



Making an NHS Complaint

If you are unhappy about any aspect of NHS care or treatment, or have a complaint about Public Health provision you or others have received, you can raise your concerns about it. This sheet will give you all the information you need to know to get you started. Should you require any assistance with this, please contact us for help and any support needed.

Before you start this process, you may wish to:

- Think about what you are unhappy about
- Think about whether you have a complaint or an enquiry
- Check that your complaint is within the time limits
- Think about why you are making a complaint and what you would like to happen as a result of your complaint, and;
- Check that your complaint can be pursued through the NHS complaints process or as a Public Health complaint

Raising concerns:

If your concern is regarding something that can be resolved quickly, i.e. by the following day, you may wish to speak directly to the member of staff involved, their manager or speak with PALS. For more information about this, please see the sheet on [“Enquiry or Complaint”](#)

Time Limits

The NHS Complaints Regulations state a complaint must be made within 12 months of the incident happening, or within 12 months of you realising you have something to complain about. A complaint may be accepted outside of this if the body you are complaining to is satisfied that you had good reason for not making the complaint sooner, and they feel it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

What cannot be pursued through the complaints process?

- Compensation for clinical negligence
- Disciplinary action against an NHS Staff member
- Complaints about privately funded treatment
- Complaints about organisations which are not NHS funded.

For more information about the above please see the sheet [“Other Useful Agencies.”](#)

Once you have considered the above, you may wish to make a note of your complaint and what you want to achieve as simply and clearly as you can. This will help you to keep focused during the complaints process, and will be something you can refer back to later to help you to decide if the actions taken have answered your complaint.

The NHS Complaints Process

There are two stages to the NHS complaints process, these stages are detailed below.

Stage One – Local Resolution

Local resolution is the first stage of the NHS complaints process. Local resolution gives you the opportunity to explain what it is you are unhappy about and what you would like to happen and it gives the NHS organisation or Public Health provider the opportunity to investigate your concerns and where appropriate, use your experience to improve local services.

How to make a complaint

- 1) You can complain **verbally**, either in person or over the telephone. The NHS Complaints regulations state that if a complaint is made verbally, the NHS organisation must make a written record of the complaint and provide you with a copy of this.
- 2) You can complain in **writing**, by letter or by email. This should be addressed to the person in charge, perhaps the Chief Executive Officer, Senior Partner or Practice Manager. Public Health complaints would initially be made to the commissioned Provider or using the LA Complaints Procedure which would then escalate to the Local Govt Ombudsman. For information on how to write your complaint please see the handout on [“Writing a complaint letter.”](#)

What happens next?

Acknowledgement - The NHS body or Public Health provider should contact you, either by phone or in writing, to acknowledge your complaint within three working days of them receiving it. When they do so they should let you know who will be investigating it, how long this should take and how they will be replying to you.

Investigation - The NHS organisation should now carry out an investigation into your concerns. At this stage they may speak with the staff members involved and look into your medical records.

Response - Once the investigation is complete, the NHS body or service provider should send you a written response which includes

- An explanation of how your complaint has been handled
- What conclusions have been reached
- What action, if needed, has been taken
- Information about Stage 2 of the complaint procedure

During this first stage of the complaints procedure you may be offered/you can request a meeting to discuss your concerns in person. For more information, please see the sheet "[Guidance on local resolution meetings.](#)" In addition, if you do not feel all your concerns have been addressed you can go back to the NHS body and request either further written responses or further meetings. Each complaint should be looked at individually and responded to in a way the Trust feels meets your needs and resolves your concerns.

Local resolution ends when either you are happy with the response you have received, or the Trust feel there is nothing further they can do. At the end of local resolution, if you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint or the way in which your complaint has been handled, you can make a submission to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), or in the case of a Public Health complaint the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

Stage two – The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) or Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

You have the right to take your complaint to the Ombudsman if you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with. The Ombudsman is Independent of the NHS and their primary function is to review the way your complaint has been handled. This is the second and final stage.

If you want to make a submission to their offices, you will need to complete their form 'making a complaint'. You need to send this to them, with copies of all letters about your complaint. For more about the Ombudsman and how to make a complaint to them, please see "[Ombudsman Information](#)".

