

Health Complaints Advocacy



Writing and sending a complaint letter

A 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 who is a patient, rather than for yourself, you must show that you have the patient's permission.

Helpful tips

Be brief

- try to keep your complaint to no more than two pages
- be careful not to lose your main points in a long letter
- if the complaint is long and complex, attach a log sheet or diary of events with details

Be clear and straightforward

- use short sentences
- don't be afraid to say what has upset you, but avoid aggressive or accusing language
- try not to repeat yourself

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. E.g. an apology, an explanation, a service improvement, any other remedy
- changes in procedure

Keep copies

- keep a copy of all letters sent and received in date order

Send photocopies of documents, not originals

- keep the original documents in your possession

Make sure your letter is received

- consider sending it by guaranteed or recorded delivery post

What happens next?

You should receive a letter of acknowledgement within three working days.

The NHS should contact you to discuss your complaint and arrange a plan to resolve your concerns with you. This means that they will discuss how best to resolve your concerns and what you hope to achieve from raising them. They should also agree with you a timescale for resolving the issues and keep you informed of progress. The suggested timescales can be influenced by things like how many staff they need to speak to, how easy it is for them to access your medical records and whether other NHS organisations are involved in your complaint. If there is a problem in keeping to this timescale they should contact you before it expires to agree an amended timescale.

If your complaint involves a service that is provided in partnership with the NHS, such as some Social Services there is a separate complaints procedure for Social Services. In these cases you may need more support, **so do not hesitate to contact Advocacy for All.**

Although Advocacy for All can only help with NHS complaints, we will point you in the right direction of where to get help with the parts of your complaint that involve a non NHS organisation. You will only need to send a letter to one of the organisations who will liaise with the others involved and provide you with a co-ordinated response.

Example framework for a first letter of complaint

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

**Insert your address
and telephone number**

The Complaints Manager (name if known)

Followed by the name and address
of their organisation

- GP/Clinical Commissioning Group
- Dental Surgery
- Hospital Trust or
- NHS Commissioning Board

Date:

Dear

Re: NHS Complaint – Complainant's Name, Date of Birth

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

OR *[if you are acting on behalf of the patient]*

I am writing on behalf of [.....insert name of patient], and
I enclose their written agreement to act on their behalf.

*[If the patient is unable to give consent for example, if they are
too young, ill or deceased, then you should explain this].*

Describe

- *what happened*
- *when, and*
- *where*

[If you have a log sheet or list of events, you can attach this as a separate sheet and refer to this here].

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

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

- *Put the most important matters first*
- *Explain why you are not satisfied*
- *Be clear and brief*
- *Number or bullet your points*
- *Ask the questions you would like the answers to and list them in order of importance*

As a result of this complaint, I would now like:

Say what you want to achieve, for example,

- an explanation of what happened
- an apology
- action by a named person.

I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns and provide a response in accordance with the NHS Complaints Procedure.

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Yours sincerely *(if you have written to a specific named person)*

OR

Yours faithfully *(If you have not written to a specific named person)*

Your signature

Print your name

cc. Other party *If you are sending copies of your letter to other parties, show this here*

Complaint letter, sample

32 The Street,
Anytown,
AT4 2AB
Tel: 01234 658789

June Brown
The Complaints Manager
The Old Surgery
2 The Paddock
Anytown AT2 2CD

Date

Dear June Brown

Re: NHS Complaint - Mrs A Thomas, DOB 19 July 1959

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

I was seen by Dr Jones three times, on 30 April 2012, 15 May 2012 and 10 December 2012. He did not examine me or do any tests. I feel that he did not take my symptoms seriously and said my problem was due to stress and that I should take things easy.

I was feeling so unwell and found his attitude upsetting as he did not seem to take me seriously. 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 16th January 2013 and arranged for some tests to be carried out.

These showed that I was diabetic. I was prescribed 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 raise my concerns with Dr Jones but he would not listen to me.

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

1. Is my medical condition poorer as a result of my diabetes not being detected and diagnosed by Dr Jones on previous appointments?

2. Why did Dr Jones not order any tests?

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

- Dr Jones' attitude to patients to be reviewed
- Dr Jones to explain why he did not listen to me or examine me
- an apology from him for the unnecessary stress and poor health I suffered because of his inadequate care
- to know what arrangements the practice has for reviewing the listening skills of the doctors.

I have had very good care from the practice in the past, in particular from Dr Allen until he retired. I was then moved to Dr Jones. I would like to regain confidence in the care provided by the practice.

I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns in accordance with the NHS Complaints Regulations.

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Yours sincerely
Mrs A Thomas