

Gaddum ... Advocacy

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy (IHCA)

Writing a complaint letter to the NHS

This guide will assist you in writing a
formal NHS complaint.



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Who do I send my complaint to?

Every NHS service in England must have their own complaints procedure. You can often find information in waiting rooms, at reception, on the service provider's website, or by asking a member of staff.

With any NHS complaint, you have the choice to either send to the NHS service directly, or to the commissioner of the service.

If your complaint is about a hospital, mental health service provider, community services provider or ambulance service, complaints can be made to the NHS Trust responsible for that service. You can contact the Complaints Manager (usually based within the PALS Team) or the Chief Executive of the Trust.

Or you can contact your local clinical commissioning group (CCG) for complaints about these services. In Manchester this service is provided by Manchester Feedback and Complaints Service.



Note: Contact details for Manchester Feedback and Complaints Service and Greater Manchester based Hospital Trusts can be found at the end of this booklet.

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Who do I send my complaint to?

If your complaint is about a GP Practice, Dental Practice, Opticians or Pharmacy, you can complain directly to the service provider themselves. You can ask to speak to the Practice Manager to raise your concerns verbally, in writing or via email.

If you don't feel able to raise your complaint directly to the provider of the service, you can direct your complaint to the commissioner of Primary Care Services which is NHS England.

If your complaint is about an independent NHS contractor you can ask them for the details of how to make a complaint or approach the relevant commissioner. The organisation you wish to complain about should be able to tell you who this is.

It is important to understand that you can take your complaint to the service directly OR to the commissioner. You are not able to do both.



TIP: You may want to obtain a copy of the local complaints procedure from the service provider as this will set out who is responsible for what and how the system works locally.



Note: Contact details for NHS England can be found at the end of this booklet.

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What to include in a letter:

The letter should clearly outline your complaint and ask for it to be investigated under the NHS Complaints Procedure. If you are writing on behalf of someone else who is a patient, rather than for yourself, you must show that you have the patient's permission (where appropriate).

You can use a paragraph like the one below to request an investigation under the NHS Complaints Regulations:

“ I wish to raise a complaint in line with current formal NHS complaint procedures regarding the care and treatment that (name of patient) received at/from (name of NHS Service) ”

What if my complaint is about more than one NHS service?

In the event of a complaint about more than one organisation – perhaps a complaint that includes issues about your GP, local hospital and ambulance service – you'll only need to make one complaint.

The organisation that receives your complaint must then co-operate with the others to ensure you receive a coordinated response. To request this, you can use a paragraph like the one below:

“ I understand in accordance with regulation 9 of the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, where the episode of care relates to more than one NHS healthcare professional, there is duty upon the NHS to co-operate and co-ordinate the complaints handling and ensure a coordinated response is provided. ”

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Tips on writing and sending the complaint letter

Be brief

- Be careful not to lose your main points in a long letter
- If the complaint is long and complex, consider using a timeline of events if your complaint covers a number of months or requires a lot of detail. You can list your questions and issues separately. Bullet points can be a helpful way to list issues.

Be clear

- Use short sentences.
- Don't be afraid to say what has upset you, but avoid aggressive or accusing language.
- Don't repeat yourself.
- You could group issues together by theme to organise your letter e.g. Medication, attitude etc.
- Where you can remember, use names of staff & dates.

Be constructive

- Your complaint is an opportunity to improve things.
- Put your concerns politely, but firmly.
- Explain what you would like to achieve as a result of your complaint. For example—an apology, an explanation, a service improvement, change to policy or procedure.
- Include a contact number on your letter to enable the NHS organisation to contact you should they need clarification on any issues you have raised. You can also state in your letter if you would like to have a meeting with the NHS to discuss your complaint
- Some people choose to share their experiences when they feel they have received good care and treatment.

Keep note

- Keep a copy of letters/emails you send and receive. Make a note of phone call date/time and names of people you spoke to.

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Before you send your letter

- Read it to make sure you are happy with the content and that it includes everything you want to say.
- Sign at the end of your letter to avoid delays with the investigation.
- Add in the date that you send the letter
- Keep a copy of your letter to refer back to when reviewing your response. It could be helpful to keep a log of any contact you have with the NHS about your complaint including names of staff you have spoken to, any relevant dates and agreed actions.



