



Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

Factsheet: Writing a complaint letter

Who to complain to

If you want to complain about a hospital or ambulance service you should contact the complaints manager or chief executive of the NHS Trust.

For complaints about primary care and independent providers such as your GP, dentist or optician you have 2 options;

1. You can complain directly to the NHS organisation by contacting the person in charge of complaints; in most GP and dental practices this will be the practice manager.
2. If you don't feel comfortable raising your complaint directly you can complain either to the NHS commissioning board or your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). All CCGs will have a Complaints Manager.

If you are not sure where to send your complaint you can ask for advice from Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), the Complaints Department at the hospital or from us. Most hospital Trusts have information about how to contact them about complaints on their websites.

If your complaint concerns more than one NHS organisation you only need to send a letter to one, they will liaise with the other organisations involved.

Writing and sending a complaint letter

The letter should clearly outline your complaint and should ask for it to be investigated under the NHS Complaints Procedure. If you are writing on behalf of someone else, you must show that you have their permission.

Useful tips

Be brief - try to keep your complaint to no more than 2 pages, be careful not to lose your main points in a long letter. Using bullet points may help.

Be clear – use short sentences, try not to repeat yourself and don't be afraid to say what has upset you but avoid being aggressive or using accusatory language

Be constructive – your complaint is an opportunity to improve things. Say what you want to achieve, eg, an apology, an explanation, an improvement.

Keep copies – keep a copy of all letters sent and received in date order

Photocopy documents – only send photocopies of additional documents, keep the original

Make sure your letter is received – you may wish to send it by recorded delivery or call a few days later to check that it was received

Framework for an initial complaint letter

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

(Insert your address and telephone number)

To: The Complaints Manager

(insert the name and address of the organisation)

(insert date)

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: NHS Complaint – *(insert complainant name and date of birth)*

I am writing to complain about the treatment I received from *(insert name(s) of staff)* at *(insert name of place where incident happened/treatment received)* on *(insert date of incident/period of treatment)*.

Or (if you are writing on behalf of someone else)

I am writing on behalf of *(insert name of patient)* and enclose their written agreement to act on their behalf. (If the person is unable to give written agreement you should explain why).

Then describe – what happened, when and where

Explain what, if anything, you have already done to try to resolve matters.

I would like the following points addressed in the response to this complaint

Put the most important matters first

Be clear and brief

Ask the questions you would like answered and list them in order of importance

Number or bullet your points

As a result of this complaint, I would like:

Say what you want to achieve, for example an explanation of what happened, an apology, action to remedy the problem by a named person

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this letter. I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns and provide a response in accordance with the NHS Complaints Procedure.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Yours faithfully

(Your signature)

(print your name)

c.c. (insert other names if you are sending copies of your letter to anyone else)