

# NHS Complaints Service

## Writing and sending a complaint letter



When writing a letter, clearly outline your complaint and request that it be investigated under the NHS Complaints Procedure. If you're writing on behalf of someone else, you'll need to show that you have their permission—unless they're unable to give it. For more details on how to make a complaint on behalf of someone who lacks capacity, download our **How to Complain Guide**.

### 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 timeline 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

#### 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?

When writing your complaint letter, be sure to clearly explain the issue and request that it be addressed through the NHS Complaints Procedure. If you're acting on behalf of someone else, you'll need to provide evidence of their consent—unless they are unable to do so. For guidance on making a complaint on behalf of someone who lacks capacity, please download our **How to Complain Guide**.

## 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, Dae of Birth**

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

OR – [if you are acting on behalf of someone]

I am writing on behalf of [.....insert the person's name], and I enclose their written agreement to act on their behalf.

[If the person 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 timeline, 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 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. (if you are sending copies of your letter to other people or departments, show this here).

**If you need to contact us at any point throughout the process you can get in touch by phone, email, or through our website**

### **Your Voice Counts**

Telephone: [0800 048 7856](tel:08000487856)

Secure email: [nhsadvocacy@yvc.org.uk](mailto:nhsadvocacy@yvc.org.uk)

Website: [www.yvc.org.uk](http://www.yvc.org.uk)

