

Healthcare Complaints

A guide to making a complaint about healthcare

Expert advice

If you're unhappy with the service that you or others have received from a hospital, doctor, dentist or any other healthcare provider, then you can make a complaint.

You have the right to have your concerns investigated and to receive a full reply.

This is a short guide to that process for complaints about:-

- NHS treatment
- Private treatment
- NHS treatment at a private hospital/clinic
- Dental treatment
- Pharmacies



How can a complaint be made?

Although complaints can be made by telephone, in person or by email, we suggest that if someone wishes to complain, they do so in writing.

In the first instance, a copy of the complaints procedure should be requested from the service provider, i.e. the hospital or treatment centre to be complained about. Each will have their own procedure for making a complaint.

Who should the complaint be made to?

GPs, dentists or health centres

Complaints should be made to the Practice Manager of the treatment centre attended.

Hospitals or ambulance services

Complaints should be made to the Complaints Manager or the Chief Executive of the NHS Trust.

Private treatment

Complaints should be made directly to the healthcare professional, hospital, clinic, etc.

Pharmacy services

Complaints can be made to the Head Office of the pharmaceutical company or through the General Pharmaceutical Council. If the pharmacy is an NHS hospital pharmacy, the complaint can be made through the NHS Complaints Procedure.

Who can complain?

The person directly affected can obviously make the complaint, but you can also make a complaint on behalf of someone if you have their written consent, if you're the next of kin of someone who has died, or if you're the parent or guardian of a child under 16.

Is there a time limit for making a complaint?

In respect of NHS services, you usually have 12 months in which to make a complaint. If there's a good enough reason, this can be extended, but this is left up to the discretion of the individual healthcare provider. In respect of other service providers, the time in which to make a complaint varies. However, this will be included within their complaints procedure.

What can be done to assist a complaint?

Any records that have been received should be kept safe and it's also helpful for those who wish to complain, to keep a written account of their experience, including as much detailed information as possible.

What if you wish to take legal action?

If you wish to take legal action, you should contact a lawyer who specialises in medical negligence without delay.

Slater and Gordon has a large team of lawyers who have a vast amount of experience in medical negligence cases and will be able to provide you with the expert advice you need.