You can access support from an advocate at any stage of the complaints process.

Enquiry or Complaint?

Making a complaint can be complicated, from the process followed to the language people use. It can also be a lengthy process and so it is important to decide what you want to complain about, and what you are hoping to achieve before getting started.

The NHS take all comments made about their services seriously, whether these are good or bad. However, you might feel like you just need some information or have a simple question which needs answering. In most NHS organisations there will be a PALS office which may be able to help with enquiries such as these. PALS is the Patient Advice and Liaison Service, and their role is to ensure that the NHS listens to patients, their relatives, carers and friends, and answers their questions and resolves their concerns as quickly as possible.

There is no distinction between a formal or informal complaint within the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, and all issues raised as such should be investigated and responded to in writing.

So what do you do if you're unhappy, but don't want to make a complaint?

Speak to PALS

The problem needs sorting NOW!	⇒	Speak to PALS
I want a copy of my medical records	⇒	Make a subject access request
I don't want this to happen to anyone else	⇒	Make a complaint
I need an appointment rearranging	⇒	Speak to PALS
Systems in the hospital need changing	⇒	Make a complaint
The issue cannot be resolved by PALS	⇒	Make a complaint



Writing a complaint letter

If you have decided to make your complaint in writing, this guide may help you to put this together and plan the details you want to include.

Who can complain? - The NHS Complaints Regulations state that anyone can complain, either about the treatment they have received personally, but also about the care provided to a friend or family member. This is detailed as, “A person who is affected, or is likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of the responsible body which is the subject of the complaint.” Most organisations will seek consent from you to investigate the concerns raised, but also to consult the medical records, as these are confidential. This is usually a form sent out through the post for you to sign.

Be aware - An NHS body can request consent from the patient to investigate and release details to the complainant. This is because some of the information may be very personal and so is covered under the Data Protection Act. If it is not possible to provide this, the organisation may not be able to provide a complete response, but should still be able to investigate issues, and provide a letter which answers things generally, and does not provide any private or specific details about the patient. If you already have this consent, or the patient has died, it might be a good idea to include this in your original letter.

A complaint can also be made about Public Health provision where an individual has been affected either personally, or again, if a friend or family member has.

Who to complain to: - Complaints in writing should be ideally addressed to the person in charge of the organisation or the service provider. This might be the Chief Executive Officer if it is a large Hospital or Mental Health Trust, or could be a Senior Partner or Practice Manager if you are unhappy with the care provided by a GP, Dentist, Optician or Pharmacist. You can also complain to a Ward Manager, Matron, or to the Complaints Department if you would prefer.

If you are not sure who to complain to, information can usually be found by telephoning the organisation or on the Trust website. You could also discuss this with an advocate who can explain your options clearly.

Writing and sending the complaint letter - You might have already thought about the issues you want to include in your letter. The letter should clearly outline your complaint and should ask for it to be investigated under the NHS Complaints Procedure. Below are some tips for putting your letter together;

- Make it clear who the complaint is about – use the full name of the patient, and make sure you insert their date of birth, so they can be easily identified.
- Try to keep your letter concise and to the point – sometimes issues can get lost in a long account which describes what happened in great detail.

- If your complaint spans many months or needs a lot of detail, perhaps use a time line, or diary of events to structure your letter, and list your questions and issues separately.
- Be factual and avoid aggressive language or comments which could be classed as offensive.
- Try to avoid repeating yourself - make your point and then move on to the next issue.
- You could group issues together by theme to organise your letter – e.g. Medication, Cleanliness, Attitude, Discharge
- Ask definite questions and for the organisation to investigate specific issues or episodes.

Do not be afraid to say what has upset you, and explain what you would like to achieve as a result of your complaint. You can then use this as an opportunity to make suggestions for how they can improve services, request to make changes to organisational policies and processes as well as explanations or an apology.

You could also include a contact telephone number in the letter, so the NHS body can easily contact you if there is something that requires explanation or they wish to discuss your letter at all. It might also be an idea to detail in the letter if you would like to have a meeting to discuss your complaint before receiving a written response.

