Please see the brief summary below in regard to the NHS Complaints Changes in Scotland, although it should be noted that the BDA is updating an advice sheet on the subject which will be available in the near future:

* New NHS complaints procedure in Scotland from 1 April 2017.

* Process aligned with system for all public sector complaints in Scotland.

* Dental practices will need to change how they handle complaints.

* Within dental practices all NHS contractors, whether practice owners or associates will need new documentation, including a complaints procedure based on Scottish government template.

* Scottish government template has both guidance for practice internal use on how to handle complaints and a procedure for patients on how their complaints will be handled. This is a one-size-fits-all across the NHS and whole public sector in Scotland that dentists must use.

* These are lengthy documents, the internal "The NHS Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure" is 62 pages long and "The NHS Scotland Public Facing Model Complaints Procedure" is 7 pages.

* There are two basic stages, Early Resolution and Investigation.

* Early Resolution. The first stage is aimed at dealing with minor issues, which the procedure labels concerns, and more straightforward complaints. These situations are where there has been a negative comment or where the issues are clear-cut and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation. They can be resolved with an 'on-the-spot' apology or remedial action that can be taken to resolve the concern within five working days.

* Investigation. The second stage would be initiated when the complainant is not happy with the outcome of stage one or where the matter is more complex, high risk or requires detailed investigation. A definitive response has to be provided within 20 working days unless there is a good reason for this to be longer.


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