



Writing a NHS complaint letter

POhWER
advocacy, making your voice heard

The NHS Complaints Advocacy Service is a service offered by POhWER

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Writing a complaint letter

General guidelines

If your complaint is about a **Trust** or Clinical Commissioning Group the letter should be addressed to the **Chief Executive**. You do not need to put the name of the Chief Executive.

For a **GP or Dental Practice**, the letter should go to the **Complaints Lead** at the practice. (You could also send a copy to the Chief Executive of the Clinical Commissioning Group which the practice is a part of).

The letter should clearly outline your complaint and ask for it to be 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 (we have included a consent form in this pack which you could use).

If you are not clear where to send your complaint, whether to an NHS Trust, a Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) or a Practice (usually medical or dental), **ask for advice from POhWER NHS Complaints Advocacy, PALS or the Complaints Department of any NHS service**. If you get it wrong and send it to the wrong place, one part of the NHS should pass it on to the correct part, so don't worry. It is confusing, and you cannot be expected to keep up with all the changes in the NHS, or know who is responsible for what.

If your complaint involves a service that is provided in partnership with the NHS, such as Social Services, you may also have to make two complaints. There is a separate complaints procedure for Social Services complaints. In these cases you may need more advice, **so do not hesitate to contact POhWER NHS Complaints Advocacy**. Although POhWER can only help with NHS complaints, we will point you in the right direction of where to get help with other parts of your complaint that involve a non NHS organisation.

Expect an acknowledgement letter **in 2-3 working days** and a full response within **10 days** from a GP or dentist and **25 working days** from an NHS trust. These are the timescales laid down in the NHS Complaints Procedure and if they are not met, you should have an explanation of the delay in a 'holding' letter. It is reasonable to chase up the responses if you hear nothing by the required date.

Helpful tips

Be brief

- Try to keep your complaint to no more than two pages
- Do not bury 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 avoid 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.

Keep copies

- Keep a copy of all letters sent and received and in date order

Send photocopies of documents, not originals**Make sure your letter is received**

- Send it by guaranteed or recorded delivery.

**PRIVATE AND
CONFIDENTIAL** Insert
your address and
telephone number

The Complaints Manager (name if known)

Followed by the name and address of
their organisation

- GP
- Dental Surgery
- Hospital Trust or
- Clinical Commissioning Group

Date

Dear....

I am writing to complain about the treatment I received from [name(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 and resolve matters.

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

- Explain why you are not satisfied.
- Put the most important matters first.
- 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
- Action to remedy the problem you experienced, by a named person, by a set date

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement 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 within **[quote the specified timescale that applies]** days.

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

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

14th February 2007

Dear Jane Smith

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

I was seen by Doctor Jones three times, on 26th April, 31st May and 13th December 2006. He did not examine me or do any tests. 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 dismissive attitude upsetting. 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 8th January 2007 and arranged for tests. These showed that I was diabetic. I was prescribed drugs and a special diet and I am now feeling much better. During the period from April 2006 to January 2007, however, I suffered with several infections, sleepless nights and mental anguish.

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

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

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

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

- Doctor Jones' attitude to patients to be reviewed
- Him to explain why he did not listen to me or examine me
- An apology from him for the unnecessary stress and debilitation 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 Doctor Allen until he retired. I was then put under Doctor Jones' care. 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 and provide a response in accordance with the NHS Complaints Procedure within 10 days.

Your sincerely

Mrs A Smith