Before you send it:

Read the letter again to make sure that everything you want to say is included. Make sure you sign it at the end of the letter; otherwise this may cause a delay in the organisation starting their investigation. Keep a copy for you to refer to later – this will be useful for you to compare your response to. It might also help to keep a copy of all letters sent and received, in date order. You could use the log included in this guide to help with this. You may wish to send your letter by recorded delivery, so you can be sure that this has been received.

Complaints about more than one NHS body

If your complaint is regarding more than one NHS organisation, you can either send separate complaints to the different organisations, or if you wish you can send all your concerns in one letter.

If you decide to send one letter – Send your letter to one NHS organisation and ask them to co-operate to provide a co-ordinated response with the others involved. They should then communicate with the other bodies concerned with your complaint, investigate and provide a combined response. It is also a good idea to state that you give your permission or consent for your complaint to be shared with the other organisations and health professionals. If you prefer, you can send a copy of your letter to each NHS organisation involved asking them to speak to each other and provide a response together. If you are unsure if this option is for you, then speak to an advocate who will be able to provide you with more information so you can make your decision.

Example framework for a first letter of complaint

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Insert your address

The person in charge/ Chief Executive Officer (name if known)

Followed by the name and address
of their organisation

- GP surgery
- Dental Surgery
- Hospital Trust or
- Primary Care Trust

Date

Dear....

RE: NHS Complaint – Complainant name, Date of Birth

I am writing to complain about the treatment I received at **[place where treatment was received]** on **[date of incident/period of treatment]**. If you are writing on behalf of the patient, add this in here, and explain the relationship between you and why they cannot complain.

Describe

- What happened
- When
- Where

If you have kept a diary, a log sheet or list of events, you can use this to make the body of your letter or you can attach this as a separate sheet and refer to this here. Explain what, if anything, you have already done to try to 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 happen, for example:

- an explanation of what happened
- a change in a process or policy
- an action to remedy the problem you experienced
- an apology

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this letter. I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns and provide a response in accordance with the NHS Complaints Procedure. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Yours sincerely (if you have named the Complaints Lead)

Or, Yours faithfully (if you have started the letter 'Dear Sir')

Your signature

Print your name

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

Complaint letter sample

1 The Avenue,
Anytown,
AT1 2AB
Tel: 01234 5678910

Jane Smith
The Complaints Manager
The Old Surgery
2 The Street
Anytown
AT1 2CD
.... Date2013

Dear Jane Smith

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

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 26th April, 31st May and 13th December. 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 8th January and arranged for tests. 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 2008 to January 2009, 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.

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:

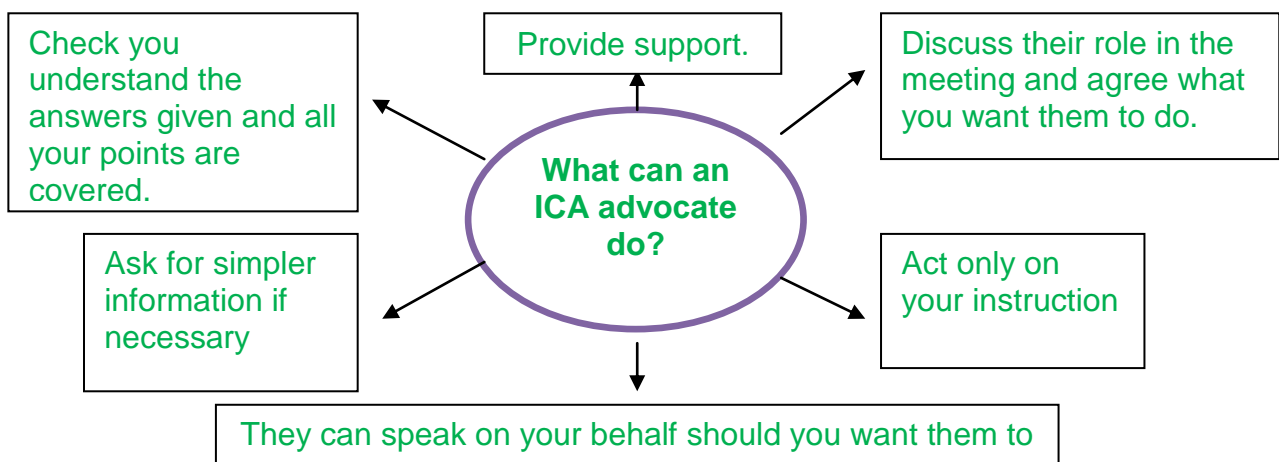
- Dr Jones' attitude to patients to be reviewed
- Dr Jones to explain why he did not listen to me or examine me
- An apology from him for the unnecessary stress and poor health I suffered because of his inadequate care
- To know what arrangements the practice has for reviewing the listening skills of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

