate.

Cassidy Dental reports annually to the Strategic Planning & Performance Group. Annual Annually, published information includes: complaint performance statistics, complaint trends and the actions that have been or will be taken to improve services. Published information is anonymised and compliant with data protection requirements

More information

More detailed information about each stage of the complaint's procedure can be found in:

'MCHP. The Health and Social Care Model Complaints Handling Procedure.' NIPSO (1 July 2025), a copy of which is held at reception

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul J. Smith'.

(Practice Owner)

Date: 23/07/2025

Review: July 2026