

GP practice addresses appointment-booking system after patient's complaint

A GP practice has put in place a number of measures to address issues with its patient booking system after a woman experienced repeated frustrations and difficulties in booking an appointment.

The woman had complained to the Practice in December 2019 in relation to the difficulties she had experienced when trying to book an appointment in November 2019. She had tried unsuccessfully for several days to book the appointment using the Practice's online Patient Booking Service and by telephone. When she complained to the Practice, she did not receive an acknowledgement. She also phoned the Practice in February 2020 and asked for a meeting with the Practice Manager, who responded a few days later with a casual and unsatisfactory response. In February 2020 she met with the Practice Manager who apologised for not replying to her letter.

The woman approached this office about her complaint, stating that she did not want anyone else to experience these frustrations and difficulties in booking an appointment.

We approached the Practice and spoke with the Practice Manager who admitted that this case could have been handled with more empathy and that their complaint handling process had fallen short of its standards. The Practice Manager outlined a number of proposals to mitigate against such issues happening in the future. These included:

1. Issuing the complainant with a letter which provided an enhanced explanation for the failure to respond to the complaint;
2. Issuing a letter which addresses each of the improvements suggested by the complainant;
3. Inserting a paragraph stating that a written acknowledgement to each complaint will be issued on the day that it is received by the Practice complaints staff;
4. Staff training in the implementation of a Care Navigation System; and
5. That the online booking system is discontinued with appointments being booked only by telephone and with additional lines added.