

Making a complaint about NHS care

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone who is a patient registered with a GP practice in the Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group area, can raise concerns, provide us with feedback or make a formal complaint. Contact us for advice if you are not sure. Those who can make a complaint include young people, adults, a family member, a carer, a friend or your local MP who can complain on your behalf with your permission.

Are my concerns, feedback and complaint confidential?

The Patient Advice and Complaints Team (PACT) provides a confidential service, but if concerns about someone's safety are noted and it is thought that a person may be at risk, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. We will however usually talk to you before we take any action.

No record of you making a complaint may be included in your patient care records, and making a complaint will not affect your care.

What are we able to deal with?

We would like to hear about your experiences, concerns and complaints about the NHS services we provide and the services of organisations we commission. If you are unclear what they are, please contact us.

Please note: Any feedback, concerns or complaints **solely about a GP, dentist, optician or a community pharmacist** are dealt with by ¹NHS England.

¹ www.england.nhs.uk/

Timeframe you have for raising a complaint?

If you have concerns which you would like to be investigated as a formal complaint you should make contact with us within 12 months of the incident or within 12 months of the matter coming to your attention. This time limit can sometimes be extended as long as it is still possible to investigate your complaint.

This timeframe is set by the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009².

Can I get help to make my complaint?

You will have a named complaint manager who will guide you through the complaints process, explaining each stage to you, and assisting with any queries you have.

You can also have assistance from a free independent advocate service. An NHS Complaints Advocate is independent of the NHS and may help you write a letter, attend a meeting with you or explain the options available to you. This service is free to anyone making a complaint about their NHS treatment or care.

If you live in the Devon County Council area, contact Devon Advocacy Consortium on: **Telephone:** 0300 343 5707 **Email:** dac@seap.org.uk

If you live in Plymouth, contact SEAP on 0300 3435719, Email: plymouth@seap.org.uk or Text: 80800, keyword SEAP

² http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2009/309/pdfs/ukxi_20090309_en.pdf

What can I expect if I complain?

Step 1

What do you need to do?

- Contact us and give us the details of what happened and which issues you want to complain about.
- Tell us what outcome you are seeking – this could be an apology, an explanation, confirmation that improvement will happen, redress.
- Check the investigation plan which we will send you, and sign a consent form to allow us to ask for information from the services involved.

We will

- need to understand the details of your experience, the issues you want investigated, and what the outcome is you are seeking.
- ask you for written consent to seek answers from any related organisations.
- tell you the likely time scale for a response.
- usually provide a written response but you or your case manager may suggest a meeting to help resolve issues. You will then receive a written record of the meeting and agreements from it.
- If there is an urgent element to your situation, we may be able to deal with this through a PALS enquiry, and then the rest of the issues within a complaint.

Step 2 Investigation plan

We will complete an investigation plan and ask you to confirm that it covers all the issues you want answers about. We then send this with your consent to each agency that needs to give answers. We expect them to complete a full investigation within a set time, including identifying any actions required to improve systems and services.

Step 3 Your complaint response

Your case manager will receive all answers and let you know of any delays. They then prepare a final response letter checking we have the answers to all the questions from the original investigation plan. The letter is checked with the contributing agencies and then quality checked by a senior manager in the Nursing and Quality directorate. It is then forwarded to the chief officer for signature before it is sent to you.

Step 4 Further steps

Should you have any follow up questions or challenges, we will be happy to receive these within 3 months of you receiving the response letter. If you remain unhappy with the final response, you can then refer your complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, whose details are included in all response letters.

Helpful information:

NHS Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group policies are all available on our website. The following can be found using the below links:

Patient Advice and Complaints Policy and Redress:

<http://www.newdevonccg.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/pals-and-complaints-team/100081>

Safeguarding Policies:

<http://www.newdevonccg.nhs.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-adults---/100253>

Incident reporting:

<http://www.newdevonccg.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/serious-incidents/100099>

NHS England public contact centre:

Telephone: **0300 311 22 33** or email: england.contactus@nhs.net

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman: <http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>

Customer helpline: 0345 015 4033 8:30am - 5:30pm Monday - Friday