

# **GREENWICH HOSPITAL**

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**COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY (5/09/17)**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Greenwich Hospital (GH) is committed to the principles of integrity, openness and fairness in all of its dealings.
- 1.2 The aim of this Policy is to provide a procedure by which someone can make a complaint in respect of GH and understand how it will be handled. Complainants can expect to receive an appropriately timely and reasoned response.
- 1.3 This Complaints Policy will be available on the GH website and may be updated periodically.
- 1.4 A report of any complaints formally investigated (under Stage 2 of the policy) and how they have been addressed will be made periodically to the Director Greenwich Hospital (the Director), the Advisory Board, and annually to the Admiralty Board on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence acting in execution of the Greenwich Hospital Acts 1865 to 1996.
- 1.5 Overall responsibility for this Policy lies with the Secretary of State for Defence but its implementation is the responsibility of the Director.
- 1.6 All parties to a complaint should be open to achieving a resolution of the concerns raised which, where appropriate, restores relationships and interactions between the Hospital and the complainant.

## **2. Definition of a Complaint**

- 2.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about any matter arising out of a person's dealings with GH. However, this policy does not apply if a complaint concerns:
  - 2.1.1 any matter which is the subject of actual or threatened legal proceedings involving GH;
  - 2.1.2 a person's occupation of any of GH's real estate, in which case the dispute resolution provisions of the relevant legal agreement(s) and/or law will apply;
  - 2.1.3 the grant of a bursary at the Royal Hospital School or the occupation of GH's sheltered housing schemes, to which separate procedures apply and which are posted on the GH website;
  - 2.1.4 any debt owed to GH; and/or
  - 2.1.5 any matters considered as part of any earlier complaint made to GH previously handled under this Policy or any other relevant complaints handling policy.
- 2.2 Any complaint which arises out of the way in which a person has been treated by an individual or organisation acting as an agent of GH should, initially, be dealt with under the complaints procedure operated by that agent. If the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved under that procedure, the complainant may refer the matter to the GH Complaints Handling Policy under Stage 1.
- 2.3 If GH receives a complaint to which this Policy does not apply it will write to the complainant explaining the position within one working week (five working days) of receipt of the complaint.

## **3. Making a Complaint**

- 3.1 A person making a complaint must provide such information about it and in such format as GH reasonably requests.
- 3.2 If a complaint relates to a specific person at GH that person will be told about it and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- 3.3 Under this Policy, complaints are handled in three stages:

Stage 1 – Initial Review - by a complainant contacting the person at GH with whom he or she has already had contact about the subject matter of the complaint;

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation - if a complaint remains unresolved, by the complainant writing to the Director or, if it relates to him or her, to GH's Clerk-in-Charge; and

Stage 3 – Advisory Board Review - if the complaint still remains unresolved, by a complainant asking for the stage 2 decision to be reviewed by the Advisory Board, or any of its members appointed for that purpose.
- 3.4 Any decision about a complaint reached following the application of the above stages is final and GH will not consider any further complaint relating to, or including anything referred to in, the original complaint.

#### **4. Stage 1 – Initial Review**

- 4.1 In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person at GH with responsibility for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and informally and should do so if possible and appropriate.
- 4.2 Receipt of a complaint will usually be acknowledged in writing within one working week, stating who is dealing with it, and by when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
- 4.3 Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within a further two working weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be provided, including an indication of when a definitive written reply will be given.
- 4.4 GH's reply will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, the decision reached and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The complainant must also be advised of their right to take the matter to Stage 2 if not satisfied.

#### **5. Stage 2 – Formal Investigation**

- 5.1 If, within two working weeks after the completion of Stage 1, the complainant is dissatisfied he or she may write to the Director or, if the complaint relates to the Director, to GH's Clerk-in-Charge, asking for the Stage 1 outcome to be investigated formally.
- 5.2 GH will seek to acknowledge receipt in writing within one working week, stating who is dealing with the investigation, and by when the complainant can expect a reply.
- 5.3 The person investigating the complaint at Stage 2 will request a written report and all relevant documentation from the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1. Where practicable, the person dealing with the complaint will offer to meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint and how it might be resolved.

- 5.4 The complainant should usually expect to receive a formal written reply within a further four working weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, an interim progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- 5.5 Whether the complaint is upheld or not, GH's formal reply will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, the decision reached and any action taken as a result. The complainant must also be advised of their right to take the matter to Stage 3 if not satisfied.

**6. Stage 3 – Advisory Board Review**

- 6.1 If within two working weeks after completion of Stage 2, the complainant is dissatisfied he or she may write to the Director or, if the complaint relates to the Director, to GH's Clerk-in-Charge, asking for the Stage 2 outcome to be reviewed formally by GH's Advisory Board or any member or members (the Reviewer(s)) appointed for that purpose. The Reviewer(s) will have had no previous involvement with the subject matter.
- 6.2 The request for a Board level review must be made in writing and addressed to the Secretary of the Advisory Board who will acknowledge it within one working week of receipt. The acknowledgement will explain who will deal with the Board level review, how the review will operate and when the complainant can expect a reply.
- 6.3 The person who has dealt with the complaint at Stage 2 will provide a report to the Reviewer(s), which will be copied to the complainant. The complainant will have the option to comment on this report. The Reviewer(s) may ask for further written submissions from the complainant and GH staff, with each being given the opportunity to comment on those submitted by the other. The Reviewer(s) may also decide to hold a meeting attended by those staff and the complainant.
- 6.4 The complainant should receive a definitive reply within two working weeks of the Reviewer(s) being provided with all the information requested or within two working weeks of the meeting if called.
- 6.5 Whether the review upholds the complaint or not, the written decision of the Reviewer(s) will describe how the review has been conducted, the decision reached and any action taken, or recommendations made, as a result of the review.
- 6.6 The decision taken at Stage 3 is final and no further complaint relating to the same matters will be considered.

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