

# What is NHS Complaints Advocacy?

Listening | Supporting | Enabling | Empowering



NHS Complaints Advocacy is free, independent of the NHS and confidential. We can help you to use the NHS complaints process which covers all NHS funded treatment.

As well as NHS hospitals, GPs, ambulance services, district nurses and mental health services, you can also use the NHS complaints process to complain about your dentist (if they treat you as an NHS patient), a pharmacist (if you had an NHS prescription) or your optician (if the NHS pays for your eye tests and glasses). Also if the NHS paid for you to be treated at a private hospital or pays all or part of someone's care home fees, this is covered by the complaints process.

## What the NHS Complaints Advocacy Service can and can't do?

We can:

- ✓ Give you information about how to complain including who to complain to
- ✓ Explain the complaints process and your options at each stage of the process
- ✓ Signpost you to other organisations who can help you if we can't
- ✓ Send you an information pack to help you make your complaint yourself
- ✓ Provide you with an advocate to support you if you need more help

We can't:

- ✓ Investigate your complaint
- ✓ Support you with a complaint about something that happened more than 12 months ago, unless you have only just found out that something went wrong or you have a good reason for not complaining sooner. This is because the NHS regulations say you should complain within 12 months
- ✓ Support you with a complaint about private health care
- ✓ Support you to complain about a medical professional's fitness to practise (whether they

are able to do their job)

- ✓ Give you legal advice
- ✓ Give you medical advice

## What sort of support can we offer?

We can send you our NHS complaints Handbook, which gives you information and guidance about making an NHS complaint, including information about the NHS complaints process and how to make your complaint.

If you are not sure whether to make a complaint, please contact us. We will listen and help you decide whether there are other ways of sorting out your concerns. You might find that the self-help information is all you need to make your complaint yourself but you can contact us again if you need more information or advice.

If you feel you need more help, an NHS Complaints advocate can support you at any stage of the complaints process.

## Advocates can help with:

- ✓ writing letters
- ✓ getting copies of your medical records
- ✓ finding information about your concerns
- ✓ Sometimes to sort out your concerns you might want to have a meeting with NHS staff
- ✓ If you decide to do this, your advocate can help you prepare for the meeting and if you want, come to it with you

If, after doing everything you can to sort out your complaint and you are not happy with the way the NHS has dealt with it, you can take your complaint to the Health Service Ombudsman.

This is the second and last stage of the NHS complaints process. You can find out more about taking your complaint to the Ombudsman from their website [www.ombudsman.org.uk/make-a-complaint](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/make-a-complaint).

If you need help taking your complaint to the ombudsman please contact us or speak to your advocate.