



Giving feedback or making a complaint about the NHS

In the NHS in Scotland, we try to give you the best possible care and treatment. We welcome and value your views, good or bad, to help us improve the service.

This leaflet explains:

- how to give feedback, make comments or raise concerns about the health care you receive and
- how to complain using the NHS complaints procedure.

Giving feedback about the NHS

Tell us about anything that is important to you

For example:

- If you're in hospital or have been recently, you may want to tell us what you think about the care and treatment you received or about the food or the ward.
- You may want to tell us about something we've done well

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- You may be concerned that you don't have enough information about the care and treatment being offered or about visiting hours, car parking or opening times.

How can I give my feedback?

You can give your feedback by:

- talking to a member of staff involved in your care
- giving your views through a patient survey or questionnaire
- phoning the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88
- giving your views through the Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) (see page 10 for contact details)
- putting your comments in a suggestion box, or
- contacting your NHS board (see page 9 for how to do this).

What happens to my feedback?

We will use your feedback to improve the services we provide.

Making a complaint about the NHS

What can I complain about?

Things you can complain about include:

- care or treatment you have had or are having in the NHS
- anything to do with the place where you are seen, for example a doctor's surgery, a hospital, a dental practice, an optician, a pharmacy, a prison health centre or an ambulance
- any member of NHS staff involved in your care

- how our services in your local area are organised, if this has affected your care or treatment.

If your complaint also involves another part of the NHS or another organisation, such as social services, we may need to pass it to someone there. We will tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things you can't complain about through the NHS complaints procedure. These include:

- private health care or treatment
- services not provided or funded by the NHS, and
- something you are taking legal action about.

The NHS complaints procedure doesn't usually provide financial compensation. The independent Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) may be able to tell you where to get information about specialist solicitors who handle negligence claims. See page 10 for contact details.

Who can complain?

You can complain if you have:

- had or are having NHS care or treatment
- visited or used our services or facilities, or
- been affected or likely to be affected by something we have done or haven't done.

You can complain for someone else if you:

- have their agreement to complain – the patient would also need to agree that staff could look at their health records if necessary
- are a child's parent, guardian or main carer and your child is not mature enough to understand how to make a complaint
- have a welfare power of attorney or a welfare guardianship order for someone who cannot make decisions for themselves, and the order specifies that you have the power to make a complaint about health care
- are a relative of, or had a relationship with, a patient who has died and you were concerned about how they were treated before they died, or
- are acting as an advocate for the patient (see pages 7 to 8 for more about advocacy).

How long do I have to make a complaint?

We have a time limit for complaints. Normally, you must make your complaint:

- within six months of the event you want to complain about, or
- within six months of you finding out that you have a reason to complain – but no longer than 12 months after the event.

However, if you feel the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please speak to the person dealing with the complaint. Sometimes we can accept a complaint after the time limit.

You can complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman about a decision by the NHS not to accept your complaint (see page 11 for more information).

How to complain

What should I do?

- If you can, first talk to a member of staff involved in your care. If you do this, we can try to sort out your complaint on the spot.
- If you are not able to talk to the NHS staff involved in your care, you can ask to speak to a senior member of staff or the complaints officer for the NHS organisation involved.
- You can complain in person, by phone, or in writing. When complaining, you should give:
 - your full name and address (and the patient's name and address if you are complaining for them), and
 - as much helpful information as possible about what happened, where it happened and when.
- You can also make your complaint by fax, email or textphone (if available), but if you do this other people may be able to see your personal information.

Who should I complain to?

- You should first complain directly to the person or organisation providing the service.
- If you don't want to complain directly to health professionals involved in your care, contact your local NHS board to find out who can help you with your complaint – see page 9 of the leaflet.
- If your complaint is about NHS 24 or the Golden Jubilee National Hospital, you should first speak to the person who was dealing with you. If you do not feel able to do this, speak to the complaints officer at the organisation. The contact details are on page 10.

- If your complaint is about the Scottish Ambulance Service, you should complain to their headquarters. The contact details are on pages 9 to 10.
- If your complaint is about the State Hospital, you should complain to the complaints officer there. The contact details are on page 11.

What happens after I have complained?

- We will try to sort out your complaint on the spot.
- We will write to you within three working days of getting your complaint.
- This letter should:
 - tell you what action we will take to look into your complaint
 - offer you the chance to talk to a member of staff about the complaint
 - give you information about advice and support available through the Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) (see page 10 for more information), and
 - give you information about mediation services if this may be helpful (see page 8 for more information).
- We will keep information about you confidential. To investigate your complaint, we may have to talk to other NHS staff about you or show them your health records. If you don't want us to share information from your health records, you should tell us when you make your complaint, but bear in mind that this may make it more difficult to look into your complaint.
- We will make a record of your details and complaint, and use it to help us make services better.

When will I get a full response?

- We will write to you with a full response within 20 working days of receiving your complaint.
- In some cases, we may need more time to give you a full response and won't be able to keep to these timescales. If this happens, we will let you know and tell you why.
- In our response we will let you know the result of our investigation. We will:
 - show that we have looked into your complaint and reply to all the points raised in it
 - offer you an apology where things have gone wrong
 - explain what we will do to stop what you complained about happening again
 - if necessary, explain why nothing more can be done about some parts of your complaint
 - offer you the chance to talk to a member of staff if there is anything in the letter you don't understand, and
 - include information about the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman in case you are unhappy with our response and want to take things further (see page 11 for more information).

