



Feedback and complaints

- How to have a say about your care
- How to have something done about your concerns or complaints

Who is this factsheet for?

This factsheet is for everyone who has been given care by the NHS in any part of Scotland.

What is this factsheet about?

The law says that:

- You have the right to have a say about your care.
- You have the right to get something done about your concerns or complaints.

This factsheet explains what these rights mean for you.



Giving feedback about the NHS in Scotland

The NHS wants to hear about anything that matters to you:

- You might want to say thank you or tell us about something that was done well.
- You might want to tell us about your experience in hospital - what you thought about the care you were given, the way you were treated, or things like the food on the ward.
- You might think that you don't have enough information about your care and treatment, about visiting hours, car parking or opening times.

How can I give my feedback?

To give your feedback, you can:

- talk to one of the staff involved in your care - this can be the best way to give feedback and get things sorted out quickly.
- contact your NHS Board by phone, email or online - see **page 10** to find out how.
- post a story on Care Opinion – www.careopinion.org.uk
- fill in a patient survey or questionnaire, or put your comments in a suggestion box
- phone the NHS inform Helpline on **0800 22 44 88**.
- Tell the Patient Advice Support Service (PASS) – see **page 10** to find out how.

What happens to my feedback?

The NHS is happy to have your feedback. It will be recorded and used to make our services better.

Making a complaint about the NHS in Scotland

What is a complaint?

We call it a complaint when someone tells us they are not happy about something we did or something we didn't do, or about the service given by us or the people who work for us.

Who can complain?

You can complain if you are affected by something that an NHS Board or a health service provider like a GP or dentist has done, or has not done.

If you are complaining for another person, the NHS Board or health service provider will have to check that the person wants you to make the complaint for them.

It will also have to check that they have agreed to have personal information about their healthcare shared as part of the complaint. If they do not agree, that will affect how the NHS Board or service provider handles your complaint.

All complaints are recorded and looked at because this helps the NHS to make its services better.



You can complain for another person if:

- The person is a child and you are their parent, guardian or main carer and they do not understand how to make a complaint. If they do understand how, they can make a complaint themselves or agree to someone else complaining for them.
- You have a welfare power of attorney or a welfare guardianship order for someone who cannot make decisions for themselves, and the order says you can complain about health care.

- Someone you are related to or in a relationship with has died and you want to complain about the way they were treated before they died.
- You are an advocate for the patient – see **page 8** for more about this.

What can I complain about?

Things you can complain to the NHS about:

- Care or treatment you have or are having in the NHS
- The place you are seen – a GP practice, a hospital, a dental practice, an optician, a pharmacy, a prison health centre or an ambulance.
- Any NHS staff member involved in your care.
- The way that NHS services are run in your area if this has affected your care or treatment.

If your complaint is also about another part of the NHS or a social work service, your complaint might be passed onto someone there. They will tell you what will be done about your complaint and who will get back to you.

For further details, please ask the organisations you are complaining about.

Complaints that are not handled by the NHS

Some things you might complain about are not handled by the NHS. These include:

- Private health care or treatment
- Services that are not given or funded by the NHS
- Anything you are taking legal action about.

If we get these complaints we will pass them on to the right people and tell you what happens next.

How do I complain?

If you can, talk to a member of staff involved in your care. Then we will try to sort out your complaint on the spot.

If you cannot or do not want to do this, you can ask to speak to a senior member of staff or the Feedback and Complaints Officer for the NHS organisation that's giving you care or treatment – **see page 10 to find out how.**

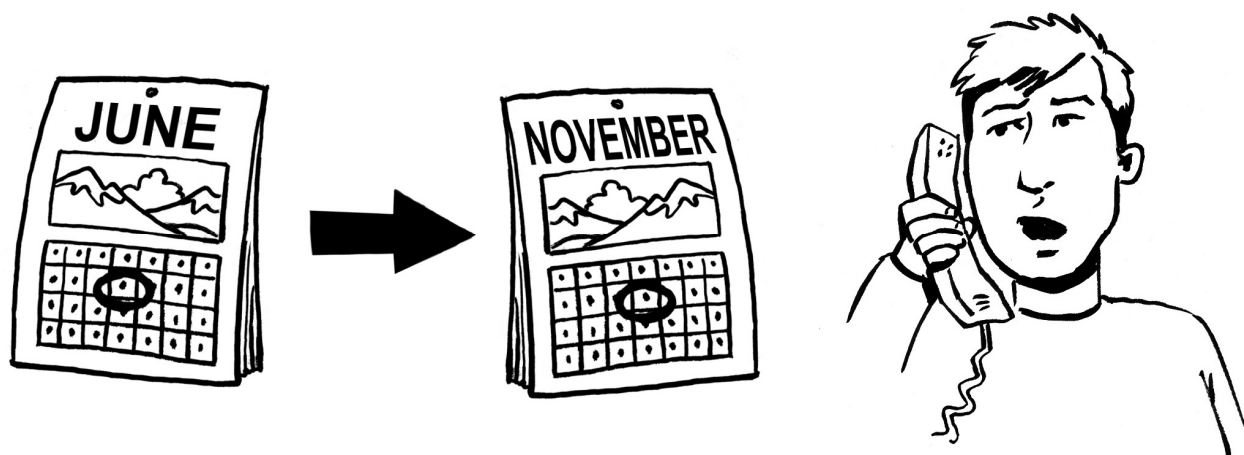


If you want to complain in writing you can send a letter or email. When complaining, you should give:

- Your full name and address (and the patient's full name and address if you are complaining for them).
- As much helpful information as possible about what happened, where it happened and when.
- What you would like us to do about your complaint.
- Your phone number, if you are happy to give it, so we can call you and talk about your complaint.