Yours sincerely
Mrs A Smith

What to expect from a Local Resolution Meeting

A Local Resolution Meeting (LRM) is often offered as part of the complaint process, to provide an opportunity to answer any questions or provide further discussions or explanations face to face. Some clients can find these a daunting prospect, so the points below are intended to provide you with a short guide for what to expect from your meeting, which can be discussed further with your advocate.



Meetings can be distressing, so should you get upset or get frustrated, the advocate will ask for a break.

Should I prepare an Agenda?

Most complaints teams will ask for an agenda or a list of points which you would like to discuss. This can seem like an enormous task, especially if your complaint is very complicated, or involves multiple clinicians or departments. However, there are some benefits to drafting an agenda:

- The complaints team can make sure the right people attend the meeting
- Detailed answers or explanations can be given, and medical records referred to as there has been time to prepare
- An agenda can be used to keep the meeting focused

Your advocate can help you to draft an agenda for any meetings which might be arranged.

- You may find it helpful to meet with them in the weeks before this to go through your file and the letters you have sent and received.
- You can use this time to look at the answers or explanations you already have, and identify the issues that you remain unhappy with.
- If you feel unable to produce a list of specific points or questions, you could simply list any topics you wish to discuss or themes, as well as any specific incidents, or episodes of care.
- This would also be helpful to the NHS service provider, so they have some idea of your outstanding issues.

Consider though that without an agenda or some idea of the issues you wish to discuss, any detailed questions or points may not be answered in the time available. Quite some time may have passed since the care or treatment was provided, and as memories fade clinicians may need to consult the medical records.

What can I expect from the NHS body?

In most Local Resolution Meetings, a member of the complaints department will attend. Their role will differ depending on the NHS bodies process, and you or your advocate should check what they will be doing when the meeting starts. They may:

- Take verbatim minutes – although this is very rare, and it can take time for these to be typed into a transcript
- Take a summary of the complaint – this is more common and simply provides brief details of what was discussed and any action points agreed on
- The meeting may be recorded – in this instance you might be provided with a copy of this
- Someone from the NHS body should chair the meeting and ensure that it runs smoothly

Points to remember:

- ❖ An advocate will not take any notes or minutes, their role is simply to act as a support for you
- ❖ give the individuals time to answer
- ❖ try not to recap the information you sent the trust in your initial complaint letter
- ❖ elect a spokes person in your family who will raise your issues



Medical Records

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you have the right to see your medical records. Sometimes this is known as a Subject Access Request.

All NHS staff have a duty of confidentiality towards all patients and their records. Patient records are made by any NHS Service you use and would include;

GP Surgery	Clinic Staff
Dentist	Mental Health Services
Ambulance Service	District Nurses
Hospital Doctors	Hospital Nurses

These should store details of any care or treatment which has been provided such as;

Medication	X-rays and scans
Tests and results	Referrals and letters
Diagnosis	Consultations
Outpatient appointments	In Patient stays

Applying for your records:

- You have to apply to see your records, and some organisations have a form specially designed for this that you are asked to complete. Some larger Hospital Trusts may also have a special department dealing with such requests.
- Records should be made available within 40 days of applying to see them, or 21 days if they have been added to within the last 40 days.
- You can request someone to view your records with you and explain anything in there which is not easy to read or uses technical, medical language.
- You can request copies of the records, but must be aware that NHS Bodies can charge you up to £50 for the copying of paper based records.
- You can also request copies of electronic records held about you. The Information Commissioners Office state that this should cost no more than £10.

