

## **Writing and sending a complaint letter**

### **Writing a complaint letter**

A complaint is usually made in writing, and the letter should clearly outline your complaint and should state that you wish to raise a complaint regarding care / treatment you or someone else has received. This should ensure that the complaint is investigated under the NHS complaints procedure. If you are writing on behalf of someone else who is a patient, rather than for yourself, you must show that you have the patient's permission. (A consent form is included in this information for your use).

### **Helpful tips**

- Explain in date order if possible what has happened. Try to remember as many details as you can, but do not worry if you can't recall some details.
- Try to keep your complaint letter as brief as possible.
- Be careful not to lose your main points in a long letter.
- If the complaint is long and complex attach a log sheet or diary of events with details.

### **Be clear and straightforward**

- Use short sentences.
- Don't be afraid to say what has upset you, but try to avoid using aggressive or accusing language.
- Try not to repeat yourself.

### **Be constructive**

- Your complaint is an opportunity to improve things.
- Put your concerns politely but firmly.
- Once you have explained what has happened, explain what you would like to achieve as a result of your complaint. This could be an apology, an explanation, a service improvement, or any other remedy such as treatment or financial reimbursement. It can be a good idea to list these at the end of the letter
- Make sure the letter is dated and signed.

**Keep a copy** of all letters sent and received, in date order.

Please do not hesitate to contact People First on **0300 303 8037** should you have any queries regarding your letter, and if you would like an Advocate to look over your letter, this can be arranged.

## Where do I send a complaint about a hospital, community or mental health service?

If your complaint is about care that you have received from a **hospital** you can directly contact the complaints department for that service.

For services from **hospitals based in the south of Cumbria** including:

- Furness General Hospital in Barrow-in-Furness
- Westmorland General Hospital in Kendal
- Ulverston Community Health Centre in Ulverston

Send your complaint letter to: The Chief Executive, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, Westmorland General Hospital, Burton Road, Kendal, LA9 7RG

With any further enquiries, you can contact University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust on 01539 716645 or visit their [website](#).

For services from **hospitals based in the north and west of Cumbria** including:

- Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle
- West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven
- Midwifery-led service at Penrith Community Hospital

Send your complaint letter to: Chief Executive, North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust, Cumberland Infirmary, Newtown Road, Carlisle CA2 7HY

With any further enquiries, you can contact North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust on 01228 814018 or visit their [website](#).

For **community and mental health services**:

If your complaint is about care that you have received from a **community service** for example:

- Community hospitals
- Community Nursing
- Drug and alcohol services
- Health visiting
- Learning disability services
- Mental health services

- Allied health services such as podiatry, physiotherapy and occupational therapy
- Community dentistry
- Children's services
- Prison Healthcare (for prisoners at HMP Haverigg)

Send your complaint letter to: Chief Executive, Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Voreda, Portland Place, Penrith, CA11 7QQ

With any further enquiries, you can contact Cumbria Partnership Foundation NHS Trust on 01228 602020 or visit their [website](#).

Some people prefer to send their complaint to the commissioner of NHS services, which for Cumbria is the Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). However, the health care provider (for example the hospital) will normally be given the opportunity to respond to your complaint. Cumbria CCG is the commissioner of **local hospital, community and mental health services** and you can send your complaint to them about these services. However, with your consent the complaint will then be forwarded to the relevant provider organisation that will then investigate and respond to your complaint.

Send your complaint letter to: NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group, Lonsdale Unit, Penrith Hospital, Bridge Lane, Penrith CA11 8HX

### **Where do I send a complaint about a GP practice, dental practice, community pharmacy or optician?**

If your complaint is about a **GP Practice, dental Practice, community pharmacy or optician** you should send this to the Practice concerned, usually addressed to the Practice Manager.

Some people prefer to send their complaint to the commissioner of NHS services. However, the health care provider (for example GP surgery) will normally be given the opportunity to respond to your complaint. **NHS England** is the commissioner of **primary care services** (such as GP and dental practices) and, if you prefer, you can send your complaint about these services to NHS England. Contact details are:

Address: NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT

Tel: 0300 311 2233

Email: [england.contactus@nhs.net](mailto:england.contactus@nhs.net)

## **Where do I send a complaint about Ambulance services?**

For ambulance services based in Cumbria, your complaint should be sent directly to the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

Send your complaint letter to: North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust,  
FREEPOST MR 10223, Patient Experience, Manchester, M45 9AQ

With any further enquiries, you can contact North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust on 0300 555 0110 or visit their [website](#).

## **What happens next?**

You should receive a letter of acknowledgment within three working days.

