

COUNTRY ASSOCIATES LIMITED

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Our Commitment

At Thyme Dental we are committed to providing high-quality dental care to all our patients. We take feedback and complaints seriously and view them as an opportunity to learn, improve our services, and maintain trust and transparency with our patients.

We aim to handle all complaints courteously, efficiently, and promptly so that concerns can be resolved as quickly as possible.

Complaints can be made to any member of staff, but to ensure that your feedback or complaint is actioned appropriately, they will be dealt with by our Complaints Lead **Sally Harvey-Hendley** unless they are minor and can be dealt with immediately.

How to Complain

We hope that most problems can be resolved quickly, often at the time they arise and with the person concerned.

If your concern cannot be resolved this way, or you would prefer to make a formal complaint, you may do so verbally, in writing, or by email.

Complaints Made Verbally

If you wish to make a complaint over the phone or in person, we will listen to your complaint and offer to refer you to the complaints lead. If they are unavailable, the staff member will take your details and a brief explanation of the complaint to pass on. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days.

Complaints Made via Email or Letter

Written and emailed complaints will be passed immediately to the Complaints Lead, who will acknowledge receipt within 3 working days of receiving your correspondence.

Investigation and Response

- We will make every effort to resolve your complaint within 10 working days of acknowledgment.

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- If the investigation is likely to take longer (for example, where clinical advice is required), we will inform you of the reason for the delay and agree on an updated timescale with you.
- If your complaint involves clinical care or treatment, the matter will usually be referred to the treating dentist, unless you specifically request otherwise.
- Once our investigation is complete, we will contact you via your preferred method (letter, email, or telephone) to share our findings and any actions taken.

Where necessary, we may seek advice from our indemnity provider, insurer, or legal adviser to ensure a fair and compliant response. In such cases, only relevant information will be shared, and confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Duty of Candour

In line with the statutory Duty of Candour, we act in an open and transparent manner when responding to complaints, offering timely apologies and clear explanations whenever a notifiable safety incident or concern arises.

Confidentiality

All complaints are treated in the strictest confidence, and we comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. Patient records and complaint records will remain confidential, and only those involved in investigating or resolving your complaint will have access to the necessary information. Information will be retained in line with the recommended retention periods.

Accessible Information

PRIVATE: We ensure that patients receive information in formats they can understand and are provided with any communication support they need throughout the complaints process. We comply with the Equality Act 2010 and ensure patients don't receive any discrimination based on protected characteristics.

Learning from Complaints

We record all complaints centrally and regularly review them as part of our governance and quality improvement processes. This ensures we identify any trends, improve our services, and share learning across the team.

Time Limits for Making a Complaint

Complaints should normally be made **within 12 months** of the incident or the date the issue came to your attention.

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However, we will always consider reasonable exceptions if there are valid reasons for the delay.

If You Are Not Satisfied

We hope that, if you have a problem, you will use our practice complaints procedure first. We believe this gives us the best chance to put things right and improve our services.

However, if you remain dissatisfied, you may contact one of the following independent bodies:

The CQC: The CQC don't get directly involved with complaints made to the practice. They do, however, encourage giving feedback to service providers.

To send feedback to the CQC please go to: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/give-feedback-on-care>

Telephone: 03000 616161 (Mon to Fri, 8.30am - 5.30pm Excluding Bank Holidays)

Private Patients: The Dental Complaints Service handles complaints made by private patients.

Telephone: 0208 253 0800 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

Website: <https://dcs.gdc-uk.org/>

The GDC

Telephone: 0854 222 4141 or 0207 887 3800

Website: <https://contactus.gdc-uk.org/Complaint/Process/13>

Document Control

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Change History				
Version	Status	Date	Author / Editor	Details of Change (Brief detailed summary of all updates/changes)
0.1	Final	12.07.23	DCME	New Template Created
0.2	Final	05.07.24	HD	Updated template to include more information on how to complain. Clarified the role of the ICB for NHS complaints.
0.3R	Final	29/5/25	HD	Made it clearer what information needs to be removed for NHS/Private care
0.4R	Final	November 2025	PG	Re-written original policy. Same content but laid out differently for patient's benefit
0.5R	Final	Feb 2026	HD	Amended policy based on CQC feedback. Added sections on AIS and the Duty of Candour.

The latest approved version of this document supersedes all other versions, upon receipt of the latest approved version all other versions should be destroyed, unless specifically stated that previous version(s) are to remain extant. If any doubt, please contact the document Author.

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