

One Stop Guide for Complaints about Healthcare in England

Getting help with your complaint

About the Professional Standards Authority

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and voluntary registration of people working in health and care. We are an independent body, accountable to the UK Parliament.

We oversee the work of ten statutory bodies that regulate health professionals in the UK and social workers in England. We review the regulators' performance and audit and scrutinise their decisions about whether people on their registers are fit to practise.

We also set standards for organisations holding voluntary registers for people in unregulated health and care occupations and accredit those organisations that meet our standards.

To encourage improvement we share good practice and knowledge, conduct research and introduce new ideas including our concept of right-touch regulation.¹ We monitor policy developments in the UK and internationally and provide advice to governments and others on matters relating to people working in health and care. We also undertake some international commissions to extend our understanding of regulation and to promote safety in the mobility of the health and care workforce.

Our organisational values are: integrity, transparency, respect, fairness and teamwork. We strive to ensure that our values are at the core of our work. More information about our work and the approach we take is available at www.professionalstandards.org.uk.

¹ *Right-touch regulation revised* (2015). Available at www.professionalstandards.org.uk/policy-and-research/right-touch-regulation



Although we do not investigate complaints about healthcare, people often contact us and ask us to help so we have put this guide together to help you.

We realise making a complaint about your healthcare or about the treatment provided to a relative can sometimes be a difficult decision to make.

The NHS is made up from numerous different organisations and it is not always clear when, where and how to raise concerns. Getting an answer to your concerns is not always straightforward and it is important to ensure that you direct your complaint to the correct organisation so that your complaint can be investigated properly.

If you are thinking about making a complaint, there are a number of organisations which can help and guide you through the NHS complaints procedure.

Your right to complain is included in the [NHS Constitution](#).

This quick reference guide presents the options you have when making a complaint about the NHS in England and where complaints about non-NHS care should be taken.

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If you want to make a complaint about NHS care

First steps

If you feel able to do so, the best thing to do first is to raise your concern with the people involved. This could be the doctor or nurse who treated you, their colleague or line manager. Explain what happened, why you are unhappy and what you would like to happen to help put things right (for example, an apology). You can raise the concern yourself or you can give permission for someone to do it on your behalf.

If you do not want to make a formal complaint

Ask for the name of someone appropriate for you to speak with or write to. For example, the person in charge of the service you have concerns about or someone from the complaints team. If you are not sure who you should talk with, ask the organisation for help.

If you want to make a formal complaint

You should ask for the organisation's complaint procedure before writing down your concerns to help make sure you are making the complaint to the right person or team.

Describe:

- (1) What happened
- (2) Who was involved
- (3) When and where it took place
- (4) How it has affected you
- (5) What you would like to happen as a result of your complaint
- (6) Ask for an acknowledgment of your complaint (you should receive this within three days of making the complaint)
- (7) Agree how often you will be kept updated on the progress of your complaint
- (8) Make sure you give your name and contact details, and how you would like to be contacted.

Please note that complaints should be made within 12 months of the event leading to the complaint taking place and that organisations should provide their full response within six months.

If you want information on the NHS complaints procedure

NHS Choices can help you find the full name and address of the organisation you want to complain about, by completing this part of its website:

www.nhs.uk/Service-Search

If you want help with making your complaint

You can get free and confidential advice about the complaint process and help with making your complaint from:

- [Healthwatch](#)
- [POhWER](#)
- [NHS Complaints Advocacy Service](#)
- [Patient Advice and Liaison Service \(PALS\)](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [SEAP](#).

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman [has listed tips on how to make a complaint](#). If you have completed the first stage of the NHS complaints procedure and do not think that your concerns have been properly looked at, [you can complain to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman can be telephoned on: 0345 015 4033.

If you want to complain about mental health care

You can complain about mental health care through the NHS complaints process. Advice on how to do so is available from [MIND](#). But complaints about the use of the Mental Health Act 1983 – for example, detention under the Act – should be made to the Care Quality Commission.

Information about this can be found at: www.cqc.org.uk/content/complain-about-use-mental-health-act.

You can get help with your complaint from the following organisations:

- [Voice Ability](#)
- [MIND](#).

If you want to raise a concern to regulatory organisations

If you are concerned about the conduct of a health professional or have fitness to practise concerns, you can complain to the relevant regulatory organisations (listed below). You can do this at the same time as complaining to the health organisation or to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Citizens Advice provide [general guidance on how to complain to the regulators](#)

You can consult the individual regulatory organisations for advice on when and how to bring concerns to their attention, by the following links or telephone numbers:

- [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#) (nurses and midwives) Telephone: 020 7637 7181
- [General Medical Council](#) (GPs, hospital doctors and surgeons) Telephone: 0161 923 6602
- [Health and Care Professions Council](#) (arts therapists, biomedical scientists, chiropodists /podiatrists, clinical scientists, dietitians, hearing aid dispensers, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, paramedics, physiotherapists, practitioner psychologists, prosthetists)

/orthotists, radiographers and speech and language therapists) Telephone: 0800 328 4218

- [General Dental Council](#) (dental professionals) Telephone: 020 7167 6000
- [General Pharmaceutical Council](#) (pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises) Telephone: 0203 713 8000
- [General Optical Council](#) (optometrists and dispensing opticians) Telephone: 020 7580 3898
- [General Osteopathic Council](#) (osteopaths) Telephone: 020 7357 6655
- [General Chiropractic Council](#) (chiropractors) Telephone: 020 7713 5155.
- [Social Work England](#) (social workers) Telephone: [0808 196 2274](#)

[Action against Medical Accidents \(AVMA\)](#) provides advice for people who have referred their complaint to a regulatory organisation. It can be contacted by telephone: 0845 123 2352.

