

Introduction

The Fertility Partnership (TFP) is committed to delivering safe, high quality, cost-effective fertility treatment. We will do our best to ensure the time you spend in our clinics is as comfortable as possible and to provide you with excellent personal and professional care, but there may be times when your expectations are not met.

This guide outlines our patient complaints procedure and gives you advice about how to get a satisfactory response to your concerns. We appreciate all feedback regarding the care and service that you, your family or others experienced during your visit, which can be relayed to us as described below.

Providing General Feedback

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we encourage our patients to provide feedback so that we can take your views and priorities into account. There are several opportunities to provide general feedback.

Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire

All patients are encouraged to complete a Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire. The feedback received from these surveys remains anonymous and is a valuable tool used by our clinics to gain insight into your experience of using our services and identifies where improvements may be made.

HFEA Chose a Fertility Clinic

The HFEA publish patient-ratings on all licenced clinics on their website. After finishing treatment, patients are encouraged to rate their clinic using the specific web link given, or by searching for your clinic on the HFEA website (see <https://www.hfea.gov.uk/choose-a-clinic/clinic-search/>) and then clicking the link to provide a rating. Our clinic surveys also provide the link to access the HFEA clinic ratings at the same time as rating the clinic.

Making comments or raising complaints about specific issues

Although we aim to deliver the best possible care and experience during your treatment at our clinics, we welcome all comments, suggestions, concerns and complaints on the care and treatment that we offer.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your treatment, or if you have concerns about the care you have received, however small, we ask that you please raise your concerns as soon as you are able, rather than waiting. Many issues can be resolved by a conversation with staff, and we would much prefer to deal with the issue straight away than have you leave the clinic feeling dissatisfied with the care you have received.

You can make comments or raise a concern:

- about any aspect of your experience and treatment
- to any member of TFP staff
- at any stage of your patient journey; before, during or after treatment
- in any format; verbally in person or by phone, in writing in an email or letter

All comments and complaints are taken seriously and will be handled fairly, with consideration for any distress that you may be feeling. We aim to resolve any issues as quickly and effectively as possible, within the timescales given in this guide.

During your visits to the Clinic

You can speak to the member of staff involved in your care or ask to speak to the relevant department manager, the Complaints Officer or the senior person on duty.

After your visit or after discharge from the Clinic Please contact the Complaints Officer or General Manager, either by phone, email or in writing. Contact details of your clinic can be found on the TFP Fertility website (www.tfp-fertility.com/en-gb).

If you wish to make a comment or complaint about the Complaints Officer (the person who usually deals with complaints in the clinic) please ask to speak to the General Manager or Quality Manager and an alternative senior member of staff will then investigate and respond to your complaint.

The Complaints Process

Our complaints process aims to ensure your concerns are fully investigated and that you are given a full and prompt reply. Any complaint that we receive is treated in confidence; we undertake to investigate all complaints courteously and sympathetically and to provide a rapid response within nationally recognised timelines.

The complaints procedure has three stages and involves the following people and/or organisations:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution

Your complaint will be handled by senior member of the management team or General Manager.

Stage 2 - Internal Appeal

If your complaint cannot be resolved at clinic level, it can be escalated to the UK Regional Quality Lead.

Stage 3 - Independent External Adjudication

If you are still not satisfied with how we have handled your complaint, you can choose to escalate to the relevant external regulatory body. Contact details for these organisations are given at the end of this guide.

Before making a complaint

If you are considering making a complaint, you might find it helpful to think about;

- what you want to achieve by making the complaint
- how you think we can resolve the issue
- for verbal complaints, whether you want a written response

What happens if I make a verbal complaint?

If you make a verbal complaint to a member of staff, it is a good idea to make a note of when you did this and to whom you spoke. The member of staff will attempt to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the complaint will be further investigated.

If it is not possible to resolve your complaint at the time, or if you request a written response, your complaint will be handled in the same way as a written complaint, as explained below.

What happens if I make a written complaint or if I want a written response?

If you are making a written complaint, please provide as much information as possible along with contact details, such as your name, telephone number and postal address. Your letter should include:

- Who or what has caused your concerns
- Where and when the events took place
- What action you have already taken, if any
- What results you want from your complaint

We will handle any personal data you provide in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

After receiving your complaint, you will receive a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within 2 working days. We may ask you for some more information about what happened and may offer to call you to talk about your concerns or offer to meet with you. After the meeting, if no further action is proposed, the clinic will send you a full written response.

The clinic will investigate what happened and take steps to help put matters right. The Clinic's General Manager or Complaints Officer will aim to provide you a full written response within 20 working days. If a full response cannot be given at this point, you will receive a letter explaining the reason for the delay. In any event, you will receive a holding letter every 20 working days until the matter is resolved.

What happens if I am not happy with the response?

Our aim is to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible at clinic level. If you are not happy with our response, please inform the clinic's General Manager or Complaints Officer and explain why. The clinic will review the steps they have taken and see if there is anything else that can be done to resolve the complaint.

If you are dissatisfied with the clinic's final response, you can ask for an internal appeal to Stage 2.

What does an internal appeal involve?

The internal appeal stage is the responsibility of the independent UK Quality Lead. The clinic will provide their contact details as required. If you are dissatisfied with the clinic's response, you will need to write to the UK Quality Lead within 6 months of the date of the final written response from the clinic. This response process will be the same as previously described, with an acknowledgement within two working days and either a full written response or an update within 20 working days.

What happens if I am still unhappy?

If you are dissatisfied with the internal appeal and the decision of the UK Regional Quality Lead, you have the right to refer the matter to the relevant regulatory body. You must write to them within 6 months of the final decision of The Fertility Partnership's (TFP) internal review.

In the UK there are several external regulatory bodies:

The Human Fertility and Embryology Authority

Complaints Inspector,

enquiriesteam@hfea.gov.uk

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority,

2nd floor, 2 Redman Place, London, E20 1JQ

During the Covid pandemic the HFEA are not accepting complaints by post. Instead, please email enquiriesteam@hfea.gov.uk.

Please note that The HFEA can only consider a complaint that indicates a potential breach of the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act, license conditions or Directions.

The Care Quality Commission (England)

Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA

enquiries@cqc.org.uk

The Healthcare Inspectorate (Scotland)

Tracy Birch, Programme Manager Independent Healthcare

Healthcare Improvement Scotland,

Gyle Square, 1 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9EB

tracy.birch@nhs.net

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (Northern Ireland)

9th Floor Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place, Belfast BT1 3BT

info@rqia.org.uk

Please note that the RQIA is an independent body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland. RQIA do not investigate any complaints as their role is to monitor and inspect complaints handling.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the TFP Complaints and Concerns Policy, please contact the General Manager or Complaints Officer at the relevant Clinic. Address details for your clinic can be found on the TFP website www.tfp-fertility.com.