

Making a complaint about an NHS organisation Tips on how write a complaint letter

Find out which organisation you should complain to

NHS services are delivered by a number of different organisations. If you are unsure where to direct your complaint please read the information on our website www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk/nhs-services-coventry or contact Healthwatch Coventry on 024 7625 2011.

As a guide you should address your complaints letter to the following people:

GP and dental practices

If you are complaining about a GP Practice or dentist you should address your letter to the “Complaints Manager” at the particular practice in question. Or you can complain to NHS England, the body which manages the funding of GPs and dentist and other primary care services by contacting:

Post: NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT
Tel: 0300 311 2233
Email: england.contactus@nhs.net

NHS Trusts or Clinical Commissioning Group

If your complaint is about a NHS Trust (such as a hospital) or Clinical Commissioning Group (“CCG”), which organises local health services you should address your letter to the Chief Executive of that organisation. Simply writing “Chief Executive” is enough and you do not have to obtain the name of the particular person in question.

Things to say in your letter

The letter should state that it is a “formal complaint” and that you wish the complaint to be investigated under the “NHS Complaints Procedure”.

You should request that the organisation in question acknowledges that your letter has been received within 3 working days of it having received your complaint.

When setting out your complaint you should:

- Be as brief as you can and use straightforward language and short sentences;
- Try to address only one point at a time and try to avoid repetition in your letter by addressing each issue once if possible;

- Deal with the most important points of your complaint first and resist the temptation to write a long letter about every issue that you have rather than those most important to you;
- How you feel about things will always be a big part of any complaint, however, when you set out how you feel and the reasons as to why you feel let down or upset, try to avoid using hostile, aggressive or accusatory language;
- Explain clearly what you hope to achieve by complaining.
- If a complaint is very long with lots of dates and events try and provide a list of those dates and events or a log sheet with details of where and when each event occurred. This will help the person dealing with your complaint to understand it better.

Time frames

Complaints using the NHS Complaints Procedure should normally be made within 12 months of the date of the event that you're complaining about, or 12 months from the date when the matter first came to your attention.

Different organisations will have their own time limit to respond to your complaint and they should only go over this if it is reasonable and they warn you about this. The maximum time limit for the final response is 6 months under the NHS regulations.

You can send further letters requesting an update if the suggested timescales are not met.

Keep a log

It is a good idea to:

- Create an accurate record of events, detailing who you spoke to, what was said, when this happened etc.
- Keep copies of letters and emails you send and receive and keep a note of phone calls you make
- If you have documents that you want to rely on make sure you send copies. Never send the originals;
- You can 'CC' your local Healthwatch into letters and emails you send about your complaint so that we get a copy and the organisation knows we have received it too.

This information sheet is a guide only, you can choose to write your letter of complaint how you wish.