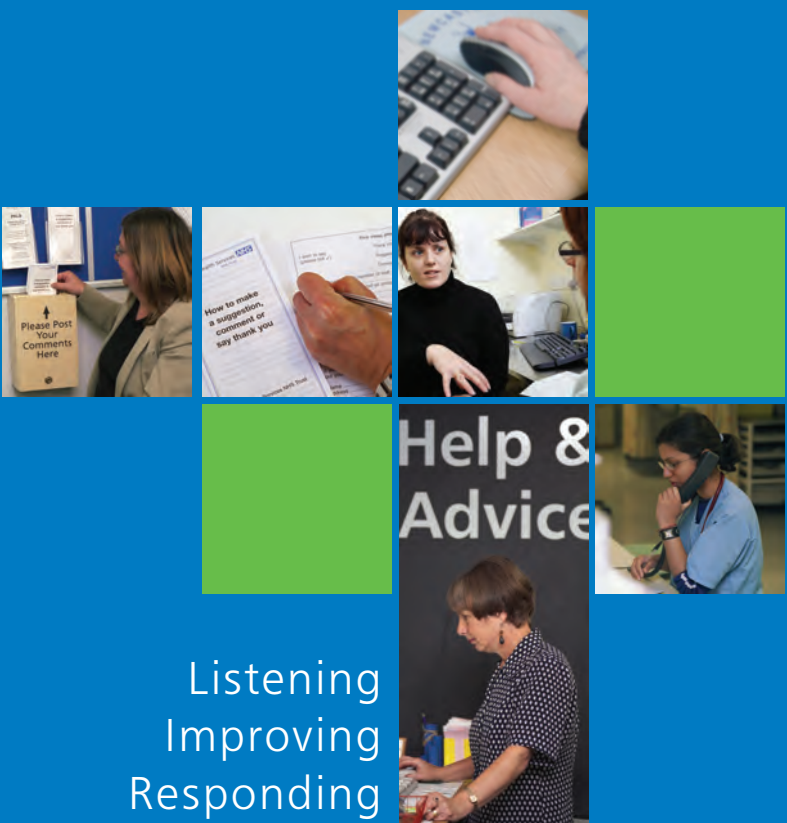


# How to complain about, comment on or compliment our services



Listening  
Improving  
Responding

Any national health service provided in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland or adult social care service in Northumberland

Freepost Plus RRYY-HGHX-TESR  
NHS North of Tyne  
1 Esh Plaza  
Sir Bobby Robson Way  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
NE13 9BA





## About this booklet

This booklet explains what to do if you wish to complain about, comment on or compliment a service commissioned by NHS North of Tyne.

At NHS North of Tyne it is our job to make sure that you receive the right service at the right time when you become ill or have an accident or to help you stay well. To do this we have contracts with a range of organisations that provide health care services, such as hospitals, community services, GP practices, community pharmacies, dentists, opticians, community and voluntary organisations and the private sector.

We expect all organisations that we contract with to provide high quality care and we know that while most people are happy with the care they receive, this isn't always the case.

We know there are times when service users want to comment on or complain about a service or to compliment the service or the staff involved. We will be pleased to pass on to the appropriate department any comments you may have about our services (positive and negative), as we do welcome any feedback.

In April 2009 a new way of dealing with NHS and social care complaints was introduced by the government. The aim was to make it easier for people by providing a common approach across the NHS and social care. This new way of working is much more centred on the needs and wishes of the person raising the concern or complaint than the previous system. There is much greater emphasis on organisations learning from complaints and using them positively, to make improvements to their services.

## How to raise a concern or complaint

It is often possible to resolve your concerns or complaints when they arise by talking to the staff immediately involved, or another member of staff such as a nurse, receptionist, practice manager, care manager or team leader. Whoever you ask to look into your concern or complaint will do their best to sort out the problem as quickly as possible. They will be careful to make sure that any information about you is kept confidential and that complaining will not influence or affect any further care and treatment.

If it's not possible to resolve the matter in this way or you would rather talk to someone not directly involved in your care, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS - see page 4) or contact the complaints lead for the NHS or social care organisation providing the service (see contacts). Alternatively, concerns can be raised with the patient experience manager for NHS North of Tyne (see contacts on pages 12 and 13).

