



Getting help with making a complaint

Scotland

Working with doctors Working for patients

General
Medical
Council

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

Patient Advice and Support Service

0808 800 9060

The service was set up by the *Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011* and can be accessed through your local **Citizens Advice Bureau**. This independent service provides confidential information, advice and support to people using the NHS in Scotland, as well as a range of other issues covered by Citizens Advice Scotland.

www.patientadviceScotland.org.uk

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

0131 556 6443

Aims to make independent advocacy available to every vulnerable person in Scotland to enable them to express their needs and make decisions about their own care. You can find details of advocacy groups on their website.

www.siaa.org.uk/find-advocate

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

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

All people with learning disabilities or users of mental health services have a right to independent advocacy under Scottish law, whether or not you are subject to mental health powers. You can speak to someone at the local health board about getting an advocate to help you understand your rights, discuss treatment options, or apply to the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland to review the decision to use mental health powers.

The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland

0131 313 8777

Monitors the use of mental health legislation, visits patients and carries out investigations. Its phone line offers advice and information about the rights of people receiving care under mental health or incapacity law.

www.mwcscot.org.uk

Breathing Space

0800 83 85 87

Provides a free, confidential service to give support and information, and signpost people to other organisations that can help.

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

Enable Direct

0300 0200 101

Provides impartial advice to people with a learning disability.

www.enable.org.uk

Making a complaint locally

For patients treated by NHS Scotland

Patients have a legal right to complain or give feedback on care and treatment provided by the NHS in Scotland, 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 and local support services on the NHS Inform website: **www.nhsinform.co.uk/rights**.

For complaints about GP services, you should speak to the practice manager. If you have already done this and you are unhappy with the response, please contact the ombudsman (see below).

For complaints about hospital, mental health, or out-of-hours services, you should speak to the service concerned. If you are unhappy with their response, you can talk to the feedback and complaints team at your local NHS health board. You can find details of your NHS health board at **www.nhsinform.co.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 the Patient Advice and Support Service (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 Scottish Public Service Ombudsman to seek a review of the decision. Go to **www.spso.org.uk** or call 0800 377 7330.

For patients treated privately

When you receive treatment from a private healthcare provider, you should raise your complaint with the manager at the clinic or hospital where you were treated. If your treatment is funded by the local health board, 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 Improvement Scotland may investigate complaints about services provided by registered independent healthcare providers. Please see below for details.

Health and social care regulation

Health Improvement Scotland promotes improvements in the quality of healthcare. While it does not handle individual complaints about NHS services, it regulates registered independent healthcare providers in Scotland. More information can be found at **www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org** or by calling 0131 623 4300.

The Care Inspectorate scrutinizes and improves care, social work and child protection services in Scotland. While it is best to speak to the organisation concerned, the Care Inspectorate may be able to investigate the standard of the care they provide. More information can be found at **www.scswis.com** or by calling 0845 600 9527.



Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org

Website: www.gmc-uk.org

Telephone: **0161 923 6602**

General Medical Council, 3 Hardman Street, Manchester M3 3AW

Textphone: **please dial the prefix 18001** then
0161 923 6602 to use the Text Relay service

This information can be made available in alternative formats or languages. To request an alternative format, please call us on **0161 923 6602** or email us at **publications@gmc-uk.org**.

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