The NHS should contact you to discuss your complaint and arrange a plan to resolve your concerns with you. This means that they should discuss how best to resolve those concerns and what you hope to achieve from raising them. They should also agree with you a timescale for resolving the issues and keep you informed of progress. The suggested timescales can be influenced by things like how many staff they need to speak to, how easy it is for them to access your medical records and if other NHS organisations are involved in your complaint. If there is a problem in keeping to this timescale they should contact you before it expires to agree an amended timescale.

If your complaint involves a service that is provided in partnership with the NHS, such as some Social Care Services, there is a separate complaints procedure for Social Care. In these cases you may need more advice, so please do not hesitate to contact People First. In addition to your NHS complaint we may be able to help with other parts of your complaint that involve a non NHS organisation, or point you in the direction of someone who can. You will only need to send a letter to one of the organisations who should liaise with the others involved and provide you with a co-ordinated response.

Please do not hesitate to contact People First on **0300 303 8037** if you have any queries regarding your letter or how to go about writing it. We will also be happy to arrange for someone to look over it for you.

**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

**Insert your address  
and telephone number (optional)**

**The Complaints Manager / The Chief Executive (name if known)**

Followed by the name and address  
of their organisation:

- GP
- Dental Surgery
- Hospital Trust
- Cumbria CCG

Date

**Dear.....**

**RE: NHS Complaint – Complainant name, Date of Birth**

I am writing to complain about the treatment I received from [names(s) of staff] at [place where incident happened/treatment received] on [date of incident/period of treatment].

**OR if you are acting on behalf of the patient**

I am writing on behalf of [insert name of patient], and I enclose their written agreement to act on their behalf. [If the patient is unable to give consent for example, if they are too young, ill or deceased, then you should explain this].

**Describe**

- What happened
- When, and
- Where

If you have a log sheet or list of events, you can attach this as a separate sheet and refer to this here. Explain what, if anything, you have already done to try to resolve matters.

**I would like the following points addressed in the response to this complaint.**

- Put the most important matters first
- Explain why you are not satisfied

- Be clear and brief
- Number or bullet your points
- Ask the questions you would like the answers to and list them in order of importance.

**As a result of this complaint I would now like**

Say what you want to achieve, for example,

- An explanation of what happened
- An apology
- A commitment to improve services to avoid similar occurrences in the future
- Action to remedy the problem you experienced, by a named person.

**I look forward to receiving your acknowledgment of this letter. I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns and provide a response in accordance with the NHS Complaints Procedure.** (If you are receiving support from an Advocate, it may be helpful to request they are copied in to future correspondence)

**Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.**

**Yours sincerely** (if you have named the Complaints Lead)

OR

**Yours faithfully** (if you have not named the Complaints Lead)

Your signature

Print your name

If you are sending copies of your letter to other parties, show this here

**CC. Other party**

## An example letter...

1 The Avenue,  
Anytown,  
AT1 2AB  
Tel: 010 232 3205

Jane Smith  
The Complaints Manager  
The Old Surgery  
1 The Street  
Anytown  
AT1 2CD

..... Date ..... 2013

Dear Jane Smith

### **RE: NHS Complaint – Mrs A Smith. DOB 19 May 1963**

I am writing to complain about the way I have been treated by Dr. Jones at the Old Surgery.

I was seen by Dr. Jones three times, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 31<sup>st</sup> May and 13<sup>th</sup> December. He did not examine me or do any tests. I feel that he did not take my symptoms seriously and said my problem was due to stress and that I should take things easy.

I was feeling so unwell and found his attitude upsetting as he did not seem to take me seriously. I was worried so I made an appointment to see another doctor in the practice. I do not know his name but it will be in my notes.

This doctor examined me on 8<sup>th</sup> January and arranged for tests. These showed that I was diabetic. I was prescribed medication and a special diet and I am now feeling much better. During the period from April 2008 to January 2009, however, I suffered with several infections, sleepless nights and I was very distressed.

I have tried to raise my concerns with Dr. Jones but he would not listen.

I would like the following points addressed in response to this complaint.

1. Is my medical condition poorer as a result of my diabetes not being detected and diagnosed by Dr. Jones on previous appointments?
2. Why did Dr. Jones not order any tests?

Along with answers to my questions, I would now like:

- Dr. Jones attitude to patients to be reviewed.
- Dr. Jones to explain why he did not listen to me or examine me
- An apology from him for the unnecessary stress and poor health I suffered because of his inadequate care
- To know what arrangements the practice has for reviewing the listening skills of the doctors.

I have had very good care from the practice in the past, in particular from Dr. Allen until he retired. I was then moved to Dr. Jones. I would like to regain confidence in the care provided by the practice.

I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns in accordance with the NHS Complaints Regulations.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Smith

**Consent to make a complaint on behalf of another person**

I ..... would like to give my full consent for my  
wife/husband/brother/sister/son/daughter ..... to submit this  
complaint on my behalf. I also give my full consent for you to access my medical  
records to complete the complaint investigation and respond accordingly.

Signed .....

Date .....