

Partner Complaints Procedure

Introduction

The emphasis in this Complaints Procedure (the Procedure) is on informality, with the object being to solve problems quickly, simply and fairly.

Complaints about HCPC Partners are rare and the purpose of the Procedure is to assist all Partners to maintain appropriate standards of conduct and performance when providing services on behalf of the HCPC. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved amicably at the Informal Stage.

All Partners are required to adhere to the HCPC Partner Code of Conduct (the Code) and the other standards established by the HCPC. Partners should be familiar with the Code, and comply with its terms when providing services on behalf of the HCPC.

Complaints

Any complaint about a Partner should, in the first instance, be made to the Partner Manager. The Partner Manager will review the complaint and, if satisfied that it is appropriate to be dealt with under this procedure, will report the substance of the complaint to the Head of Department or Director ultimately responsible for the service delivered by the Partner.

Although the Procedure emphasises informality, the Partner Manager may require a verbal complaint to be confirmed in writing and require a complainant to provide further information about a complaint in order to facilitate its proper consideration.

In certain circumstances, depending on the nature and severity of the issue raised, the Partner Manager may have to share the concerns with the subject of the complaint in order to progress the matter.

Informal Stage

The object of this Informal Stage is to resolve complaints fairly, quickly and simply with the minimum of formality. For that reason, the Partner Manager and relevant Head of Department or Director have discretion as to how a complaint will be investigated and determined.

The purpose of the Procedure is to assist Partners to maintain appropriate standards of conduct and performance. In many cases the appropriate first steps will be for the

Partner Manager or relevant Head of Department or Director to discuss the complaint with the Partner, explore any factors which may have affected the Partner's conduct or performance, provide clarification about the Partner's role and offer appropriate training or other support.

The Partner Manager will keep a record of each complaint and, where resolution is achieved at the Informal Stage, how it was resolved.

Formal Stage

The Formal Stage will apply to any complaint which cannot be resolved satisfactorily at the Informal Stage or which relates to a persistent problem which has previously been considered at that stage.

The relevant Head of Department or Director will send a written notice to the Partner concerned, setting out the complaint and inviting the Partner to submit any representations that the Partner may wish to make. The notice must set a date by which any representations are to be received, which must be not less than 28 days from the date of the notice.

Once the time in which the Partner may make representations has elapsed (and whether or not any representations have been provided) the relevant Head of Department or Director will consider and determine the complaint.

The relevant Head of Department or Director will make a written record of the determination and the reasons for it and a copy will be sent to the Partner within seven days of that decision being made.

Complaints to which the Procedure does not apply

The Procedure will not apply to complaints which, in the opinion of the Partner Manager and/or relevant Head of Department or Director, are of a serious or persistent nature and may constitute a material breach of the contractual relationship between the Partner and the HCPC. In that event the complaint will be dealt with under the terms of the Partner's Service Agreement.

The Procedure will also not apply to complaints relating to the fitness to practise of a Partner who is a registrant or a member of another regulated profession. Such complaints will be referred directly to the Fitness to Practise Department or other relevant regulatory body.

Confidentiality & Disclosure of Information

In all cases, any sensitive information relating to the complaint will be treated as strictly confidential.

Information about individuals will only be disclosed on a strictly need to know basis. This information will only be shared or disclosed as absolutely necessary, in order to resolve the complaint, and only the minimum necessary information will be disclosed.