

NHS Complaints Advocacy Service

Do you have a complaint about the NHS?

Talk to us. Make your voice count.



Freephone 0800 161 5600

FREE, CONFIDENTIAL and INDEPENDENT



Healthwatch Staffordshire NHS Complaints Advocacy Service

Healthwatch Staffordshire acts as the independent voice of local people, using feedback from services and information from complaints. We champion quality health and social care services for people across Staffordshire.

What is Healthwatch Staffordshire NHS Complaints Advocacy Service?

**NHS Complaints Advocacy is:
Independent of the NHS
Confidential, and Free**

Advocacy provides practical support and information to people who want to complain about an NHS service.

It also supports people who want to make a complaint on someone else's behalf.

The service aims to help people understand what their options are and to support them through the NHS complaints process to ensure they get the best possible resolution. Every person who accesses the service will have different needs and every complaint is different which is why the service adapts the approach it takes to each case and tailors the support it provides to meet individual needs.

You decide the level of support you need and an advocate will work with you to ensure you get the best possible outcome to your complaint.



Your right to make a complaint

You have a right to make a complaint through the NHS complaints procedure if you are unhappy with the care, treatment or service you have received from the NHS.

The NHS Constitution explains your rights when it comes to making a complaint. You have the right to:

- have your complaint dealt with efficiently, and be properly investigated
- know the outcome of any investigation into your complaint
- take your complaint to the independent Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman if you're not satisfied with the way the NHS has dealt with your complaint

If you want to find out more about the NHS Constitution and your rights under the NHS complaints procedure, you can refer to the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

You can find links to the regulations by visiting the Department of Health's website: www.dh.gov.uk

This booklet will provide you with a straightforward description of what the NHS complaints procedure covers and how it works, who can complain, and how Healthwatch Staffordshire's NHS Complaints Advocacy Service can help you.



Are you concerned about something that is happening now?

The aim of the NHS complaints procedure is to help you get things put right as quickly as possible, so that you are able to continue with your healthcare without unnecessary worry or concern.

The complaints procedure says that if your concern is about current care or treatment your best option may well be to resolve the issue informally using one of the following routes:

- Speak to a member of staff directly involved with your treatment, or their manager. This is often the quickest way to put things right and stop them getting worse
- If your complaint concerns hospital treatment, please speak to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) - PALS provides information, advice and support to patients, families and their carers and can help you get answers to your questions quickly. PALS is run by NHS staff. For more information, please ask the person who is treating you

Who can complain?

Anyone can complain about the care, treatment or service they have received from the NHS.

You can also complain on someone else's behalf, if they have asked you to do so and provided their written consent, on behalf of a child or on behalf of someone who has died. If a person cannot complain for themselves due to lack of mental capacity (under the terms of the Mental Capacity Act 2005) or physical incapacity, you can also complain on their behalf. If you want to complain on someone else's behalf, talk to us and we can explain what you need to do as when a complaint is made on behalf of someone else, the organisation receiving the complaint has to consider:

- In the case of a child, whether there are reasonable grounds for you to make the complaint on the child's behalf and whether it is in the child's best interests and
- In the case of people who lack mental capacity, whether making the complaint on their behalf is in their best interests

Deciding if you have a complaint

If you are unsure whether you have a complaint, you can contact our advocacy team who can talk through your concerns and help you to decide if you want to make a complaint. The NHS complaint procedure may be the best route for you to follow if:

- You have raised your concerns but they have not been resolved fully
- What happened raises serious questions about standards of care
- You want to complain about more than one organisation
- You have complex issues to raise

What is covered by the NHS complaints procedure?

