



Passionate  
about  
possibilities.

# Independent Complaints and Advocacy Service (ICAS)

*- Writing a Letter of Complaint*





**Passionate  
about  
possibilities.**

## **What is in This Booklet?**

**Page 3**      Who Do I Complain To?

**Page 5**      Writing and Sending the Complaint Letter

**Page 7**      Letter of Complaint Outline

**Page 8**      Letter of Complaint Example

**Page 10**     What Happens Next

**Page 11**     Contact Us




## Who Do I Complain To?

### *Complaints Involving NHS Organisations*

If you want to complain about a hospital or an ambulance service that is part of the National Health Service (NHS), then you need to contact the Complaints Manager or the Chief Executive of the NHS Trust.

If you are not clear about where to send your complaint, ask for advice from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) or the Complaints Department at the hospital. Alternatively, most hospital Trusts have details on how to contact them about complaints on the website. You can also contact our Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS).

For complaints about service provision in primary care or by independent providers such as your GP, dentist, optician, pharmacist, health centre, or other independent NHS contractor, you have two options:

-  You can complain directly to the NHS organisation and service by contacting the person in charge of complaints. In most GP and dental practices, this will be the Practice Manager.

**OR**

-  You can complain to the Commissioner of the Service.

If your complaint concerns more than one NHS organisation, then you only need to send a letter to one of the organisations. They will liaise with the other organisation(s) involved and provide a co-ordinated response.



**Passionate  
about  
possibilities.**

## Useful Tip



If you choose to make a complaint directly to the organisation and you are not satisfied with their response, you cannot then raise the same issue with the Commissioner of the Service. Instead, you must go directly to the Health Service Ombudsman.

## *Complaints Involving Non-NHS Organisations*

There are separate complaints procedures for Social Care or complaints about privately arranged services. Although our ICAS service cannot support complaints in these cases, we can point you in the right direction of where to get help.

Our ICAS service can support you in complaining about NHS services that include a social care element. An example of this might be you wanting to make a complaint to the hospital about your discharge, but part of the complaint relates to the social care services provided when you arrived home.




If your complaint involves a service that is provided in partnership with the NHS, then you only need to complain to one of the services.







## Writing and Sending the Complaint Letter

The letter should clearly outline your complaint and for your complaint to be investigated under the NHS Complaints Procedure. If you are writing a complaints letter on behalf of someone else, rather than yourself, you must show that you have the patient's written permission. We have included a consent and confidentiality form in this pack that you could use.

### ***Be Brief***



-  Try to keep your complaint to no more than two pages.
-  Be careful not to lose your main points in a long letter.
-  If the complaint is too long and complex, then include a log sheet or a diary of events with details.

### ***Be Clear and Straightforward***



-  Use short sentences and try to number or bullet your points.
-  Put the most important matters first and ask the questions that you would like answers to in order of importance.
-  Don't repeat yourself.
-  Don't be afraid to say what has upset you, but avoid aggressive or accusing language.




## ***Be Constructive***

-  Your complaint is an opportunity to improve things. Put your concerns politely, but firmly.
-  Explain why you are not satisfied and what you would like to achieve as a result of your complaint, such as an apology, an explanation, or a service improvement.

## ***Keep Copies***

-  Keep a copy of all letters or emails sent and received in date order and a note of all telephone calls made.
-  Send photocopies of documents that you would like to include. Always keep the original copies of documents in your possession.

## ***Make Sure That Your Letter is Received***

-  You may wish to send your letter of complaint by guaranteed or recorded delivery, to make sure that the letter is received.



Passionate  
about  
possibilities.

## Letter of Complaint Outline

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Your Address

Your Telephone Number

The Chief Executive or Complaints Manager (name if known)

The name and address of their organisation

Date

Dear ....

Re: NHS Complaint – Complainant name, Date of Birth

I am writing to complain about the treatment that I received from [name(s) of staff] at [place where the 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].

[Then describe what happened, when, and where. If you were unable to recall events, such as because you were undergoing surgery, then include information provided by third parties and how they were made aware of this.]

[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.  
[Add points in bullet points]



Passionate  
about  
possibilities.

## Letter of Complaint Example

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Mrs A Smith  
1 The Avenue  
Your Town  
At1 2AB  
Tel: 01023 23205

Helen Clarke  
The Complaints Manager  
Petersfield Surgery  
4 Main Street  
Your Town  
AT1 2CD

30th March 2023

Dear Helen Clarke,

Re: NHS Complaint – Mrs A Smith, DOB: 19th May 1963

I am writing to complain about the way that I have been treated by Dr Hayton at Petersfield Surgery.

I was seen by Dr Hayton three times, on 24th April, 31st May and 10th December 2022. He did not examine me or do any tests. I feel that he did not take my symptoms seriously and he said that 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 7th January 2023 and then arranged for tests. These tests 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 2022 to January 2023, however, I suffered from several infections and sleepless nights. I was very distressed.

I have tried to raise these concerns with Dr Hayton, but he would not listen. I would like the following points addressed in response to this complaint:

- Is my medical condition poorer as a result of my diabetes not being detected and diagnosed by Dr Hayton on earlier appointments?
- Why did Dr Hayton not order any tests?

Along with answers to my questions, I would like:

- Dr Hayton's attitude towards patients to be reviewed,
- Dr Hayton to explain why he did not listen to me or examine me,
- An apology from Dr Hayton for the unnecessary stress and poor health that I have suffered because of his inadequate care,
- and 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 Connor, until he retired. I was then moved to Dr Hayton. I would like to regain confidence in the care provided by the Practice.

I would appreciate it if you would carry out a full investigation into my concerns, and provide a response in accordance with the NHS Complaints Procedure.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,  
Mrs A Smith







## What Happens Next

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

The NHS should then contact you to discuss your complaint and arrange a plan to resolve your concerns with you. This means that they will discuss how best to resolve your concerns and what you hope to achieve from raising them.

They should also agree on a timescale for resolving the issues with you 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, then they should contact you before it expires to agree on an amended timescale.

If your complaint involves a service that is provided in partnership with the NHS, then the organisation that received your complaint will approach the other organisations. Between themselves, they will agree on who will:





-  Take the lead in handling the complaint,
-  Be your point of contact and take responsibility for communicating with you,
-  Co-ordinate the handling of the complaint and any investigations,
-  and ensure that you receive a single response, addressing all of the issues agreed at the outset.



Passionate  
about  
possibilities.

## Contact Us

If you need more advice on writing a letter of complaint, or at any point during the complaint process, then please contact us.

-  Call and ask for Jo: 01226 240273
-  Email Jo: [jo.stanley@dialbarnsley.org.uk](mailto:jo.stanley@dialbarnsley.org.uk)
-  Use the contact form: [www.dialbarnsley.org.uk/contact](http://www.dialbarnsley.org.uk/contact)
-  Write to us:  
Jo Stanley-Cook,  
DIAL, McLintocks,  
Summer Lane, S70 2NZ



**DIAL Office, 3rd Floor, McLintocks,  
Summer Lane, S70 2NZ**

Registered Charity No. 1108982

Company Ltd By Guarantee No. 5234581

[www.dialbarnsley.org.uk](http://www.dialbarnsley.org.uk)

**Updated October 2023**