

**Complaints  
Policy and Process**

Policy No	GQA22
Responsible Person	Registered Manager
Date Issued	
Next Review Date	Every two years
Authorised by	
Version No	01

Title	<b>Complaints Policy and Process</b>
Author	Martha Walker
Responsible Person	Registered Manager – Dr Kathryn Avery
Authorised	
Issue Date	
Review Date	Every two years unless review required earlier
Policy No and Version	GQA22 Version 01
References	GMC: Good Medical Practice DoH: Listening Responding Improving CQC: Fundamental Standards
Appendix	1. Patient Complaint Information Leaflet 2. Complaint Record 3. Complaint Register
Scope	All individuals in the employ of this establishment <i>(‘employ’ means any person who is employed, self-employed, a volunteer, working under practising privileges or contract of service with this establishment)</i>

**Note: Currently only three directors of Chelvey Menopause consult patients – should additional personnel be appointed the policy would be adapted to reflect the change**

## AIM

To ensure that all patient concerns and complaints are dealt with promptly with due care and consideration, resulting in satisfactory conclusions and improvement in delivery of care where appropriate.

## POLICY

Chelvey Menopause accepts the rights of patients (and their relatives or representatives, if appropriate) to make complaints and to register comments and concerns about the services received, and further accept that they (the patients) should find it easy to do so. Chelvey Menopause welcomes complaints and comments and looks upon them as opportunities to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services.

This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by patients and their relatives, carers and advocates are taken seriously.

The policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation..

This policy ensures that a duty of candour is accepted and delivered by the directors of Chelvey Menopause

The directors believe that failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints leads to an aggravation of problems, service user dissatisfaction and possible litigation. The directors support the idea that most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly, can be sorted at a local level between just the complainant and the company.

### **Aim of the Complaints Procedure**

The directors aim to ensure that the complaints procedure is properly and effectively implemented, and that patients feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Specifically it aims to ensure that:

- Patients and their representatives are aware of how to complain and that the directors provide easy to use opportunities for them to register their complaints.
- Every complaint is acknowledged within 2 working days.
- All complaints are investigated and responded to in writing within 21 days of being made.
- Patients (and their representative, if appropriate) will be updated on the progress of the investigation if the 21 working days cannot be met.
- Complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and sensitively, with due regard to the upset and worry that they can cause to both service users and staff.

### **Responsibilities**

Dr Avery is responsible for handling complaints. Where it would be inappropriate for Dr Avery to conduct the investigation into a complaint she will ask co-director and clinician Dr Laura Flexer to conduct the investigation

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### **Verbal complaints**

The directors accept that all verbal complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, must be taken seriously.

The doctor receiving the complaint will remain polite, courteous, sympathetic and professional to the complainant, there is nothing to be gained by adopting a defensive or aggressive attitude.

At all times in responding to the complaint, the doctor will remain calm and respectful.

The doctor will offer an apology that the complainant (patient) has had cause to make a complaint.

If the complaint is being made on behalf of the patient by a relative or other representative (advocate), it must first be verified that the person has permission to speak for the patient, especially if confidential information is involved. (It is very easy to assume that the advocate has the right or power to act for the service user when they may not). If in doubt, it should be assumed that the complainant's explicit permission is needed prior to discussing the complaint with the advocate.

After talking the problem through Dr Avery will suggest a course of action to resolve the complaint. If this course of action is acceptable then it will be clarified either verbally or if appropriate in writing.

If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable to the complainant, then Dr Avery will ask the patient to put their complaint in writing and ask them to include what they are expecting the outcome to be. They should be given a copy of the company's complaints procedure if they do not already have one.

Details of all verbal and written complaints must be recorded in the Complaints Register

### **Serious or written complaints**

#### **Preliminary steps:**

When Dr Avery receives a written complaint an acknowledgment e-mail/letter must be sent within two working days to the complainant. (If the complaint is received via e-mail then the acknowledgement is returned via e-mail and likewise for a letter.) This includes a leaflet detailing Chelvey Menopause's procedure for the complainant (see Appendix 1).

If necessary, further details are obtained from the complainant; if the complaint is not made by the patient but on the patient's behalf, then consent from the patient, preferably in writing, must be obtained from the complainant

If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, advice could be sought from a legal advisor. If legal action is taken at this stage, any investigation by the organisation under the complaints procedure immediately ceases.

*NOTE: Where possible verbal communication should be started with the complainant as soon as possible. All verbal communication must be recorded in the complaint record.*

#### **Investigation of the complaint by Chelvey Menopause:**

Immediately on receipt of the complaint, Dr Avery will start an investigation and within 21 working days should be in a position to provide a full explanation to the complainant, either in writing or by arranging a meeting with the individuals concerned.

If the issues are too complex to complete the investigation within 21 working days, the complainant will be informed of any delays.

Dr Avery may ask one of her two clinical co-directors to review the case . If it still cannot be resolved then Chelvey Menopause ask an adjudication service to intervene if an internal resolution cannot be achieved.

#### **Meeting:**

If a virtual meeting is arranged, the complainant will be advised that they may if they wish bring a friend or relative or a representative such as an advocate.

At the meeting a detailed explanation of the results of the investigation will be given and also an apology if it is deemed appropriate (apologising for what has happened need not be an admission of liability).

Such a meeting gives the company management the opportunity to show the complainant that the matter has been taken seriously and has been thoroughly investigated.

**Follow-up action:**

After the meeting, or if the complainant does not want a meeting, a written account of the investigation will be sent to the complainant. This includes details of how to approach the Care Quality Commission if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome.