These charges are sometimes waived if they are requested in connection with a complaint, but you will need to check this with the individual organisation. To help reduce the cost and time this might take, it might be a good idea to think about the specific section of records you would be interested in. For example, you could request notes only from a specific department, or for a particular length of time.

What to do if you feel there is information missing or is incorrect: - It is not possible to have information removed or deleted from your medical records, unless of course these relate to another patient. However, you can ask to have information added to these, or to have your own comments inserted as an '**Addendum**'. This is something you will need to speak to the NHS Body about.

Obtaining records about someone else: - If you are obtaining records about someone else, the NHS Body will usually require the patient's permission in writing. This includes a parent or guardian applying to see the records of a child, if they are unable to understand these themselves. In this case, the NHS Body will decide if it is in the best interests of the child.

Where a patient is unable to give permission because of incapacity or illness, you may need to seek legal advice and a court authorisation. If you are a representative for them appointed by the court, you may be able to access their records, again, if it is considered to be in their best interests.

If you are seeking the records for a patient who has died, these can only be obtained by certain people. This is known as a Personal Representative and is usually an executor, or someone making a claim arising from the death.

If you do not fall into one of these categories, the NHS body will decide whether they will provide the records on a case by case basis. They will consider if you have a valid reason for requesting the notes, your relationship with the patient, as well as any wishes the patient may have expressed about other people viewing the notes.

***Be aware** - A patient can at any time instruct an organisation that their records are not to be shared under any circumstances. This is the patient's choice, and can apply when the records refer to someone who is deceased.*

The NHS Trust might decide that the notes cannot be shared as this could cause you distress, or damage the reputation of the person who has died. The organisation should consider the views of any surviving family, and make a decision using all the information available.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you have a right to see your own records unless:

1. Your doctor thinks that to do so would seriously harm you or another person to see the information contained.
Be aware, this refusal can apply to part of your records and there is no obligation to inform you of such a partial refusal. It is worth asking if any part of your records has not been made available if you are worried about this.
2. Providing them would involve "disproportionate effort" on the part of a Trust or GP Practice.
Be aware, Disproportionate effort is not defined, but the Data Protection Information Commissioner has warned against abusing this clause to block your access to your records.

An advocate cannot help you to access your medical records, or help you to understand these. But they can help you to use details from these in your letter of complaint, or when you are preparing for a meeting. Again, if you need further help or support you can contact us at any point.



The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, (PHSO) for NHS Complaints or the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for Public Health complaints, are the second and final stage of the complaints process. More information about the first stage Local Resolution can be found in the sheet "[Making an NHS Complaint](#)".

Who is the PHSO and what does she do?

The current Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman is currently Dame Julie Mellor, and her offices specifically undertake independent investigations into complaints that the NHS services in England has not acted properly or fairly, or has provided a poor service. The Ombudsman's office will, normally, only take on a complaint after efforts have been made to resolve the complaint locally, with the practice or trust, and a response has been received. It is the Ombudsman's view that a practice or trust should be given a chance to respond and, where appropriate, try to put things right, before they become involved.

Once a submission has been made to her offices, her team will investigate the way your complaint has been handled, considering three things known as *The Ombudsman's principles*. These are *Maladministration*, *Un-remedied Injustice* and if there will be a *Worthwhile Outcome*. It is highly unlikely that the Ombudsman will review your case herself, but she has a large team of assessors and clinical advisors who work on her behalf at offices in London and Manchester.

Completing the form

There is a form which should be completed for submissions to the Ombudsman's office which asks you to give a brief summary of the complaint so far. You may find it useful to speak to an advocate about this, to decide the issues you wish to include. Sometimes, you might decide that you want to draft a covering letter for the Ombudsman which outlines your issues and the progress the complaint has made. It is quite acceptable to write 'please see covering letter' rather than complete the various boxes on the form.

A submission should include copies of all relevant correspondence about the complaint. This might be letters of complaint, trust responses, meeting minutes, action plans or emails sent and received. These should be organised into date order and you can refer to the attached correspondence in Section 6 '*What was your original complaint...*'

The PHSO process

When a case is received at the PHSO it is assessed initially to see if it falls within their remit (i.e. is it a health complaint? has it already been raised with the service provider?) They will then go on to assess it using the three principles mentioned before: *Maladministration*, *Unremedied Injustice* and if there will be a *Worthwhile Outcome* of them accepting it for investigation.

