

how to make a complaint about your GP practice

You can complain to your GP practice

Talk to the reception staff or to the practice manager and ask them how to make a complaint. They will give you a copy of their complaints procedure. They may say you can:

- ▶ talk to someone
- ▶ write to them
- ▶ fill in a form

Complain as soon as you can. You must complain within 12 months of the date of the event that you're complaining about. Ask them when you can expect to hear back from them.

It is fine to make a complaint. No one will treat you badly because of it. But if your complaint concerns an individual, try to speak to the person you are unhappy with first. It may solve the problem.

Be clear that you are complaining. If staff at your GP surgery think you are just giving feedback, your complaint may not be dealt with in the same way. If in doubt, put your complaint in writing.

Or you can complain to NHS England

If you don't feel comfortable complaining to your GP practice, you can complain directly to NHS England instead.

When you complain to your GP practice you start a two way conversation. However, when you complain to NHS England the process is more formal. You will probably only get one chance to put your case. Make sure you give them all the relevant information. They will then need to contact the GP practice to investigate.

- ▶ email england.contactus@nhs.net
- ▶ write to NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT
- ▶ telephone 0300 311 22 33

But you can't do both

If you are unhappy with the way your GP practice have dealt with your complaint, you cannot then complain to NHS England. You must do one or the other. But you still have the right to appeal. (see overleaf)

Support making your complaint

If you need support to make a complaint you can contact NHS Complaints Advocacy at VoiceAbility. They can provide you with an advocate; a person who will help you to complain. Your advocate will:

- ▶ ensure that you understand your options
- ▶ help you to achieve the outcome you are seeking

You can ask for an advocate to assist you at any point in your complaint. If you would like an advocate to work with you, contact VoiceAbility's NHS complaints helpline:

- ▶ telephone 0300 330 5454
- ▶ textphone 0786 002 2939

The website www.nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org has resources to support you to make a complaint by yourself. These are available in a range of languages, as well as Easy Read and large print formats.

What if you're still not happy?

If you're unhappy with the result of your complaint you can appeal to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. This cannot be your first port of call. You must first complain to either the GP practice or to NHS England. The Ombudsman can only help if:

- ▶ the GP practice or NHS England have finished looking at your complaint
 - ▶ or your complaint has not been sorted out after 6 months
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- ▶ telephone 0345 015 4033
 - ▶ email phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk
 - ▶ www.ombudsman.org.uk/make-a-complaint

By law you need to contact the Ombudsman within a year of the incident you are complaining about. If it was more than a year ago they may still be able to help if there were good reasons for the delay.

Healthwatch Islington

If you are happy with the service at your GP practice, but would like to complain about another health or social care service you use, contact Healthwatch Islington. Healthwatch Islington will let you know who you need to contact in order to make a complaint (or to leave positive feedback) about other services in the borough, for example dentists, pharmacies, opticians, hospitals, mental health services, care homes, day centres, and out of hours services.

- ▶ telephone 020 7832 5828
- ▶ email info@healthwatchislington.co.uk
- ▶ www.healthwatchislington.co.uk