

How to Complain to the NHS

Since 1948, the NHS has been providing free healthcare to all in the UK, with more than a thousand NHS hospitals across the country.

This gigantic organisation is by far the biggest UK employer and also one of the largest in the world. In England alone, the workforce is made up of around 1.4 million people!

Although the NHS is committed to providing exemplary healthcare to everyone who needs it, it's natural that sometimes expectations may not be met.

If your loved one has received or is receiving NHS care, and they've had a negative experience, making a complaint can help to put things right.

Today we're explaining the process of complaining to the NHS, as well as highlighting how this differs if you live in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

How to Complain About the NHS in England

If you've had an unsatisfactory experience with the NHS in England, you can make a complaint by post, phone or email.

Post

If you'd like to share your experience, you can write to:

NHS England
PO Box 16738
Redditch
B97 9PT

Phone

If you'd like to talk to someone on the phone, call **0300 311 22 33**.

Email

If you prefer to send an email detailing your experience, contact england.contactus@nhs.net.

What to Include in Your Complaint

Although it might be distressing in certain circumstances, it's important to comprehensively explain exactly what's happened in as much detail as possible.

Whether you're communicating by post, phone or email, provide a clear explanation of what's happened, including the date of specific incidents. It's also essential that you share where this took place and who was involved.

Be prepared to share your name and contact details so you can be kept informed as your complaint progresses.

When you're making a complaint on behalf of a loved one or someone you care for, you'll need their consent before the process can begin. This will be explained to you once you've made contact.

NHS England Complaints Policy

NHS England's complaints policy is currently under review with the view to update it soon.

Visit the website below to view the current version of the policy.

www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/nhs-england-complaints-policy-sept-23.pdf

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) exists to provide support and information to patients and their relatives.

It's possible to make a complaint through PALS and this might be your preferred method if you feel like you need additional support.

By contacting PALS, you'll be able to learn more about the complaints procedure, share your experience and learn how to get independent help.

Visit the website below for more information about PALS.

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/what-is-pals-patient-advice-and-liaison-service

How to Complain About the NHS in Scotland

If your complaint pertains to a GP practice, dental surgery, pharmacy or optician, then the first step is to reach out directly to the service provider.

For all other NHS services, you should contact your local health board.

Visit the website below to find the details for your local health board.

www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/feedback-and-complaints/making-a-complaint-about-your-nhs-care-or-treatment

Each health board has a procedure for moving forward with complaints, so you'll be informed of the process when you make contact.

How to Complain About the NHS in Wales

The process for making complaints about the NHS in Wales is called Putting Things Right.

Visit the website below to learn more and begin the process.

<https://111.wales.nhs.uk/contactus/complaint/>

How to Complain About the NHS in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the NHS is referred to as Health and Social Care (HSC).

Visit the website below to read about the complaints procedure for HSC services.

www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services

Outcomes and Expectations

Before you make a complaint to the NHS, it's a good idea to consider what you want the outcome to be.

In many instances, acknowledgement of your experience and an apology can feel like an appropriate resolution. However, that's not always the case. So, decide what's appropriate for your situation and be clear about your expectations from the beginning.

Once your complaint has been dealt with, you might find you're not satisfied with the outcome. If this is the case and you're in England, you have the option to reach out to the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman (PHSO). This independent service is free for all.

The PHSO can investigate complaints against the NHS and may help you to reach a more satisfying resolution if previous attempts have failed.

Visit the website below to learn more or call on **0345 015 4033**.

www.ombudsman.org.uk

This information was accurate and up-to-date as of 13/02/2024.