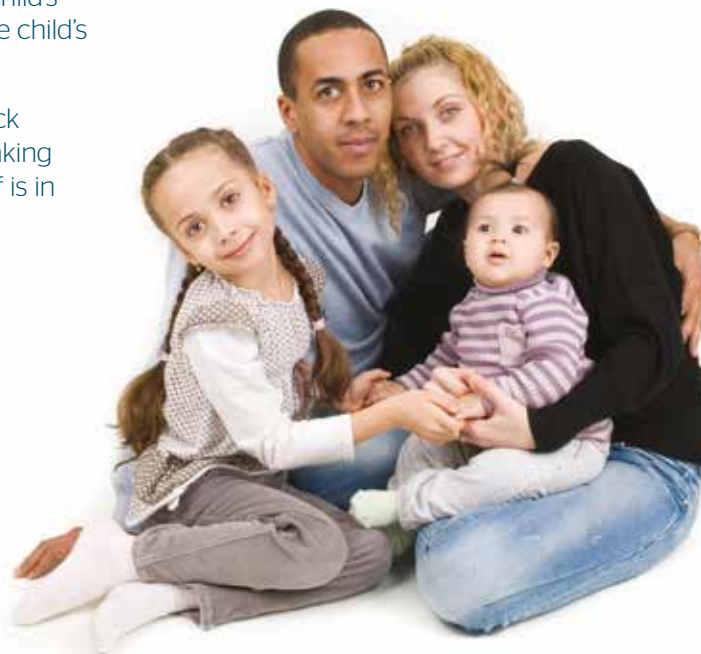
The NHS complaints procedure applies to all services provided or funded by the NHS including GPs, hospitals, pharmacies, opticians, the ambulance service and any NHS social care (including nursing home or home based care) that you might receive.

You can also use the NHS complaints procedure if your complaint covers both health and social care, and to complain about NHS funded nursing home care or a home based care package which is funded by the NHS.

You cannot use the NHS complaints system for complaints that are about:

- Social care alone or other services provided by the council
- Privately funded health, nursing home or home based care
- Personnel matters, such as getting staff disciplined
- Legal issues and claims for compensation
- Contractual matters and consultations about service changes

If you are concerned, you can talk to us in confidence. Call our Freephone: 0800 161 5600



Making your complaint

Self-Help Information Pack

Not everyone making a complaint about the NHS will need an advocate. Sometimes you may just need some information. If you decide you want to make a complaint and you feel comfortable making it yourself, you may find our Self-Help Information Pack useful as it will help you to think about your complaint, what you want to achieve and what your options are. It also provides guidance on how to write your letter of complaint, who to write to and gives you a step by step guide to making a complaint through the NHS complaints procedure.

You can download our Self-Help Information Pack from the NHS complaints section of our website www.healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk or call us on our Freephone 0800 161 5600 and we will send one out to you. We also have a range of guides and information leaflets on our website which you may find useful.

Advocacy support

If you don't feel comfortable making your complaint yourself, we can provide you with advocacy support. This can either be a one to one support service provided over the telephone or in person. We tailor our approach to fit your needs, and provide you with the level of support you require.



What Healthwatch Staffordshire's NHS Complaints Advocacy Service can and can't do

We can provide you with an Advocate who can:

- ✓ Answer your questions to help you make decisions
- ✓ Help you write letters to the right people
- ✓ Provide you with one to one support and explain your options
- ✓ Prepare you for meetings and attend with you
- ✓ Monitor the progress of your complaint and help you get the best possible resolution

An Advocate cannot:

- ✗ Give you legal or medical advice
- ✗ Provide counselling
- ✗ Help you complain about a private healthcare provider
- ✗ Get an NHS employee disciplined
- ✗ Provide a secretarial service

If you want some more information or to find out how the service can support you, contact us direct and talk to one of our advocates in confidence.

We provide a range of leaflets and guides to help you at every step of the way when making a complaint through the NHS Complaints Procedure. We can also help you if you want to find out how to access your medical records.



Contact us

Freephone
0800 161 5600

Text: "Healthwatch" and your name and number to 60006

Email: advocacy@ecstaffs.co.uk

Post:

Write to us at Healthwatch Staffordshire NHS Complaints Advocacy, Suite 2, Opus House, Priestly Court, Staffordshire Technology Park, Stafford, ST18 0LQ.

For more information visit our website at
www.healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk/nhs-complaints

If you need this information in another format
please contact us.

Talk to us.
Make your
voice count.



Join us on our website and visit our new feedback platform; Experience Exchange, where you can share your recent experiences of local health and social care providers. To find out more, please visit **www.healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk/x2**