What happens now?

Once a complaint has been submitted, it should be acknowledged within 5 working days. This letter should also say who will be managing the response, and give a reference number to quote in future correspondence or on the phone. It might be a good idea to make a note of this for future reference. This will then be passed on to an assessor who may telephone you to discuss your complaint and should write to you to say if the case has been accepted for further investigation or not within **40 days** of it being received at their offices.

The case is accepted for investigation

If the Ombudsman feels that the case has met the criteria, it will be allocated to a case manager for further investigation. For this, the PHSO will normally access the medical records for the patient, and may seek clinical advice or a second professional opinion. They may make recommendations for the trust, or they do have the capacity to make ex-gratia payments for inconvenience, hardship or to return the complainant to the position they were in before. They can also recommend that a service or trust compensate an individual and specify an amount. This is different to compensation for medical negligence, but the Ombudsman's helpline will be able to discuss this with you in more detail.

The case is refused for investigation by the PHSO

If a case is refused it may be for several reasons:

- It is Premature – Local resolution has not been exhausted
- The case falls outside of their remit i.e. Is about private treatment
- It is 'out of time' for approaching the PHSO – over 12 months since the incident you are complaining about
- The Ombudsman feels that the trusts have made every reasonable effort to resolve the complaint

So what happens if the Ombudsman decides not to investigate your case?

You can complain about a decision which has been made by the Ombudsman by approaching the Review Team. They will not consider a review of the complaint if you simply 'disagree' with their decision; a submission needs to be made to the review team detailing why you are unhappy or if there are things you think have not been considered fully. The Ombudsman's office complaints policy states that they will aim to respond to these issues within 16 weeks, but once received; the decision of the review team is final.

The end of the process

Once a case has reached this point, it has now completely exhausted the NHS Complaints Procedure, and can no longer be supported by an NHS complaints advocate. The only remaining option if you are unhappy would be to submit your case for *Judicial Review*. This is a legal process and is beyond the expertise of an advocate. You would need to seek the advice of a solicitor for this. A complaint cannot progress to Judicial Review without first appealing the decision of the PHSO through the review team.

Are there any exceptions?

You can approach the Ombudsman before your case has finished local resolution if there are exceptional circumstances, for example if you have been diagnosed with a terminal condition. This does not mean that they will investigate the complaint rather than the service provider, but they could try to speed up the process by contacting them and explaining the situation, or maybe even suggesting a remedy to the complaint, depending on the complexity or urgency of the case.

Who are the LGO?

The Local Government Ombudsman's office specifically undertakes independent investigations into complaints that there has been a failing in Public Health provision to individuals, or a poor service has been provided. The body complained about must have a chance to sort out the complaint before the LGO can consider it.

They can offer help and support via a helpline on **0300 061 0614**. It is open from 8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. (Calls to 03 numbers will cost no more than calls to national geographic numbers (starting 01 or 02) from both mobiles and landlines, and will be included as part of any inclusive call minutes or discount schemes in the same way as geographic calls.)



Other useful Agencies

Whilst making your complaint, you might find that you want to pursue other avenues or outcomes which lie outside the NHS Complaints process, such as disciplinary action. This short guide will act as an index of the agencies to approach and give you a brief outline of their role. Contacting these organisations or making a submission to them lies outside the remit of an advocate. The contact details for all the organisations below can be found in the leaflet “[Useful contacts and addresses](#)”.

The General Medical Council – GMC

The primary role of the GMC is to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public and ensuring standards of practise in medicine are met. They are the regulator of all doctors practicing in England, and maintain a register with details about behaviour, health or performance that could prevent them from doing their job. They will deal with concerns raised by members of the public who have doubts over a doctor’s fitness to practice, and you can approach them if you feel that a doctor requires disciplinary action.

