**Organising a complaints meeting**

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| **Action Points** | **Check** | **Comments** |
| ***1 - Pre-Meeting*** | | |
| Know your professional, regulatory, and contractual obligations in complaint handling. This understanding will boost your confidence and enable you to address concerns effectively. |  |  |
| Ensure that your complaint investigation process clearly includes a choice for the complainant to engage in a face-to-face or telephone discussion. |  |  |
| Consider offering to facilitate a meeting with the complainant at any point during the complaint process. |  |  |
| Consider why holding a face-to-face meeting may be helpful in avoiding unnecessary escalation or facilitating a clear explanation of any decisions that arise. |  |  |
| Consider meeting at an early stage to facilitate information gathering or better understand what is being complained about. |  |  |
| Consider holding a meeting to discuss the outcomes of a complaint investigation. This can provide details of your findings and conclusions and offer further explanations to the complainant. |  |  |
| Ensure the chosen meeting environment provides a comfortable experience for the complainant and doesn’t add to any existing stress. |  |  |
| Facilitate any preferred methods of communication, including any reasonable adjustments required for the complainant. |  |  |
| Consider the room's layout for any special requirements due to disability. |  |  |
| Review lighting, noise levels, and other distractions that may negatively impact the meeting. |  |  |
| Consider if the meeting can held remotely if preferred by the complainant. |  |  |
| Consider any potential risks to personal safety. |  |  |
| Consider whether practical safety measures are in place, such as an exit strategy and agreed-upon processes for ending a meeting and summoning assistance. |  |  |
| Facilitate requests for a complainant to ask a friend, family member, or someone else they trust to attend the meeting with them as support. |  |  |
| Inform the complainant beforehand who will be present at the meeting on behalf of the organisation. |  |  |
| Arrange for a scribe to be present who can concentrate solely on taking notes. |  |  |
| Consider whether English will be the complainant's first language and be prepared to offer the services of an NHS interpreter if required. |  |  |
| Consider how to respond to a complainant's request to bring a solicitor or other legal representative to the meeting. |  |  |
| Agree on the relevant areas for discussion beforehand, to facilitate the meeting process. |  |  |
| Set out an agenda to share with the complainant or ask them to provide you with a list of questions they would like answered. | ☐ |  |
| Obtain the complainant's consent to discuss matters in the presence of any third party who may be present. | ☐ |  |
| Prepare to answer all questions the complainant raises openly, honestly, and to the best of your ability. | ☐ |  |

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| Prepare to answer any specific clinical questions tabled by the complainant directly with a clinician or seek answers from a colleague with relevant clinical knowledge and patient experience. |  |  |
| Decide how a meeting will be offered (e.g. verbally, in writing, or electronically). |  |  |
| Ensure that all relevant communications are recorded in the complaint file. |  |  |

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| **Action Points** | **Check** | **Comments** |
| **2 - *During the meeting*** | | |
| Know your professional, regulatory, and contractual obligations in complaint handling. This understanding will boost your confidence and enable you to address concerns effectively. |  |  |
| Commence the meeting with introductions and an explanation of everyone presents role. |  |  |
| Start by setting the scene and seeking early agreement on the agenda as seen by both parties. |  |  |
| Communicate any intention to take notes/minutes in advance, explaining the purpose and who will take them. |  |  |
| Consider what your approach will be if the complainant asks to record the meeting rather than receive written notes or minutes. |  |  |
| Allow the complainant to ask any initial questions they may have. |  |  |
| Aim to answer all questions raised by the complainant openly and honestly. |  |  |
| Verbally acknowledge that something has gone wrong and offer an apology where appropriate. |  |  |
| Discuss potential outcomes that can arise from complaint investigations. |  |  |
| Prepare to intervene if the complainant is not making their point clearly or is going off-topic to bring things back on track. |  |  |
| Prepare to take control of or even terminate the meeting if personal safety is threatened. |  |  |
| Communicate any proposed changes or improvements to your service that you intend to make as a result of the complaint investigation. |  |  |
| Consider a process for concluding the meeting with the complainant. |  |  |

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| Consider how to proceed at the conclusion of the meeting if matters remain unresolved. |  |  |
| Be clear on what to do if the complaint relates to a non-NHS provider (private treatment). |  |  |

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| **Action Points** | **Check** | **Comments** |
| ***3 – Post meeting*** | | |
| Confirm the findings of your investigation and the outcomes of the complaint to the patient in writing. |  |  |
| Be aware that the NHS complaints regulations stipulate that a complaint investigation must be fair to all parties involved. |  |  |
| Recognise that employers have a duty of care to support employees during and after the complaint process. |  |  |
| Recognise that healthcare workers may worry that things said during a meeting may be subsequently used against them. |  |  |
| Be aware of your statutory obligations if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation. |  |  |