

How to complain about health services

There are a number of ways to raise concerns about:

- your treatment;
- the arrangements for patients;
- the conditions under which care is given;
- the quality of the service;
- the attitude of staff; or
- whatever is the cause of your complaint.

Remember, you have a right to complain. Complaints can be, and are, used by the NHS to measure satisfaction and to improve services and quality. Making a complaint should not adversely affect your care or treatment.

This section gives you information on informal and formal approaches to complaining about health services.

Informal complaint

You can deal with it yourself immediately

Try speaking to the member of staff involved or responsible for the service you are receiving, such as the doctor, the nurse or the receptionist. Many matters can be dealt with effectively and helpfully in this way.

There are 'Comment and Suggestion' boxes located within the public areas of hospitals. Alternatively, you can email any feedback using the [online form](#) on the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital NHS Foundation Trust's website.

You can ask to see the person responsible for complaints

Each GP, medical or dental practice has a Complaints Lead and each NHS Trust has a Complaints Department. They can tell you how to make a complaint, will look into it, and can explain how the complaints procedure is handled in their organisation.

You can talk to Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) staff

If you are not able to deal with it at the time, or you don't want to raise it with the person concerned, you can ask to talk to the [Patient Advice and Liaison Service \(PALS\)](#) staff. PALS is confidential, independent of the NHS and can:

- advise and support patients, their families and carers;
- provide information on NHS services;
- listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries; and
- help sort out problems quickly on your behalf.

Each NHS Trust has a PALS service operating within it.

Formal complaints

The NHS Complaints Procedure

If you have used the informal approaches mentioned above and your complaint is still not resolved, you may want to start the formal NHS Complaints Procedure.

This procedure covers all NHS services provided in hospitals, clinics, the community and the home, and by doctors, dentists, opticians and pharmacists. It also covers services paid for by the NHS in private hospitals, homes or other places, but does not cover private health care.

Remember, the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) are available to give you advice and assistance with this at any point. You can find out more information about ICAS further in this section.

You can contact the Independent Complaint Advocacy Service (ICAS)

[ICAS](#) is a statutory service for people who have a complaint against the NHS, and who want to know what to do next.

The help and advice they give is free, confidential and is totally independent of the NHS. It is available to all NHS patients or their representatives.

Its aim is to enable you to feel confident about taking a complaint forward yourself, but with the knowledge that support is available when you need it.

ICAS provide support, help and advice, including:

- information and support on the telephone
- support via fax, email, letter and text message
- a contact point where questions can be asked and answered in person
- assistance with letters where required
- advice about what to do next
- a supporter or advocate at meetings or hearings
- a route to other specialist help, if needed

The Patients Association is the national telephone and email helpline for anyone trying to navigate health and social care systems in the UK. The helpline service is free and confidential. They can help you to:

- access to treatments
 - get a second opinion on your health condition or diagnosis
 - make a complaint
 - understand social care
 - get your voice heard as a patient rights and responsibilities
 - change your GP or dentist
 - see your medical records
 - speak to other organisations to help you if needed
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Other Useful Information

Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) provide free independent advice and support to people affected by medical accidents (lapses in patient safety) through their specialist helpline, written casework and inquest support services. They can refer to accredited clinical negligence solicitors if appropriate. They also work in partnership with health professionals, the NHS, government departments, lawyers

and, most of all patients, to improve patient safety and justice.

Healthwatch Newcastle helps everyone speak up about health and social care services in Newcastle. They also offer free, confidential and independent information about these services.

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Useful Organisations

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Website: www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1082.aspx?CategoryID=68&SubCategoryID=153

Telephone: 0800 032 0202

Address: Freepost PALS,

North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA)

Email: ica@carersfederation.co.uk

Website: www.nenhscomplaintsadvocacy.co.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 3000

Address: Room 312, NE8 3HU

Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA)

Email: advice@avma.org.uk

Website: www.avma.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 3000

Address: Freedman House, CR0 1QG

Connected Voice Haref

Email: haref@connectedvoice.org.uk

Website: <https://connectedvoice.org.uk/services/haref>

Telephone: 0191 235 7022

Address: Connected Voice Haref, NE1 4BX

Healthwatch Newcastle

Email: info@healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk

Website: <http://www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0191 338 5720

Address: Suite E11 E Floor, NE1 1LE

The Patients Association

Email: helpline@patients-association.org.uk

Website: www.patients-association.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 338 5720

Address: P Block, HA1 3UJ

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