

Making complaints and giving feedback

The NHS Constitution sets out what you can expect from NHS services. If you are unhappy with NHS care or services, it's important to let us know so we can improve.

There are two ways to tell the NHS what you think:

- give feedback
- make a complaint.

How can you do this?

Giving feedback

Give good or bad feedback by:

- telling the NHS organisation. You can speak directly to a member of staff. Other ways to give feedback should be clearly displayed at the service you visit
- telling your Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). More information about PALS appears later in this leaflet
- leaving a comment on NHS Choices, www.nhs.uk

- completing the Friends and Family Test, which asks some patients whether you would recommend the care you have received to your family or friends.

If your feedback is about a negative experience, you can complain.

How to complain

You can complain to:

1. The 'health care provider'. This is the organisation where the issue took place, for example your hospital, GP surgery or clinic.
2. the 'commissioner'. This is the organisation that paid for how your care was delivered. This will vary depending on the NHS service you complain about:
 - › If your complaint is about services such as hospital care, mental health services, out of hours services and 111 services, contact your local clinical commissioning group, www.england.nhs.uk/ccg-details

The NHS complaints procedure



A guide for patients on making complaints and giving feedback about NHS care

- › If your complaint is about primary care services such as GPs, dentists, opticians or pharmacy services, contact NHS England, www.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/complaint
- › If your complaint is about public health services such as drug and alcohol misuse services, contact your local authority, www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council

You can choose who to complain to.

Some questions to consider

- Do you want an apology from the organisation where your experience occurred?
- Would you prefer to complain to an organisation not directly involved in your care, for example, if you are upset by your experience?
- Is your complaint about how NHS services are funded or the types of services available? If so, contact the commissioner (see overleaf).

Making your complaint

You can complain in **writing**, by **email** or by **speaking** to someone at the organisation. The organisation can give you more information about making a complaint. Try to make your complaint as soon as possible; ideally within 12 months.

Anyone can complain. A family member, carer, friend or your MP can complain on your behalf. Generally, you should agree to this. If you are a child, you can make a complaint yourself as long as the organisation is satisfied you can do so without adult representation.

What can you expect if you complain?

- To have your complaint acknowledged and properly looked into
- To be kept informed of progress and told the outcome
- To be treated with respect and courtesy

If you have not received a response to your complaint within six months you will be told the reason for the delay, unless you have agreed to a longer period for your complaint to be looked into.

Unhappy with the outcome of your complaint?

You can ask the 'Ombudsman', an official person who is independent of the NHS and government, to look at it.

There are two ombudsmen who deal with complaints about different NHS services:

- For most NHS complaints contact the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman www.ombudsman.org.uk
- For public health services complaints contact the Local Government Ombudsman, www.lgo.org.uk

Support to help you make a complaint

- Your local **Healthwatch**, the 'consumer champion for health services'. Visit www.healthwatch.co.uk/find-local-healthwatch
- Contact your local council or local Healthwatch to find out about **complaints advocacy services** in your area
- **PALS** can help you if your complaint is about an experience you had at a hospital. Find their details on the hospital's website, or visit them at the hospital
- Some areas have **patient liaison teams** who can help. Contact your local clinical commissioning group, www.england.nhs.uk/ccg-details or local Healthwatch to find out more
- Your local **Citizen's Advice Bureau**, www.citizensadvice.org.uk