



North of England  
Commissioning Support

Partners in improving local health

## NHS Complaints Information

### Your experience of NHS services

The NHS North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) supports Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and other NHS organisations to improve health services for everyone.

We welcome feedback about NHS services, both positive and negative. If you are unhappy with the treatment or service you, a relative or someone you care for has received from your local NHS, you have the right to make a complaint, have it looked into and get a response. Within the NHS we aim to make sure all complaints are handled well and that appropriate action is taken in order to try and resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction.

### Can my issue be resolved without formally complaining?

You can raise your concerns immediately by speaking with the staff involved. This might give you the response you require without having to take the matter further.

You can also contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who can provide confidential advice and support to help you resolve queries and concerns about your NHS care within an NHS trust informally without having to make a formal complaint. In some NHS organisations, PALS staff are part of another department, for example, customer services or patient experience team.

It is important to note that PALS does not investigate complaints but will provide informal support in resolving a query or concern. PALS cannot help with issues which have already been raised via the NHS complaints procedure or with social care complaints (which need to be addressed by the local authority) and does not provide medical advice. Find out more about PALS on the NHS Choices website via the link below:

<http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1082.aspx?CategoryID=68&SubCategoryID=153>

### Who can help me make a complaint?

The Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA) Team can guide and support you through the complaints process. They can help you put your complaint in writing and attend meetings with you; however, the ICA Team does not investigate complaints.

- For **Northumberland**, please contact Healthwatch Northumberland by telephone on 03332 408468 or e-mail at [info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk)
- For **North Cumbria**, please contact Best Life Advocacy by telephone on 0300 303 8037 or email at [admin@peoplefirstcumbria.co.uk](mailto:admin@peoplefirstcumbria.co.uk)
- For **Stockton**, please contact Stockton ICA by telephone on 0808 1729553 or email [sica@pcp.uk.net](mailto:sica@pcp.uk.net)
- In **all other areas of the North East**, please contact the Carers Federation by telephone on 0808 802 3000 or email at [ica@carersfederation.co.uk](mailto:ica@carersfederation.co.uk)

## **What is NECS' role in the local complaints procedure?**

Local CCGs have asked NECS to manage complaints on their behalf. Therefore, if your complaint is about CCG commissioning or a funding decision you can contact either your local CCG or NECS and details of how to do this are provided below.

If you choose to submit your complaint to the CCG, this will be passed to NECS to manage on the CCG's behalf. If you are not happy for your complaint to be shared with NECS you must make this clear at the time of raising your complaint with the CCG.

If your complaint is about the services provided by NECS, the NECS Complaints Team will deal with it directly.

It should be noted that complaints relating to some types of funding decisions and eligibility criteria are not routinely handled via the complaints process; the Complaints Team can provide advice on the process to follow.

## **Who can complain?**

Anyone can complain about NHS services or treatment they have received or if they have been affected by the actions or decisions of an NHS organisation or primary care practitioner. If you are unable to complain yourself, someone can act on your behalf with your consent.

## **When should I make a complaint?**

A complaint should be made within 12 months from the date the issue occurred or when it came to your attention.

## **What happens if my complaint involves a number of different organisations?**

If your complaint involves more than one NHS organisation or the NHS and social care (provided by the local authority), you can make your complaint to just one of the organisations involved and they will liaise with the other organisations and arrange for you to receive a single, coordinated response.

## **How do I make a complaint?**

The NHS complaints procedure aims to resolve complaints quickly, at source. This is called 'local resolution' and it is advisable to complain to the organisation that provided the service you are unhappy about.

When you submit your complaint it would be helpful if you could be clear what you would like to achieve as a result of this so that the NHS can try to resolve the matter to your satisfaction.

You can make your complaint in writing, by email, or verbally. If you make your complaint verbally, you will be asked to sign and return a written record to ensure that you agree with the contents.

Alternatively you can complete a complaint form and return it to the NECS Complaints Team who will arrange for the responsible organisation to respond to your concerns.

To find out more about the NHS complaints procedure please visit the NHS Choices website via the link below:

<http://www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Rightsandpledges/complaints/Pages/NHScomplaints.aspx>

## Where do I send my complaint?

If your complaint is about a hospital, community or mental health service or independent provider you should send this to the NHS organisation involved.

If your complaint is about a GP practice, dental practice, community pharmacy or optician you should send it directly to that organisation.

If your complaint is about CCG commissioning, a funding decision or a service provided by NECS, you should send it to the address below:

Complaints Team  
North of England Commissioning Support Unit  
John Snow House  
University Science Park  
Durham  
DH1 3YG

0191 374 4218 [necsu.complaints@nhs.net](mailto:necsu.complaints@nhs.net)

Face to face meetings can be arranged with the Complaints Team, however, these are by appointment only. This service is not offered on a drop in basis.

## What happens if I prefer to complain directly to the commissioning organisation?

The commissioning organisation pays for the healthcare services in your area. The responsible commissioner will vary depending on the NHS service you are complaining about.

- If your complaint is about services such as hospital care, mental health services, out of hours services and community services such as district nursing, the CCG is the commissioner and you should send your complaint to NECS who will coordinate the complaint on behalf of the CCG
- If your complaint is about primary care services such as GPs, dentists, opticians or pharmacy services, NHS England is the commissioner. **The CCG and NECS cannot investigate complaints about primary care services.** More information about NHS England is available via <https://www.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/complaint/>
- If your complaint is about a public health organisation (which provides services that prevent disease, promote health and prolong life), your local authority is the commissioner. Information on finding your local authority is available via <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-your-council>

Complaining to the commissioner may be the right option if you are not comfortable complaining directly to your healthcare provider, or if you feel this is not appropriate. However, the healthcare provider will normally be given the opportunity to investigate and respond to your complaint directly. In cases where the CCG is the commissioner, NECS will request a copy of the complaint response for monitoring purposes.

Please note, if you have already complained to your healthcare provider, the commissioner will not be able to re-investigate the same concerns.

## **What can I expect in response?**

Your complaint will be fully investigated in a manner that is fair to both you and the staff involved. If failings are identified during the investigation, any necessary improvements will be made to the quality of services. You will receive a written response to your complaint which will include information on any service improvements.

## **What happens if I am unhappy with the response?**

If you remain unhappy with how your complaint has been handled following the conclusion of local resolution, you can ask the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) to review your complaint. You can contact the PHSO at the address below:

PHSO  
Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London  
SW1P 4QP

0345 015 4033

[phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk)

[www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)

## **Healthwatch**

Healthwatch is an organisation set up to get your opinion and find out what matters to you to help make sure your views shape the support you need. Local Healthwatch provides information about access to services and choices available to help people by taking more control of their own health, treatment and care.

For more information go to your local Healthwatch website:

<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/your-local-healthwatch/list>

For general enquiries call: 03000 683 000