

To all Community Pharmacies

9<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Dear Colleague,

### **Management of Complaints in Community Pharmacy**

You recently received a letter in error regarding the e-Learning package '*Complaints in Health and Social Care: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning*'. Please note that the letter was only intended for GP, dental and ophthalmic practices and should be disregarded.

The purpose of this letter is to provide an update on how complaints should be managed by Community Pharmacists, including information on the resources that are available.

#### **Context:**

- (1) Under **Terms of Service, Pharmaceutical Service Regulations (NI) 1997**, every pharmacy is required to have in place a complaints procedure which includes:
  - Provision of information within the pharmacy about the complaints procedure
  - A specified person who deals with complaints
  - Management of complaints - all complaints must be:
    - Recorded in writing
    - Acknowledged within 3 working days
    - Properly investigated *and*
    - A written summary of the investigation and conclusions provided to the complainant within 10 working days.
  - Keeping records of all complaints and associated correspondence
- (2) Furthermore, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 8(1)(b) of the **Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009** set out Amendment Directions to the Health and Social Care Board on procedures for dealing with complaints about family health practitioners which came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009.

These Directions set out the following:

*"For the purposes of monitoring complaints the HSC Board shall require the practitioner to –*

- (a) *Forward an anonymised copy of-*

- i. each written complaint; and
- ii. each response,  
to the HSC Board within 3 working days of the response being issued.”

In summary, under these Directions, the HSCB must monitor how practitioners deal with, and respond to, complaints as well as their outcomes. All community pharmacies are therefore required to adhere to the following process:

- Once a written complaint has been resolved locally, practitioners are required to forward an anonymised copy of the complaint and the pharmacy response to the HSCB within 3 working days of the response being issued (see contact details below). Please note that only patient details should be anonymised and that pharmacy details must be included.
- For the purposes of consent, complainants must be advised of this process.

### **Action for Community Pharmacies:**

You will be aware that all community pharmacists are required to comply with both the Terms of Service and all legal and professional requirements (as outlined in the Code of ethics, Principle 8, Obligation 8.8 which states: *Take all reasonable steps to ensure that both you and those you employ or supervise comply with all legal and professional requirements and best practice guidance*).

You should therefore review your complaints procedure to ensure that you are complying with the requirements under both the Terms of Service and the Amended Directions of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act, as outlined above.

To support the management of complaints, HSCB Complaints Department has developed resources to assist staff working within Primary Care, including pharmacists, and details of these are included in the Appendix.

### **HSCB Contact Details**

- Information relating to complaints from the **Western area** should be sent to:

Rosemary Henderson  
HSCB  
Gransha Park House  
15 Gransha Park  
Clooney Road  
Londonderry  
BT47 6FN

- Information relating to complaints from **all other areas** should be sent to:

Complaints Dept  
HSCB  
12-22 Linenhall Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8BS

- Please note that all Board telephone numbers have changed therefore, we would be grateful if you could ensure that your records are updated accordingly.

**Health and Social Care Board, Switchboard – 0300 555 0115**

**Complaints Hotline Number – 028 9536 3893**

- If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact Alice McKeown in the Complaint's Office at the Board on:

Tel: 028 95 363006

Email: [fpsetrainingcomplaints@hscni.net](mailto:fpsetrainingcomplaints@hscni.net)

Yours sincerely,



**Liz Fitzpatrick**  
**Complaints and Litigation Manager**  
**HSC Corporate Services**  
[Liz.fitzpatrick@hscni.net](mailto:Liz.fitzpatrick@hscni.net)



**Joe Brogan**  
**Assistant Director of Integrated Care**  
**Pharmacy & Medicines Management**

## Appendix – Complaints Management Resources

### 1. ‘Complaints in Health and Social Care: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning’ e-Learning Package

This provides general training and awareness on the Management of Complaints, as well as detailing the role and responsibility of the Health and Social Care Board, (the Board), in relation to complaints. The e-Learning has been updated to reflect recent changes and it is recommended that all staff involved in managing complaints complete the training.

The e-Learning Package can be accessed via:

- (a) NICPLD website [www.nicpld.org](http://www.nicpld.org) and log in. The course link is located in the on-line courses section and is titled “Handling Complaints in Health and Social Care”.
  - (b) Pharmaceutical Services page of the BSO website <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2659.htm>
  - (c) Alternatively it can be accessed at [http://www3.hscni.net/fps\\_elearning\\_complaints/](http://www3.hscni.net/fps_elearning_complaints/) (Please note that the web address should include ‘www3’ and this is *not* a misprint).
- Once you have completed the package you will be asked to select the appropriate Family Practitioner Service (FPS) – choose community pharmacy from the drop down menu.
  - Enter the name of your pharmacy in the Practice name box
  - Enter your Contractor Code in the Practice/Premises code box (entering this code will give the Board confirmation that you have completed the e-Learning package).

Please note that a hard copy of the training is available from the HSCB complaints office if required.

### 2. HSCB Policy on the Management of Complaints

This is available on the BSO website

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2659.htm>

### 3. Support from HSC Board Complaints Department

If further support is required, Board officers are willing to visit pharmacies and staff to discuss their requirements under the HSC Complaints Procedure and provide further guidance on how to manage and respond to complaints. Please contact the Complaints Office for further information, Tel: 028 95 363006.