Who can help me with my complaint?

Patient advice and support

- If you would like to speak to someone for advice or help with making a complaint please ask a member of staff for details about the Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) which is

available through local citizens advice bureaux. See page 9 for contact details.

Advocacy

- If you want someone to help you express your views, you can ask for an advocate. An advocate is someone independent of the NHS who will help make sure your views are heard and that you have access to the information you need to make your own decisions. Your local NHS board or the feedback and complaints officer will be able to tell you about advocacy services in your area..

Mediation

- Mediation means bringing people together to try to resolve a problem.
- An independent mediator can try to help you and the person you have complained about agree what should happen next.
- Mediation can only be used if you and the person you've complained about both agree to it.
- To find out more about mediation, please ask the person who is dealing with your complaint.

What if I change my mind after I've complained?

- You can change your mind about making a complaint at any time. Please let us know as soon as possible. It would be helpful if you could write and tell us, but otherwise a phone call will do.

What if I'm not happy about the way the NHS has handled my complaint?

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

- If the NHS has fully investigated your complaint and you are still not happy, you can ask the SPSO to consider your complaint further.
 - The SPSO cannot normally look at complaints more than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about. Sometimes this time limit will not apply. Please contact the SPSO for more information.
 - The SPSO cannot look at matters that have been or are being considered in court.
- If you are not happy with the way the NHS is dealing with your complaint, for example if you think it is taking too long, you can contact the SPSO.
- The Ombudsman does not take up all cases and will decide whether or not to investigate your complaint further. See page 11 to find out how to contact the Ombudsman.

How to find out more

- For more information about anything in this leaflet, contact:
 - your local NHS board and ask to speak to someone about complaints

To find contact details for your local NHS board:

- look in the phone book under 'health services'
- call the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88, or
- look on the internet at www.hris.org.uk

- the NHS inform Helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88)
- the Patient Advice & Support Service (PASS) at your local citizens advice bureau (find your nearest bureau on the website at **www.cas.org.uk** or in your local phone book). PASS is independent and provides free, confidential information, advice and support to anyone who uses the NHS in Scotland.

Scottish Ambulance Service

To complain about the ambulance service, contact:

Feedback and Complaints Officer

Scottish Ambulance Service, National Headquarters, Gyle Square,
1 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9EB

Phone **0131 314 0000**

NHS 24

To complain about NHS 24, contact:

Feedback and Complaints Officer, Patient Customer Relations
Department, NHS 24, Caledonia House, Fifty Pitches Road,
Cardonald Park, Glasgow G51 4ED

Phone **0141 337 4501**

Golden Jubilee National Hospital

To complain about the Golden Jubilee National Hospital, contact:

Feedback and Complaints Officer (Risk Officer)

NHS Waiting Times Centre Board, Golden Jubilee National
Hospital, Agamemnon Street, Clydebank G81 4DY

Phone **0141 951 5177**

State Hospital

To complain about the State Hospital, contact:

Feedback and Complaints Officer

The State Hospital, Carstairs, Lanark, ML11 8RP

Phone **01555 842 200**

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Freepost EH641, Edinburgh, EH3 0BR

Phone **0800 377 7330**

Text message **07900 494 372**

Email **ask@spsso.org.uk**

Website **www.spsso.org.uk**

Information about health rights

- **Confidentiality – it's your right** explains how the NHS protects your personal health information.
- **How to see your health records** explains your right to see or have a copy of your health record.
- **Consent – it's your decision** explains how you should be involved in decisions about your health care and treatment.
- **Health care for overseas visitors** is a set of factsheets explaining what NHS services overseas visitors can expect to receive while they are in Scotland.

- **The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities** is a summary of the rights and responsibilities patients have when using NHS services in Scotland (available from October 2012)

Information for young people

- **Consent – your rights** explains how you should be involved in decisions about your health care and treatment.
- **Confidentiality – your rights** tells you how the health service keeps information about you private.
- **Have your say! Your right to be heard** tells you how to give feedback or make a complaint about the NHS.

Information for carers

- **Caring and consent** explains your right to be involved in decisions about the health care of the adult you care for.

You can get this information from:

- GP and dental surgeries, hospitals and other places where you get NHS care
- the NHS inform Helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88)
- www.nhsinform.co.uk or www.hris.org.uk
- your local citizens advice bureau (find your nearest bureau on the internet at www.cas.org.uk or in your local phone book).

Your comments please!

We want to know what you think about this leaflet.

Please give us your comments:

- by post to **NHS inform**, NHS 24, Golden Jubilee National Hospital, Beardmore Street, Clydebank G81 4HX
- by emailing us at **nhs.inform@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk**
- by visiting our website at **www.nhsinform.co.uk** and clicking on the 'contact us' link, or
- by phoning us on **0800 22 44 88**.

We have tried our best to make sure the information in this leaflet is correct. However, the leaflet is for guidance only so you should not rely on it as a full statement of the law. If you are thinking about taking legal action, you should contact a solicitor, a citizens advice bureau, the Patient Advice & Support Service or other advice agency.

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