They also work with medical schools to help devise the right curriculum and set the standards and values of doctors so they know how to behave with patients.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council – NMC

The NMC provide a similar role to that of the GMC. They set the standards for nurses and midwives to meet in their work, and have formulated a code of conduct which states how they must behave. Like the GMC, they also keep a register of all nurses and midwives in the UK and it is illegal to work as such without being on the NMC register. All nurses must prove annually that they fulfil the requirements for keeping their skills and knowledge up to date, and all midwives are supervised throughout their careers to ensure this. Any concerns about a nurses capabilities should be made to the NMC, and they will investigate and if necessary remove a nurse from the register for a period of time, or permanently if required.

The Health Professionals Council – HPC

The HPC is also a regulatory body set up to monitor a large number of other health care staff which you may come into contact with. They work to ensure a high standard of practise within the following professions;

Arts therapists, biomedical scientists, chiropodists, podiatrists, clinical scientists, dieticians, hearing aid dispensers, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, paramedics, physiotherapists, practitioner psychologists, prosthetists / orthotists, radiographers, speech and language therapists as well as social workers in England.

Should you have concerns regarding the fitness to practise of any of these, you can raise a complaint to the HPC. Action can be taken where necessary; including stopping someone from practising should there be sufficient concerns about their conduct.

General Dental Council - GDC

The GDC register dental professionals throughout the UK, including dentists, technicians, hygienists, dental nurses and orthodontists. They set the professional standards for them to follow and maintain a register of practitioners similar to the other regulatory bodies. Should you have concerns regarding a dentist's fitness to practice, you can approach them to raise your complaint about his, but they are unable to help with concerns about the costs of treatment.

General Optical Council – GOC

The GOC is the regulator for optical professionals in the UK including optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses. Their role is also to protect the public by promoting high standards of education, performance and conduct amongst opticians. Any complaint about fitness to practice in this area should be directed to the GOC for investigation, and they will take any disciplinary action necessary.

Local Government Ombudsman – LGO

The Local Government Ombudsman looks at Public Health provision and complaints about council services, such as education admissions, appeal panels and adult social care providers, such as care homes and home care providers. Their role is to investigate complaints in a fair and independent way, after this has been raised with the service provider. Should you have any queries about making a complaint to their offices, you can contact the LGO on 0300 061 0614.

AvMA – Action against Medical Accidents

AvMA is a charitable organisation who can provide legal and medical support and advice if you are considering taking your complaint down this route. They provide a free and confidential helpline service, can give information on your rights as a patient, or medical explanations, and provide you with information about compensation and clinical negligence. They can also make a referral to an appropriate solicitor for your individual case. You may find it useful to speak to them if this is something you are considering as there are time limits for making a legal claim as there are for making a complaint. They can also provide information about the Coroner and Inquests if you wish to speak to someone impartial about this.

Useful contacts and addresses

The Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman

Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP
Tel: 0345 015 4033
www.ombudsman.org.uk

General Medical Council

Regent's Place
350 Euston Road
London
NW1 3JN
Tel: 0845 357 8001
Switchboard: 0845 357 8001

Nursing & Midwifery Council

1 Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN
Fitness.to.practice@nmc-uk.org
Tel: 020 7637 7181

Health Professional Council

Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU
Tel: 0845 300 4472

General Dental Council

37 Wimpole Street
London
W1G 8DQ
Tel: 0845 222 4141
E: Complaints@gdc-uk.org

General Optical Council

41 Harley Street
London
W1G 8DJ
Tel: 020 7580 3898
E: goc@optical.org

Optical Consumer Complaints Service

PO Box 219
Petersfield
GU32 9BY
Tel: 0844 800 5071
E: postbox@opticalcomplaints.co.uk

National Patient Safety Agency

4-8 Maple Street
London
W1T 5HD
Tel: 01138 252 525
E: patientsafety.enquiries@nhs.net

The Law Society of England & Wales

Tel: 020 7242 1222
www.lawsociety.co.uk

Community Legal Services Direct

Tel: 0845 345 4345
www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk

Action Against Medical Accidents (AVMA)

44 High Street
Croydon
Surrey
CR0 1YB
Tel: 0845 123 2352
www.avma.org.uk

Data Protection Information Commissioner

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113
www.daraprotection.gov.uk

Care Quality Commission
Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4PA
Tel: 03000 616 161
E: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH
0300 061 0614
You can also text 'call back' to 0762
480 3014
www.lgo.org.uk