

# Tips on making a complaint to the NHS in England

## Why should I complain?

If you are unhappy with the NHS treatment you, a family member, or someone you care for has received, you can make a complaint. Complaints can help the NHS to learn and improve services.

## What is a complaint?

A complaint is when:

- you are not happy with an organisation's service or something it did or didn't do, and
- you want the organisation to answer your concerns and put things right.

## About us

We are the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. We make final decisions on complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS in England. Before bringing a complaint to us, you should complain to the NHS organisation you are unhappy with (for example, your GP or hospital).

Here are some tips to help you do this.

# Top tips

## 1. Make your complaint clear

Work out what you want to say, including:

- what happened
- who was involved
- when it happened
- where it happened
- how it has affected you or someone else.

## 2. Decide what you hope to achieve

Be prepared to tell the NHS organisation what you would like it to do to put things right. This could be to apologise or to take action to prevent the same mistake happening again.

## 3. Complain as soon as you can

It's best to complain as soon as possible if you can while events are still fresh in your mind.

Complaints should normally be made within 12 months of the date of the event that you're complaining about or as soon as the matter first came to your attention.

#### **4. Contact the NHS organisation you want to complain about**

If you can speak to the people involved first, they may be able to sort out your complaint quickly.

If you're not sure who you need to contact, your local Healthwatch can help.

To find your local Healthwatch, visit [www.healthwatch.co.uk/find-local-healthwatch](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/find-local-healthwatch)

#### **5. Ask about the organisation's complaints procedure**

You may be able to complain by talking to someone, or you might need to put your complaint in writing. Ask if there is a form to fill in, and when you can expect to hear back.

#### **6. Ask for help**

If you need some help with making your complaint, you can get in touch with your local advocacy provider. Advocacy providers support anyone who wants to make a complaint about the NHS.

Visit [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) and search for 'health complaints advocacy providers' to find a contact who can offer support in your area. If you need help finding an advocacy provider, you can also contact us on 0345 015 4033.

## **7. Keep to the point**

Keep your complaint clear and short, so your main points stand out. State clearly what you want to achieve from your complaint.

## **8. Include your contact details**

Tell the organisation how you would like it to contact you and include a reference number if you have one.

## **9. Keep a note of anyone involved in your complaint**

Write down the names and positions of the people involved in, and dealing with, your complaint. Also keep copies of any letters or emails you get, as you may need to refer to them in the future.

## **10. Contact us**

If you have reached the end of the complaints process and you still don't feel that the issue has been resolved, or if your complaint hasn't been dealt with after six months, you can complain to us.

For more information on making a complaint to the NHS in England or For more information on making a complaint to the NHS in England or to make a complaint to us, visit:

[www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk) or call 0345 015 4033.

For other languages or formats please contact us:  
[publications@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:publications@ombudsman.org.uk)