Complaints can be made in writing (including by email) or verbally and may be made on your behalf by someone else. If someone is making the complaint on your behalf and we need to disclose confidential information to investigate the complaint, we will always need to seek your consent first. This is to protect your confidentiality.

## What if I want to compliment a service?

You can contact the service directly or you can telephone or write to PALS or any of the complaints leads listed in the contacts section at the back of this leaflet and they will ensure your compliment is passed onto the staff concerned.



## PALS

Every NHS organisation has a Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) which can provide confidential advice and support to help you sort out any concerns you might have about any aspect of NHS care you receive. They can also provide general information about NHS services.

PALS can often sort out your concerns quickly and informally but can also provide advice on how to access the formal complaints route if the issue requires a more detailed investigation by the organisation providing the service.

### PALS aims to:

- Advise and support patients, their families and carers
- Provide information on NHS services
- Listen to concerns, suggestions and queries
- Help sort out problems quickly on your behalf

### PALS cannot:

- Help with social care complaints but they can advise you on who to contact
- Help with a formal complaint requiring an investigation

See contacts section on pages 12 and 13 for details.

## What will happen next?

Depending on the nature of your complaint the staff member or PALS representative may be able to resolve the issue for you or if this is not possible they will recommend referring you to the complaints team of the organisation providing the service for further investigation.

### Local resolution

All complaints should be acknowledged (either verbally or in writing) within three working days. Following receipt of your complaint you will be contacted by the organisation's complaints officer.

It may be possible for the organisation involved to quickly resolve your concerns, but if this is not the case, the complaints officer will discuss your complaint in more detail with you. At this point, an investigation plan will be agreed with you providing options for the handling of your complaint, how it is responded to, a time-scale to respond and what you would ideally like to see happen to resolve your complaint.

Once this has been discussed an agreed action plan will usually be drawn up and a copy sent to you.

An investigating officer will be appointed to investigate your complaint. This person will keep you updated about the investigation progress and discuss any potential changes such as longer time-scale required and further information needed etc.

By the end of the investigation we hope to answer all your questions, address your concerns satisfactorily and make necessary improvements to services where appropriate.

This is called local resolution.



## What if I am not satisfied with the response?

While we will do all we can to provide a satisfactory response, you may still feel your concerns have not been fully addressed. If this is the case, you can seek a review by the ombudsman.

### Review by the ombudsman

You have the right to refer your complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (NHS services) or Local Government Ombudsman (social care) for review. (See contacts on pages 12 and 13 for details)

The ombudsman does not have to investigate every complaint put to him. He will not usually take on a complaint which has not been through the NHS and or social care complaints procedure, or a case which has been dealt with by the courts. He may also request the organisation involved, looks at the complaint again to see if more could be done to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Or the ombudsman may decide that he needs to carry out an independent review of your complaint. Following this he may then decide the organisation should take some specific action(s) or carry out some recommendations. Whatever he decides, you will be informed by his office.

## Who do I contact to make a complaint?

You can initially contact a member of staff or PALS if your complaint is about an NHS service, (see contacts on pages 12 and 13) or you can contact the complaints lead of the organisation directly providing the service.

## What if I am unsure about which organisation provides the service I wish to complain about?

You can contact PALS or NHS North of Tyne for further information and advice.

If an organisation receives a complaint about a service which is not provided by them they will contact you and seek your consent to forward the complaint to the right organisation.



## What if I have a complaint about a GP practice, dentist, pharmacy or optician?

As highlighted earlier, many concerns can be resolved quickly, by talking to the staff immediately involved at the time. If this is not possible you should ask to speak to the practice manager/supervisor who is usually the person responsible for handling complaints.

If your concerns cannot be resolved straightway the practice should follow the same local resolution procedure as outlined above.

## What if I do not want to contact the organisation directly to make a complaint?

You can contact PALS in the first instance.

Alternatively you can contact NHS North of Tyne who with your consent, will liaise on your behalf with the organisation you are making the complaint about.

In most cases NHS North of Tyne will ask the organisation providing the service to investigate and respond to you directly.

