Getting help with making a complaint

England
All patients should receive the best care possible. When you feel this has not happened, it can be confusing to know who to talk to about your experience and get the support you need.

If we are investigating your complaint, this booklet sets out some organisations that can support you during the process, such as finding an advocate.

If we can’t take your complaint forward, this booklet gives contact details of organisations that can help you decide what to do next. Most complaints can be settled more quickly by the organisation where you were treated or seen. If you haven’t already, we also explain how to raise the matter locally.
Organisations offering support or advice when making a complaint or accessing health services

Finding help with making a complaint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Healthwatch</strong></td>
<td>0300 068 3000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides guidance and details of local <strong>NHS Complaints Advocacy</strong> services to help you make a complaint about health and social care services. It is an independent network of local organisations that champion the views of people who use health and social care services in England. You can find details of your local Healthwatch and information on how to complain on their website.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/find-local-healthwatch">www.healthwatch.co.uk/find-local-healthwatch</a></td>
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| **Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA)**        | 0845 123 2352  |
| Provides free specialist medico-legal advice and support with making complaints where there are concerns about patient safety, as well as support with inquests and other legal processes. | www.avma.org.uk |

General advice

| **Citizens Advice Bureau**                         | 03444 111 444 |
| Provides confidential and independent advice to the public on how to resolve a range of issues. You can find details of your local bureau on their website. | www.citizensadvice.co.uk |

| **The Patients Association**                       | 0845 608 4455 |
| Provides a helpline to answer queries about healthcare services, both NHS and private, and advocates for greater access to information, high quality care and involvement in decision making. | www.patients-association.org.uk |

Emotional support

| **Samaritans**                                    | 0845 790 9090 |
| Provides 24-hour confidential support services. | www.samaritans.org |
Support with mental health or learning disabilities

People who are subject to powers under the Mental Health Act – including detention in hospital or community treatment orders – are entitled to independent mental health advocacy. You can speak to someone at your NHS trust about getting an advocate to help you understand your rights, or apply to a mental health tribunal to review the decision to use these powers. For people who lack capacity, an independent mental capacity advocate can discuss treatment decisions and your best interests.

Mind Infoline 0300 123 3393
Mind Legal Advice Line 0300 466 6463
Provides information on mental health care, signposts people to local advocacy services, and offers advice on mental health law. www.mind.org.uk/information-support

Care Quality Commission 0300 061 6161 and press 1
Monitors the use of powers under the Mental Health Act and provides Mental Health Act commissioners, who can visit detained patients, or help people to write letters or complain. www.cqc.org.uk/content/mental-health

Mencap Direct 0808 808 1111
Provides impartial advice to people a learning disability. www.mencap.org.uk
Making a complaint locally

For patients treated by the NHS

Patients have a right to complain or give feedback on care and treatment provided by the NHS, which should be done as soon as possible after becoming aware of your complaint.

Most complaints can be settled locally, and more quickly, by the organisation where you received treatment. You can find more information about the health service on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS.

For complaints about GP services, you should speak to the practice manager. Or, you may prefer to talk to NHS England about your complaint. Go to www.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/complaint or call 0300 311 22 33.

For complaints about hospital, mental health, or out-of-hours services, you should speak to the complaints team at your local NHS trust. There are patient advice and liaison services in hospitals, which can help with complaints procedures. Or, you can contact your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), which has responsibility for commissioning services. You can find details of your NHS provider at www.nhs.uk.

If you are uncomfortable speaking to someone at your local service, or need help at any point in the process, you can talk to your local Healthwatch group (see page 1 for details).

Seeking a review of a local decision

If – after completing any local appeals process – you are unhappy with the response from your local service, you can contact the Health Service Ombudsman to seek a review of the decision. Go to www.ombudsman.org.uk or call 0345 015 4033.
For patients treated privately

When you receive treatment from a private healthcare provider or an NHS private patient unit, you should raise your complaint with the manager at the clinic or hospital where you were treated. If your treatment is funded by your CCG or NHS trust, you should follow the process described previously.

Many private healthcare providers have signed up to a code of practice, which includes an independent adjudication of complaints. If you are unhappy with the response from one of these providers, you can refer your complaint to the Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service.

Go to www.iscas.org.uk or call 020 3713 1746.

Health and social care regulation

All healthcare organisations in England – whether run by the NHS or privately – must meet the standards of quality and safety set by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). It has responsibility for inspecting and monitoring organisations that provide health and social care.

While the CQC does not handle individual complaints, you can give feedback on your experience by contacting them at www.cqc.org.uk or on 0300 061 6161.