

## Complaints in Health and Social Care Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning

### Attention all family practitioner services

*Complaints in Health and Social Care: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning (1 April 2009)* has replaced the *HPSS Complaints Procedure (1996)*. It provides a streamlined process that applies equally to all health and social care (HSC) organisations including family practitioner services.

#### The HSC standards for complaints handling are:-

**Accountability** - HSC organisations will ensure that there are clear lines of accountability for the handling and consideration of complaints.

**Accessibility** - All service users will have open and easy access to the HSC Complaints Procedure and the information required to enable them to complain about any aspect of service.

**Receiving complaints** - All complaints received will be dealt with appropriately and the process and options for pursuing a complaint will be explained to the complainant.

**Supporting complainants and staff** - HSC organisations will support complainants and staff throughout the complaints process.

**Investigation of complaints** - All investigations will be conducted promptly, thoroughly, openly, honestly and objectively.

**Responding to complaints** - All complaints will be responded to as promptly as possible and all issues raised will be addressed.

**Monitoring** - HSC organisations will monitor the effectiveness of complaints handling and responsiveness.

**Learning** - HSC organisations will promote a culture of learning from complaints so that where necessary, services can be improved when complaints are raised.

#### Practice-based Complaints Procedure

The standards require all family practitioner services to have in place a practice-based complaints procedure for the handling of complaints. FPS should note that posters should be displayed within the practice, highlighting the various mechanisms of how to raise a complaint. This practice-based complaints procedure is the local resolution mechanism for resolving complaints at practice level.

#### The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) Complaints Department can provide you with help, support and advice.

If you need help in any of the following areas:

- The role of the HSCB acting as “honest broker” between the complainant and practitioner.
- Appointment of independent experts, independent laypersons or conciliators.
- Practice based complaints procedures, leaflets etc.
- Complaints Handling.

We can arrange a visit to your Practice or you can contact us by phone or email:

HSCB Complaints Department,  
12-22 Linenhall Street,  
Belfast BT2 8BS  
Tel: 02895363893

A copy of *Complaints in Health and Social Care: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning* is available on the DHSSPS website:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc-complaints-standards-guidelines-resolution-learning.pdf>