What happens after I have sent my letter?

- You can expect an acknowledgement letter within 3 working days of the NHS receiving your letter. This will usually give you the name of the Case Manager dealing with your complaint.
- Each NHS body will have their own complaints policy—it may be worth requesting a copy of their policy to check what their stated timeframe to respond is.
- Most NHS bodies usually give a timeframe of 25 working days and 60 working days for more complex complaints.
- If the NHS can't meet this agreed date, they should contact you to discuss and agree a new timeframe.
- You can contact the allocated Case Manager/Complaints Manager at any stage during the process to discuss your complaint.

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COMPLAINT TEMPLATE LETTER

Your name & address and contact details

Tel number

Email

[This is where the address of the NHS
Organisation will go)

[add in the date that you write/send the letter]

Dear [Chief Executive name/Complaints Manager/Complaints Department],

Re: NHS Complaint – name and dob of patient

I wish to raise a complaint in line with current NHS complaint procedures regarding the care and treatment patient name received at name of hospital/GP surgery/dental practice

I have detailed below the circumstances and sequence of events that have led to the submission of this complaint.

Details specific to my complaint

[This is the section that you would detail your experience and what your complaint is about. Include any details specific to the complaint such as any dates, names and other details that you are aware of. You may also wish to consider any specific questions that are relevant to your complaint. It can be helpful to make the questions stand out. You could do this by using bullet points, numbered points, writing them in bold etc.]

The outcomes I am seeking are:

- [list here the outcomes that you are looking for through the complaints process e.g. apology, explanation, change of policy/procedures, service improvement]

I look forward to receiving an acknowledgement to this letter to discuss the manner in which my complaint will be handled and the response time within which the investigation is likely to be completed.

Yours sincerely

Your name

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Contact details for Greater Manchester based Hospital Trusts

Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Post: Customer Care, Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Prestwich Site, Knowsley Building, Bury New Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 3BL

Tel: 0800 587 4793

Landline: 0161 358 0600

Email: CustomerCare@gmmh.nhs.uk

Website: <https://www.gmmh.nhs.uk/customer-care>

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

PoPost: Chief Executive, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, Cobbett House, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9WL

Tel: 0161 276 8686

Email: complaints@mft.nhs.uk

Website: <https://mft.nhs.uk/mri/patients-visitors/patient-experience/making-a-complaint/>

Northern Care Alliance NHS Group

Post: The Complaints Department, IM&T Building, North Manchester General Hospital, Delaunays Road, Crumpsall, Manchester, M8 5RB

Tel: 0161 604 5800

Email: complaintsoffice.trust@pat.nhs.uk

Website: <https://www.pat.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/complaints.htm>

Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

Post: Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust Headquarters, Complaints Department, 225 Old Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, OL6 7SR

Tel: 0161 716 3083

Email: complaints.penninecare@nhs.net

Website: <https://www.penninecare.nhs.uk/contact/compliments-and-complaints>

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Useful contacts

NHS England

Post: NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT

Tel: 0300 311 22 33

Email: england.contactus@nhs.net ('For the attention of the complaints team' is to be included in the subject line)

Website: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>

Manchester Feedback and Complaints Service

Post: Manchester City Council, PO Box 532, Town Hall, Manchester, M60 2LA

Tel: 0161 953 8388

Email: nhscomplaints@manchester.gov.uk

Website: <https://manchesterccg.nhs.uk/contact/comments-and-complaints/>

Healthwatch Manchester

Post: Canada House, 3 Chepstow Street, Manchester, M1 5FW

Email: info@healthwatchmanchester.co.uk

Tel: 0161 228 1344

Website: <https://www.healthwatchmanchester.co.uk/>

Information Commissioners Office (ICO)

Post: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: casework@ico.org.uk

How to contact us:

Gaddum

6 Great Jackson Street

Manchester

M15 4AX



advocacy@gaddum.org.uk



gaddum.org.uk



0161 834 6069

Monday to Friday 9 am - 5 pm