This information will help us understand the problem and what we need to do about it.

How long have I got to make a complaint?



You should make a complaint within six months of:

- When the thing that you want to complain about happened
- Finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months (1 year) after what happened.

We can accept some complaints after this time limit. If you don't think a time limit should be put on your complaint, please speak to the person who is dealing with it.

You can complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman if the NHS decide not to accept your complaint – see **page 9** to find out how.

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

You can change your mind about making a complaint at any time. Please tell the person who is handling your complaints as soon as possible.

What happens when I complain?

The NHS wants to deal with complaints as quickly as possible. This might mean an apology and an explanation for what went wrong, and fixing the problem right away.

The NHS deals with complaints in two stages. You can also take your complaint to the Ombudsman if you are not happy with the NHS decision.

The early resolution stage

If your complaint is simple and is easy to fix, staff will try to sort it out in **five working** days or less. This is called the 'early resolution' stage.

The investigation stage

If your complaint is more serious and complicated, or has not been sorted out in the early resolution stage, it will need to be investigated. This is called the 'investigation stage'.

At the investigation stage, staff will write to you within **three working days** to say that we know about your complaint. They will also get in touch by phone to talk about your complaint and to find out what you want done about it.

When will I get an answer?

The NHS will send you a letter within 20 working days of getting your complaint at the investigation stage. This letter should:

- Show that staff have looked at your complaint
- Answer all the points you made in your complaint
- Apologise if things went wrong
- Tell you what has been done, or what will be done to stop what you complained about from happening again.
- If needed, explain why the NHS cannot do anything more about some parts of your complaint
- Give you the chance to talk to a member of staff if there is anything in the letter you do not understand
- Give you information about the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, in case you are unhappy with the way the NHS has handled your complaint – see **page 9** for more information.

If we need more time to give you an answer, we will let you know and tell you why.

Who can help me with my complaint?

Other people can help with your complaint and give you advice:



Independent advice and support

Please ask a staff member if you want advice or help with making a complaint. They will give you details about the independent Patient Advice and Support Service. It's available through your local citizens advice bureau. **See page 9** for contact details.

Advocacy

If you want someone to help get your views across, you can ask for an advocate. An advocate is independent of the NHS. They can make sure your views are heard and that you get 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

Some complaints can be dealt with through mediation. This is a service where independent mediators help the person making the complaint and the NHS to agree. You can ask for mediation or Health Boards might offer it, but it can only happen if both sides agree to it. The Feedback and Complaints Officer at your local Health Board tell you more about this.

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

If the NHS has fully investigated your complaint but you're still not happy, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to look at it.

This is an organisation that makes sure that public service organisations in Scotland (like the NHS) are following the rules and treating people properly.

The Ombudsman cannot look at:

- A complaint that has not gone through the proper NHS complaints procedure – please make sure your complaint has been looked at by the NHS before you contact the Ombudsman
- Things that happened, or that you knew about, more than 12 months (1 year) ago
- Anything that has gone to court.

You can contact the Ombudsman:

In person

SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

By post

Freepost SPSO (You don't need to use a stamp)

By phone: **0800 377 7330**

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

Online contact **www.spsso.org.uk/contact-form**

How can I find out more?



For more information about anything in this factsheet and to get this leaflet in another language or format, contact :

- your local NHS board and ask to speak to someone about complaints or feedback.

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**
 - Look on the internet at www.nhsinform.scot
 - The NHS helpline on
- The NHS helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone **18001 0800 22 44 88**)
 - The Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) at your local citizens advice bureau or on **0800 917 2127**.

You can find the address of your local bureau on the internet:

www.cas.org.uk/pass

Scottish Ambulance Service

To complain about the **ambulance service**, contact:

Patient Experience Team

Corporate Affairs & Engagement

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:

Patient Affairs Service

NHS 24

Caledonia House, Fifty Pitches Road, Cardonald Park, Glasgow G51 4EB

Phone **0141 337 4597**

Golden Jubilee National Hospital

To complain about the **Golden Jubilee National Hospital**, contact:

Feedback and Legal Co-Ordinator

NHS National Waiting Times Centre Board

Golden Jubilee National Hospital

Agamemnon Street, Clydebank G81 4DY

Phone **0141 951 5951**

Email feedback@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk

The State Hospital

To complain about the **State Hospital**, contact:

Complaints Officer

The State Hospital

Carstairs

Lanark ML11 8RP

Phone **01555 842 200**

Information about health rights

The **Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities** explains what you can expect when you use the NHS in Scotland, as well as your rights and responsibilities.

The series of **Your health, your rights** factsheets tell you more about what these rights mean for you:

- **Access:** your rights when accessing NHS services in Scotland.
- **Communication and participation:** the right to be told about and involved in decisions about health care and services.
- **Confidentiality:** the right for your personal health information to be kept private.
- **Respect:** the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- **Safety:** the right to good, safe care.
- **Hospital waiting times:** how quickly you should get hospital care.

For more about health rights see the following:

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

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.

Information about health services

- **Getting NHS dental treatment in Scotland** tells you how to use NHS dental services in Scotland.
- **It's okay to ask** gives useful tips and questions you can ask during your health care appointments.
- **The NHS Chronic Medication Service at your local pharmacy** tells you about an NHS service for people with a long-term condition.
- **Your guide to free NHS eye examinations in Scotland** gives information about free NHS eye examinations in Scotland for all UK residents.

We have tried our best to make sure that the information in this factsheet is correct. However, the factsheet is not part of the Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities. It is for guidance only so you should not rely on it as a complete statement of the law.

Produced by NHS inform

