

How to complain about health services

if you are unhappy with the health service or care that you receive, you can raise your concerns. For example, this could be about:

- your treatment
- travel arrangements
- conditions that your care was given
- quality of the service
- attitude of staff
- waiting times

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

This page explains more about how to make an informal or formal complaint 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.

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.

Local help and support

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can help you to raise any concerns that you have about an NHS service in the North East. This is a free confidential and independent service. They can:

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

Each NHS Trust has a PALS service operating within it.

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.

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.

You can get help to make a formal complaint. An NHS complaint might include something that happened during care or treatment at:

- the hospital
 - your General Practitioner (GP)
 - the dentist
 - the pharmacist
 - the optician
 - an NHS funded care home
 - any other **NHS funded service** even if delivered in the private sector
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Help to make a formal complaint

North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICA) provided by [Your Voice Counts](#) give free confidential help and advice to people who want to complain about an NHS service. This is an independent service. It's available to all NHS patients or their representatives. They can help you feel confident about taking a complaint forward yourself. They can offer more support if needed. ICA 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 has a national telephone and email helpline for anyone trying to navigate health and care systems in the UK. The helpline service is free and confidential. They provide guidance and signposting on how to:

- access treatment
- 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

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are a free, confidential, NHS advice service. They help patients, their families and carers give feedback on NHS services.

Parliamentary and health service Ombudsman independently investigate complaints about UK government departments and the NHS in England.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of care services. This includes Hospitals, Care Homes, Dental, Home Care agencies, Mental Health, GP surgeries

Patient Safety Commissioner promotes patient safety with medicines and medical devices. They want to hear from patients about your experiences to help improve the healthcare services for everyone. You can contact the commissioner to share your experience. They will use your feedback to help improve health care. They can also provide advice and help you to find the right support. More information about the concerns raised by patients about the safety of medicines and medical devices is on their website.

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.

Useful Organisations

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Email: pals@nhct.nhs.uk

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/what-is-pals-patient-advice-and-liaison-service/>

Telephone: 0800 032 0202

Address: Freepost PALS,

Newcastle NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (NHS ICA)

Email: nhsadvocacy@yvc.org.uk

Website: <https://www.yvc.org.uk/nhsica>

Telephone: 0191 478 6472

Address: NHS Complaints Advocacy (Your Voice Counts), NE8 1PQ

Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA)

Email: advice@avma.org.uk

Website: www.avma.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 478 6472

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

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Address: PO Box 4771, CV4 0EH

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Patient Safety Commissioner

Email: pscenquiries@patientsafetycommissioner.org.uk

Website: <https://www.patientsafetycommissioner.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Address: Patient Safety Commissioner, SW1P 3HZ

Related Articles

[How to make a complaint about Adult Social Care services](#)

[Having your say about health and care services](#)

[While you are in hospital](#)

Dentists

How to make a good complaint