

Listening and Learning

Making a Complaint - Frequently Asked Questions

1. How should I write my complaint?

You can write this on a letter or on the enclosed form. It is very important that you think about what you would like to achieve. We are more likely to be able to help if you can be specific about your complaint and realistic about what you want to happen as a result.

- Try to remember as much information as possible, including dates, times, places, and details of staff involved. Staff will usually wear Trust name badges, but if you can't remember these please write down any descriptions.
- Write down your key points and questions at the end of your letter. It is helpful if you could number these (point 1, 2, 3 etc...). This makes it easier for us to address directly the issues you are most concerned about.
- Please tell us clearly what you simply want to pass on as feedback, and what you would like us to investigate and respond to. We recommend focusing on a smaller number of issues that are most important to you. This helps us to focus on the points that matter most to you.

2. Is there a time limit for making a complaint?

You should make a formal complaint within 12 months of the incident happening, or within 12 months of you being aware of the problem that you wish to complain about. We can waive this time limit if there are good reasons why you could not complain earlier. An example might be if you were too unwell to raise your concerns. However, please remember that many issues become more difficult to investigate as time passes.

3. Can I claim compensation?

You will typically need to take legal action if you want to make a claim for compensation. The NHS Complaints Procedure does not deal with cases for damages as a result of clinical issues. We cannot advise you about a legal claim and can only suggest that you seek independent advice.

4. I am worried that making a complaint will affect my care. Will the staff treat me differently?

No, our staff are encouraged to respond positively to complaints and view them as a learning experience. However, if you have any concerns about this, please discuss these with us.

5. Who can complain?

Any NHS patient can complain about any the service they have received. You can complain on behalf of a friend or relative. However, they must agree to let you complain on their behalf.

When you make a complaint on behalf of someone else, we will send you a form called "Permission to Act on My Behalf". This should be signed by the patient to show that they are happy for you to complain on their behalf.

6. What will happen after I contact you?

We will send you an initial acknowledgement, just to let you know that we have received your letter. We will also allocate a senior manager to investigate your complaint. They may wish to speak with you directly so that we are clear about your concerns. We may also contact you to see if we can resolve your concerns quickly outside of the formal procedure, particularly if you have an immediate care issue that requires attention.

7. Can you help if I have additional needs?

Yes, please let us know how we can help you. All of our published information can be made available in other formats, such as on a CD or as a word document for text reading. Our formal response can be sent this way too. If you have trouble reading or speaking English, please let us know and we will find a way to help.

8. Why should I make a complaint?

We cannot change your experiences. However, we will apologise for any care failings. We will also tell you about any changes we are making within the hospital to improve the standard of service for future patients.

9. I have concerns about my care across a number of different hospitals. Do I have to complain to each in turn?

No, as long as some of the concerns relate to our service, we will contact the other organisations on your behalf.

Finally, please do let us know if you have any other questions.