If you want to complain about continuing healthcare

NHS continuing healthcare means a package of continuing care arranged and funded solely by the NHS. There are a number of checks that have to be made before continuing healthcare funding is given and appeals for funding need to be made to local Independent Review Panels. If your appeal is unsuccessful, you can [complain to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#).

- NHS Choices provide the [guidance on NHS continuing healthcare](#)

If you want to complain about care homes and social care services

If you have a complaint about a care home or about social care services, who you should complain to depends on how the care is funded:

Local council:

If the care is provided, arranged or paid for by the local council, the director of social services and the local councillors have overall responsibility. In areas where there are county and district councils, the county council is responsible for adult social care services. In these cases, you can make a complaint under the local council's complaints procedure.

Private care:

If the care you wish to complain about is privately funded, then you would need to complain to the organisation that is providing the care (the care provider). If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

Care is paid for by direct payment from the local council:

Direct payments are payments of money that a local council social services department makes to people to arrange their own community care services, instead of the local authority arranging the services. Complaints about care would need to be made to the care provider and, if your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

The Local Government Ombudsman looks at complaints about councils and some other authorities and organisations, including education admissions appeal panels and adult social care providers (such as care homes and home care providers). It can be contacted at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint/> and by telephone on 0300 061 0614.

NHS Choices [provides advice on how and who to complain](#) to on its website.

The Care Quality Commission [provides advice on how to make a complaint](#) about health and social care services.

Citizens Advice [provides a flowchart on how to make a complaint](#) about adult social services.

If you have a safeguarding concern

If you think that a child or vulnerable adult might have been harmed, or might be at risk of harm, you should telephone your local council and ask to be put through to the social services department.

You can find the contact details of the appropriate council here: www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council.

You also can report a safeguarding issue to the Care Quality Commission by telephone: 03000 616161 and by email at enquiries@cqc.org.uk.

The Care Quality Commission [provides general advice on the safeguarding of children and adults](#). It also has [produced guidance on this issue](#).

If you want to complain about health service commissioning

If you have concerns with an NHS service and wish to complain to the organisation which commissioned the service rather than the organisation which provided it, you can contact the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group (the CCG) for concerns about the commissioning of hospital care. You can get details for your local CCG from your local council or from www.nhs.uk.

For concerns about the commissioning of GP, dental, pharmacy and optical services, you can complain to NHS England at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/complaint/>.

If you want to complain about the care you paid for (non-NHS)

Not all care is provided by the NHS. Some treatment is privately paid for and is given by organisations which do not belong to the NHS. This is sometimes called private healthcare or independent sector healthcare.

If your complaint is about privately funded healthcare, you should complain to the healthcare provider. It would be helpful to check before you make the complaint whether you can complain under the NHS complaints procedure. This is because NHS-funded healthcare services provided in a private hospital can be complained about under the NHS complaints procedure. If you are not sure, ask the organisation who has given the care.

Once you have a response to your complaint and if you remain unhappy, you might have the option of going to the Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service (ISCAS) which represents some independent healthcare providers. You can find out whether the organisation you have a complaint about is a member and access their complaint forms here: <http://www.iscas.org.uk/>. ISCAS telephone number is: 020 7536 6091.

If your complaint is about privately funded Dental or Optical Treatment, you can contact:

- [Dental Complaints Service](#)
- [Optical Consumer Complaints Service](#).

If you want to make a personal injury claim

If you think you have suffered personal injury and wish to claim compensation, you should consult a solicitor.

- The Law Society gives details of solicitors who are members of its personal injury accreditation scheme at: www.lawsociety.org.uk
- Citizens Advice [provides information on making personal injury claims](#).

If you think that a criminal offence has been committed

If you think that a criminal offence has been committed during your healthcare, you should contact the Police. Details of your local police can be found at: www.police.uk/.

If you want to complain about care provided outside of England in the UK

[For details about how to complain about care in Northern Ireland, please click here:](#)

[For details about how to complain about care in Scotland, please click here:](#)

[For details about how to complain about care in Wales, please click here:](#)

If you want to share your experience about healthcare regulators

The Professional Standards Authority

We promote the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and voluntary registration of people working in health and care. We are an independent organisation, accountable to the UK Parliament. We oversee the work of nine statutory organisations that regulate health professionals in the UK and social workers in England. We review the regulators' performance and audit and scrutinise their decisions about whether people on their registers are fit to practise. We can refer final fitness to practise panel decisions to court where we believe they are unduly lenient and do not protect the public.

You can help us check that the regulators are meeting the [Standards of Good Regulation](#) by sharing your experience about the [regulators](#) and [accredited registers](#).

When we review their performance, as we do each year, we take account of many sorts of information. This includes things the regulators tell us, things we observe or read and things you and others tell us.

We would like to hear about your experiences to help us see what they do well and where they might need to improve. We will use the information you give us to help us build an overall picture of their performance. We publish a report about each regulator's performance every year and we will send you a copy if you would like us to. We may not mention your information in the report, but you can be sure we take it into account.

You can [share your experience here](#).

*If you want to make a complaint about a health or care professional or about the regulator, please contact the regulator direct as we do not have the power to investigate complaints.

If you want to share your experience about your care or care you know of

The Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission (often referred to as the CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. It works to ensure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate and high-quality care. It monitors, inspects and regulates services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety and publishes reports which include performance ratings to help people choose care.

The Care Quality Commission would like to know if you have received poor care, or you know that poor care is being given somewhere - anonymously if you wish. You can also tell it when you think you have received good care. You can share your experience by following the link at: <http://www.cqc.org.uk/share-your-experience/guidance-sharing-your-experience-us>

By telephone at: 03000 61 61 61

By email at: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

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