However, depending on the nature of the complaint NHS North of Tyne may decide to carry out the investigation themselves. This will be discussed with you during the initial action planning stage (see above) and with the organisation involved.

If your complaint has already been investigated and responded to by another NHS or social care organisation, NHS North of Tyne is not able to investigate it again. If this is the case and you are still unhappy about the way your complaint has been handled, you can ask the ombudsman to review the complaint.



## What if my complaint involves more than one NHS or social care organisation?

To make the process as easy as possible for you the NHS and social care organisations across the North and South of Tyne areas have an agreement about handling complaints which involve more than one organisation.

In such cases, the main organisation involved in your care will usually take the lead in investigating the complaint and will ask the other organisations involved to look into the issues relating to their organisation.

They will then provide a response to the lead organisation. This means you can receive one response covering all aspects of your complaint rather than separate responses from each organisation.

This approach will be discussed and agreed with you during the initial contact stage.

## Is there a timescale for making a complaint?

The law states that people wishing to make a complaint should do so within 12 months of the incident happening or of becoming aware of the matter being complained about.

There may be a few occasions when this timescale may not be possible and if the organisation receiving a complaint outside this period feels there was a good reason for it not being raised earlier and the complaint can still be handled effectively and fairly, they may decide that it is still possible to investigate.

## What if I need some advocacy or support in making my complaint?

The Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) provides support to people (eg writing complaint letters) who want to make a complaint about their NHS treatment.

ICAS is totally independent of the NHS, is free and confidential to all NHS service users. See contacts section on pages 12 and 13 for details.

## I don't actually want to make a complaint but want to make a general comment about a service(s) – who can I contact?

Even if you do not want to make an individual complaint we are interested in your views about services and we want you to have the opportunity to discuss this with us. You can do this by contacting PALS or the Communications and public engagement team or by completing the tear off comment slip at the end of the leaflet and posting it to:

### Communications and public engagement team

Freepost Plus RRYY-HGHX-TESR

NHS North of Tyne

1 Esh Plaza

Sir Bobby Robson Way

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE13 9BA

Tel: 0191 217 2599

E-mail: [getinvolved@northoftyne.nhs.uk](mailto:getinvolved@northoftyne.nhs.uk)



## Who to contact

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freepost: RLTC-SCHH-EGXJ  
The Old Stables  
Grey's Yard, Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 1QD  
Tel: 0800 032 0202 (freephone)  
Text: 01670 511098  
E-mail: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

### NHS North of Tyne

Patient Experience Manager  
Bevan House, 1 Esh Plaza  
Sir Bobby Robson Way, Great Park,  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE13 9BA  
Tel: 0191 217 2790  
Fax: 0191 217 2701  
E-mail: complaints@northoftyne.nhs.uk

### Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)

The Executive Centre Newcastle  
Cuthbert House, City Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 2ET  
Tel: 0300 456 8348  
E-mail: newcastleicas@carersfederation.co.uk

### Ombudsman (Health Service complaints)

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman  
Millbank Tower, Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP  
Tel: 0345 0154033  
Fax: 0345 0614000  
E-mail: phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk  
Website: www.ombudsman.org.uk

### Local Government Ombudsman (Social Care)

PO Box 4771  
Coventry  
CV4 0EH  
Tel: 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1993  
Fax: 024 768 20001  
Website: www.lgo.org.uk



### Compliments, general comments or complaints

If you have any ideas, comments or criticisms, do let us know. Your valued comments will help us to review and improve the services that we provide. Should you wish to pay a compliment, make a general comment or complaint, please complete and place this form in one of the comments boxes, placed around many of the sites, alternatively, you can forward this form by freepost to the communications and public engagement team at NHS North of Tyne.

**NB: This is not a secure means of post and you should not use this form to provide confidential information about yourself or anyone else.**

### Communications and public engagement team

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E-mail: [getinvolved@northoftyne.nhs.uk](mailto:getinvolved@northoftyne.nhs.uk)

This document is available in large print and other languages on request: Tel: **0191 217 2599**

**NB: You should not use this form to provide confidential or sensitive information about yourself or anyone else.**

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

..... Telephone Number: .....

Compliment:

Comment:

Complaint: