

The Thalidomide Trust

Making a complaint about your GP surgery

The NHS is a wonderful institution and gives great care to millions of people every day, but like any organisation, sometimes things go wrong, or we don't get the service we expect.

The thought of making a complaint can be daunting; Who do I complain to? Will it affect my care in the future? How will they respond? Can I complain on someone else's behalf?

It's ok to make a complaint – it shows organisations how they can improve and make their services better and safer for everyone.

Use this factsheet to help you make a complaint about your GP surgery – to get the best outcome for you, and improve things for other patients in the future.

Q How do I complain?

A If you've seen your GP or practice nurse, and something hasn't gone the way you were expecting or you are unhappy about the way your practice is working (like waiting times) - here's what to do next.

Remember, making a complaint WON'T affect the care you're given in the future, and it may well make it better.

If you want to give feedback over something minor, you can do so via the practice website. This kind of feedback is collated, and discussed in the practice's Patient Participation Groups (PPGs), who then meet with the practice staff to review the feedback given. PPGs are made up of patients representing all the patients at the practice, and speak up on their behalf.

If the issue you're raising is more serious, or needs looking at in depth, or you didn't get a satisfactory response from the website, you may want to make a complaint more formally, which involves the following steps:-

Get a copy of the practice complaints procedure - this will give you an overview of how your practice deals with complaints and will explain the process. You can get it at reception and it should also be available on the practice website.

Think about what you want to say

Try and make your complaint as short and clear as possible and stick to the facts. Include

- who or what you're complaining about
- what went wrong
- what you want to achieve: An apology? A change to your treatment? To see a different doctor or nurse?

Be sure to include your contact details and an up to date mobile number.

Think about how you would like the GP practice to respond to you

If you don't feel comfortable talking on the phone, then let the practice know that you would like

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a response by email or letter. A written response will also provide you a record of what they've said and will allow you to reflect on this.

Think about the time frame

For your complaint to be investigated, you'll need to complain within 12 months of when the incident happened, or as soon as you first notice there's a problem. (Sometimes the time frame can be extended if the complaint is serious or negligence is involved).

Try and resolve your complaint at your practice first

You may feel able to raise the issue you're unhappy about with your GP/nurse or health care professional directly, but if you don't, it's best to contact the Practice Manager either in writing, or in person. They will be well equipped to handle your complaint in the most appropriate manner.

If you do complain by letter or email, be sure to keep copies of your correspondence and any replies you get. If you can, attach any appropriate evidence to the complaint e.g. a clinic letter if you're complaining about a clinic - but be sure to keep a copy of anything you give in.

If you make a complaint verbally, the practice will register your complaint and give you a written record - make sure it gives an accurate account of what you said.

If you're complaining on behalf of someone you care for, make sure you get their written consent first. You will need to show this when you make the complaint.

Q How and when should the practice acknowledge my complaint?

A The time scale for acknowledging complaints should be in the practice's complaints procedure, but all complaints should be acknowledged in 3 working days, either in writing or by phone. The practice should also be able to give you an approximate time scale for when your complaint will be dealt with.

Q What happens next?

A When they've got your complaint the GP Practice will aim to:-

- Find out what happened and what went wrong
- Invite you to a meeting to discuss the problem, if this is appropriate
- Apologise, if this is appropriate
- Identify what can be done to make sure that the problem doesn't happen again

The vast majority of complaints will be resolved this way but if you're still not satisfied, you can take further action.

Q What can I do if my complaint has not been resolved?

A If you're not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved, it depends on where you live as to where you should send it to next. If you live in England, you can direct your complaint to NHS England here:-

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NHS England PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT

By email to: england.contactus@nhs.net

If you are making a complaint please state: 'For the attention of the complaints team' in the subject line.

By telephone: 0300 311 22 33

If you live in one of the other nations of the UK and you want to make a complaint, contact the Feedback and Complaints Team at your local NHS health board – see the links below. Ask your GP surgery if you're unsure which NHS board you come under.

Scotland

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/feedback-and-complaints/complain-about-a-gp-pharmacy-dentist-or-hospital-in-scotland>

Northern Ireland

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/make-complaint-against-health-service>

Wales

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/ourservices/contactus/nhscomplaints>

What can I do if I'm still not happy?

- A** If you're still not satisfied by the outcome or decision you've been given, you can take the matter further. Again this will depend on where you live, but you can complain to the relevant ombudsman. See the links below.

It's important to know the ombudsman is a free service and is independent of the NHS.

England - <https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>

Scotland - <https://www.spsso.org.uk/>

Wales - <https://www.ombudsman.wales/>

Northern Ireland - <https://nipso.org.uk/>

Can the Trust help me make a complaint?

- A** If you're unsure whether to make a complaint, or if you would like to talk it through, you can contact one of the Health and Wellbeing team at the Thalidomide Trust. Call us on 01480 474074 or email us at hello@thalidomidetrust.org