The outcomes of the investigation and the meeting are recorded in the Complaint Record and any shortcomings in company procedures will be identified and acted upon.

The directors will review all complaints at least every three months as part of its quality monitoring and improvement procedures, to identify the lessons learned.

**Vexatious Complainers**

Chelvey Menopause takes seriously any comments or complaints regarding its service. However, there are service users who can be treated as vexatious complainers due to the inability of the company to meet the outcomes of the complaints, which are never resolved. Vexatious complainers need to be dealt with by the arbitration service in order that the time factor required to investigate repeatedly becomes less of a burden on the organisation, its staff and other service users.

**Complaints that involve the Chelvey Menopause doctor's clinical care**

Complaints made about the clinical care delivered at Chelvey Menopause are treated seriously. Dr Avery will investigate and aim to resolve complaints should a complaint arise about other Chelvey Menopause doctors. Dr Avery will suggest that the doctor takes advice from the GMC and/or the MDU or other indemnity organisation. She will also advise the doctor seek advice from their Responsible Officer if appropriate at this stage.

**Complaints that involve Dr Avery's clinical care**

Complaints made about the clinical care delivered at Dr Avery are treated seriously. As Dr Avery would normally investigate and aim to resolve complaints should a complaint arise about her clinical she will immediately pass it to her co-director and clinical colleague Dr Laura Flexer. Dr Avery will take advice from the GMC and/or the MDU or other indemnity organisation. She will seek advice from her Responsible Officer if appropriate at this stage.

**External bodies**

If an impasse is reached internally in the complaint process then Chelvey Menopause will ask an external adjudicator such as ISCAS (Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service) to intervene. Chelvey Menopause will give the contact details of the regulator in the clinic's Complaint Information leaflet. (Note: the CQC will not arbitrate in a complaint but require the provider to make their contact details available to the service user).

**END**

## Appendix 1

### Patient Complaint Information Leaflet

As a clinic we strive to provide the best possible service for our patients. However, we recognise that sometimes you may feel that we have not met your needs.

If you have any complaint or concern about the service you have received from the doctors or staff working at this centre, you are entitled to ask for an explanation.

We operate an in-house complaints procedure to deal with your complaint. This procedure does not deal with matters of legal liability or compensation.

#### Our promise to you

We will:

- **Listen** to your complaint or concern;
- **Respond** by establishing a clear, appropriate plan of action, and provide you with relevant support and advice;
- **Improve** the service however we can.

#### How to make your complaint

We hope that we can resolve your problem easily and promptly, often at the time the problem arises and with the person concerned. If your problem cannot be sorted out in this way and you wish to make a complaint we would like you to do so as soon as possible. This will enable us to establish what happened more easily.

Please make your complaint in writing to myself, the registered manager, Dr Kathryn Avery

Please be assured that any complaint you make, written or verbal, will be treated in strict confidence and have no effect upon the level of treatment and care that you receive at the practice.

If you would prefer a family member, friend or advocate to make the complaint on your behalf, they may do so and we will work with them, and yourself, to resolve the problem. However, whilst we can receive a complaint on your behalf we cannot provide any medical information to a third party without your authority. To discuss or provide confidential information we would require a note signed and dated by you.

If your complaint was of a nature you felt unable to discuss to seek resolution with myself, I will appoint an independent external colleague to lead the investigation.

#### What happens next?

Your complaint will be acknowledged within two working days of receiving it. This may well be a phone call from myself to you (or your advocate) to make sure we fully understand your complaint.

We aim to make a full response to you within the next 21 working days. During that time we will conduct an investigation to find out what has happened and whether there is any action that can be taken to put things right. If at the end of those 21 days we are still conducting our investigations, we will notify you of the position and keep you fully informed until our investigations have been concluded.

As a result of the practice investigation we will:

- Make sure you receive an apology;
- Find out what has happened and what went wrong;
- Make it possible for you to discuss the problem with those concerned, if you would like this;
- Keep you informed of our progress;
- Identify what we can do to make sure that problem does not happen again.

### **Getting further help with your complaint**

We hope that, through our practice complaints procedure, we can resolve your problem satisfactorily. We believe that this will give us the best chance to put the matter right with you and the opportunity to improve our services for all our patients

If internal resolution cannot be achieved Chelvey Menopause will an external adjudication adjudication service to intervene and take over the complaint.

You may also contact the Care Quality Commission, if you feel that your complaint is not being dealt with in a satisfactory manner, on 03000 616161. (Note: the CQC will not arbitrate in a complaint, but require the provider to make their (CQC) contact details available to the service user).

*Thank you*  
*Dr Kathryn Avery*  
Registered Manager

## Appendix 2

### Patient Complaint Record

OFFICE USE ONLY
Problem/complaint received by: .....
Nature of complaint: Clinical/Non-Clinical ( <i>Please circle</i> )
Date and time received: ...../...../.....

Patient name: .....

Address: .....

Telephone number: .....

Best time of day to be contacted on phone: .....

If complaint is being made on behalf of the patient, please note relationship to patient:

.....

Telephone number: .....

Best time of day to be contacted on phone: .....

Nature of complaint / problem:

\*Signed by: ..... on ...../...../..... Time: .....

Referred to: ..... on ...../...../..... Time: .....

*\*Please note: If a patient is unable to put his/her complaint in writing, please use this form to record the complaint and indicate that you are writing it on behalf of the patient and ask them to sign at the end of the statement to confirm it is accurate and you have permission to refer it on.*



