

Making a Complaint

Most concerns and complaints you'll have with service providers can be best resolved informally but if you have attempted that and your efforts have been blocked or things have not changed you may feel that your only option is to make a formal written complaint. You might feel reluctant or afraid to do this, particularly if you have been refused a service, but if you are unhappy with the way you have been treated and the decisions made in your care you have the right to complain.

You can use our Letter Writing Tips resource and the Complaint Letter Writing Worksheet in this toolkit. Make sure you make your complaint within 12 months of the incident/action/decision that you wish to complain about.

Complaint procedures vary from organisation to organisation but more usually they have a staged process with time limits within which the service will acknowledge and respond to your complaint in writing. If the organisation is unable to meet those time limits they should inform you of that.

As part of the investigation of your complaint the allocated investigator may well ask to meet/speak to you – it is your choice as to whether to do this or not. In the case of complaints to an NHS health trust the investigator will be a senior manager from within the organisation.

PALS: Patient Advice & Liaison Services – these services form part of all NHS hospital trusts and they're there to support you with any concerns and issues you have with the hospital services you are receiving. They can help you make complaints.

What can I expect if I complain?

You should:

- Have your complaint acknowledged and properly looked into
- Be kept informed of progress and told the outcome
- Be treated fairly, politely and with respect
- Be reassured that your care and treatment will not be affected as a result of making a complaint
- Be offered the opportunity to discuss the complaint with a complaints manager
- Expect appropriate action to be taken following your complaint

NHS England

The NHS Constitution

The NHS Constitution sets out your rights as a patient, and explains the commitments the NHS has made to providing you with a high quality service. Organisations providing NHS care must take account of the NHS Constitution when treating you, so you may find it helpful to refer to it if you are thinking about making a complaint.

Unhappy with the outcome of your complaint?

If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the NHS health trust's complaints service and would like to take the matter further, you can contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) which makes final decisions on unresolved complaints about the NHS in England. It is an independent service which is free for everyone to use. To take your complaint to the Ombudsman, visit the PHSO website or call: 0345 015 4033.

If you don't want to complain to the NHS health trust about one of their services you could complain to your area's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). If you're unhappy with the response you receive to your complaint to the CCG and feel that your issue has not been properly addressed then you can complain to NHS England about them.

Top Tips on Writing a Formal Complaint about an NHS Service

- Follow our Letter Writing Tips!
- Follow your NHS health trust's complaints process - it should be on their website and if you don't have access to the internet ask for a copy to be sent to you.
- Make it clear in your letter that you are making a formal complaint.
- Include in your letter any steps you have taken to resolve the issue informally.
- Be brief and concise - only include information that is relevant to the current issue - what happened, the name and role of who was involved - remember to include dates and make reference to and enclose any relevant documents.
- Explain how what has happened or the decisions made have impacted on you and your OCD/BDD.
- Be polite! You may well be angry and upset but it is best not to use the complaints process to threaten a member of staff or to use offensive language.
- Be clear about what you want to happen as a result of your complaint but be realistic! It is unlikely that the Trust will agree to sack anyone on the basis of your complaint or provide you with a live-in therapist. You will not gain financial compensation as a result of a formal NHS complaint. But it is reasonable for example to ask for an apology for poor practice and communication, for a decision to be reconsidered or a procedure to be changed.

Self Advocacy Worksheet 7 – Complaint Letter Writing Worksheet

CONTACT OF PERSON & ADDRESS TO SEND COMPLAINT TO

(Check complaints procedure for this)

DATE

Dear NAME

I am writing to make a formal complaint aboutWHO? – A PERSON/A SERVICE?

WHAT HAPPENED? GIVE SPECIFIC DATES, PLACES or MAKE REFERENCE TO LETTERS / DOCUMENTS YOU RECEIVED / SENT

HOW HAS THIS IMPACTED ON YOU?

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO TRY TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE INFORMALLY? WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

WHAT DO YOU WANT IN RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINT? E.g. an apology? A service? A review of a decision?

IF THE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE HAS TIMESCALES FOR RESPONSES YOU COULD MAKE REFERENCE TO THEM

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE CONTACTED? E.g. email, letter?

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely/faithfully – see Letter Writing Tips!

SIGNATURE

CC – who else are you sending the letter to? E.g. your GP – put their name here