









Writing a complaint letter



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Who you should complain to



If you decide to make a complaint, you have to contact your local service. You will usually speak to the Complaints Manager.



If you want to complain about an ambulance service, you can complain to the Hospital's Complaints Manager.



If you want to complain about a doctor or dentist, you can complain to the person who runs the surgery. They are usually called the Practice Manager.

You need to tell the Complaints Manager everything you are not happy with.



If you are not sure who to complain to, you can ask a member of NHS staff. You can also talk to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who will be able to tell you.



Or you can call the NHS Complaints Advocacy Service at VoiceAbility. Then we can help you find out who is the right person to speak to.



The same problem might involve lots of NHS services. If this is the case, you only need to complain to one of the services.

They will talk to other services that you are unhappy with. They will give answers for all the different services.

Writing your letter



Your letter should tell the Complaints Manager what you are not happy about.

You should be very clear about:



- What happened.
- What you want done about it.

Say in the letter that you want your complaint to be looked into.



Are you writing a letter for someone else?

You need to get permission from that person to say that they are happy for you to make a complaint for them.



There is a consent form in this self help pack that you could use.



What you should include in your letter

You should **always** include:



- Your address and telephone number



- The name of the person you are writing about and their Date of Birth

- What you are unhappy about.

- The name of the person you want to complain about.

- The name of the place or service that you want to complain about.

- The dates of when you used the service.



You **might** need to include:



- A consent form. This is needed if you are writing the letter for someone else. If you cannot get consent because someone is too ill or too young, say this.

- Information from other people. This is important if you cannot remember everything.

- A diary of when things happened, if you have one.



Say what you have already done to try and make things better. This could have been speaking to NHS staff or PALS.



Ask any questions you want.

Say what you want to happen. For example that:



- The Complaints Manager tells you they got your letter.
- Your complaint is being looked into.
- A report is being written.
- The service says why things went wrong.
- The service says sorry.
- The service changes something about how they work.





Helpful Tips

Keep your letter short

- Your letter should not be more than 2 pages long.
- Make sure the main things you are complaining about are very clear.
- If your complaint is very long, attach a diary of the things that happened.



Make your letter very clear

- Use short sentences.
- Do not say the same things again and again.
- Say what you are unhappy about.



Be polite

- Do not be aggressive or threatening.



Say what you want to happen as a result of your complaint. This could be the NHS service saying sorry. Or it could be the NHS service making things better for people who use the service.



Keep a copy of your letter

- Always keep a copy of letters that you write.
- Always keep a copy of any emails that you write.
- Make notes about any telephone calls about the complaint.



Documents that you send

- Take a photocopy of any documents that you need to send.
- Make sure that you keep the original.
- Send the Complaints Manager the photocopy.



Make sure that your letter gets there

You can send a letter by a special Royal Mail service called guaranteed or recorded delivery. Your local post office should be able to help you make sure that your letter gets there.

This is an example of a complaints letter

Mrs A Smith
1 The Avenue,
Yourtown,
AT1 2AB
Tel: 010 232 3205

Helen Clarke
The Complaints Manager
Petersfield Surgery
4 Main Street
Yourtown
AT1 2CD

30 March 2013

Dear Helen Clarke

RE: NHS Complaint – Mrs A Smith, DOB 19 May 1963

I am writing to complain about the way I have been treated by Dr Hayton at Petersfield Surgery.

I was seen by Dr Hayton 3 times, on 26 April 2012, 31 May 2012 and 13 December 2012. He did not examine me or do any tests. I feel that he did not listen to me when I said how bad I felt. He said that I was feeling bad because of stress. He said that I should just take things easy.

I was feeling so unwell and what he said upset me. I do not think he really listened to me. I was worried so I made an appointment to see another doctor in the practice. I do not know his name but it will be in my notes.

This doctor examined me on 8 January 2013 and arranged for tests to be done. The tests showed that I am diabetic. I was given medication and a special diet and I am now feeling much better.

During the period from April 2012 to January 2013, however, I suffered with several infections, sleepless nights and I was very distressed.

I have tried to talk to Dr Hayton about how I feel but he does not listen to me.

I would like the following questions answered.

1. Do I feel worse because I had to wait for a long time to find out I was diabetic?
2. Why did Dr Hayton not order any tests?

Along with answers to my questions, I would now like:

- You to review Doctor Hayton's attitude to patients.
- Doctor Hayton to explain why he did not listen to me or examine me.
- Doctor Hayton to say sorry about the unnecessary stress and poor health I suffered because of his inadequate care.
- To know what arrangements the practice has to make sure that all doctors listen to their patients properly.

I have had very good care from the doctors at the practice in the past, in particular from Doctor Conner until he retired. I was then moved to Dr Hayton. I would like to become confident again in the care provided by the practice.

I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my complaint, following the NHS Complaints Regulations.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Smith

What happens next?



Hopefully you will get a quick answer that you are happy with from the NHS service.

If this does not happen, the NHS Complaints Manager should:



- Write to you or phone you within 3 working days to say they have got your complaint. Working days are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.



- Look at your complaint. If they can solve the problem straight away, they will write to you and tell you what they are going to do.



- If they cannot solve the problem straight away, they will contact you and tell you. They will tell you if they need more information. This might be information you can give them. Or it might be information that they need to get from other people. They should tell you:

- **What** they are going to do.
- **When** they are going to do it.



The Complaints Manager can give you information to help you make a complaint. They might give you information so you can contact an NHS Complaints Advocate.



Helpline Number: 0300 330 5454



Textphone Number: 0786 002 2939



Fax Number: 0330 088 3762



NHS Complaints Advocacy
VoiceAbility,
Mount Pleasant House,
Huntingdon Road,
Cambridge, CB3 0RN



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