

Healthcare complaints advocacy self help pack

Thank you for requesting this self help pack. It has been compiled to enable you to make a complaint about any aspect of NHS treatment or care that you may have received. We hope you find it helpful.

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Your guide to raising a concern or making a complaint about NHS services

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Introduction

The National Health Service (NHS) and other providers of health services work hard to treat everyone properly and promptly. Most people using health services are satisfied with their treatment (or the treatment of family/friends/partners) but sometimes things go wrong.

If you are not happy with the medical treatment that you or a family member has received, you can raise your concerns about this.

Step 1: What am I unhappy about?

Before you start, it is important to be clear about what it is you are unhappy about with the NHS care and services that you have received. It could include:

- treatment or care
- attitude of staff
- poor communication
- waiting times
- lack of information
- failure to diagnose a condition

Step 2 - What can I expect to achieve?

When raising a concern with the NHS you can expect:

- to be treated with respect and courtesy
- to be offered support to help you raise your concerns
- a speedy solution to be offered wherever possible
- an explanation of what happened
- an apology if appropriate
- changes to be made so that the same thing will not happen to anyone else
- better communication between NHS staff and patients

Step 3 - Who do I raise my concerns with?

Once you are clear on what you are concerned about, you need to decide how best to raise your concerns. You can:

- **Speak to a member of staff directly**

Many complaints are caused by misunderstandings or poor communication that can be put right once you explain the problem. If you feel able to, you can speak to a member of staff who is directly involved in your treatment, or their manager, about what you are concerned about or dissatisfied with. This is often the quickest way to put things right and stop them getting worse.

- **Speak to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you feel uncomfortable directly contacting the NHS staff member yourself, or you have tried and it has not resolved your issues, then a service called PALS may be able to help you.

PALS provide information, advice and support to patients, families and their carers and can help you get answers to your questions quickly. See the PALS factsheet in this pack to find out more about the service.

The NHS complaints procedure may be the best route 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 wish to raise complex issues which require investigation
- The issues involved concern more than one organisation

The NHS complaints procedure (England)

It is your right to have your concerns investigated and to be given a full and prompt response. This is known as the NHS complaints procedure.

Are there time limits for making a complaint?

Generally, you should make your complaint within 12 months of the incident happening, or within 12 months of you realising that you have concerns.

The NHS can use its discretion to look at issues that are beyond these timescales. For instance, if you are too ill to make the complaint straight away the NHS will consider if it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

Which services are covered by the NHS complaints procedure?

- All NHS trusts and NHS bodies including NHS foundation trusts
- Family health services provided for the NHS by GPs, dentists, opticians or NHS pharmacists
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)
- Private healthcare establishments, if the treatment has been paid for by the NHS
- Ambulance service
- Nursing home care or a home based care package (if funded by the NHS)

If your complaint covers both health and social care, you can still make your complaint to the NHS.

You cannot use the NHS complaints system for a complaint that is 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 matters and claims for compensation (you will need to speak to a solicitor who specialises in medical or clinical negligence)
- contractual matters and consultations about service changes

Stages

If you would like your complaint to be dealt with formally you should use the NHS complaints procedure. The NHS complaints procedure focuses on resolving your complaint locally in the first instance.

Stage 1 - local resolution

The first stage of this is called local resolution, where the NHS body or practice is required to investigate and respond to your complaint.

The aim of local resolution is to try to sort out your problem directly with the NHS service. This is your opportunity to explain what it is you are concerned or dissatisfied about and what you would like to happen. Local resolution is important because it aims to resolve your concerns and, where appropriate, use your experience to improve local services. The NHS healthcare provider should respond to you efficiently, sensitively and promptly.

At this stage it is important to raise everything that you are unhappy about as new issues cannot later be introduced as part of the same complaint.

What do I do first?

A complaint can be made:

- in person
- over the telephone
- by email
- by post

If you make the complaint in person or on the phone, the healthcare provider to whom the complaint is being made must make a written copy of the complaint and provide a copy of the written record to you.

Useful tips:

- Always keep a copy of your letter to refer to later.
- Have pen and paper ready and note the date you send the letter or call.
- Take the name of the person who you spoke to if phoning or calling in person.

Who will deal with your complaint?

All NHS organisations have a complaints procedure. If your complaint is about a service delivered by a foundation trust, for example a hospital or the ambulance service, you should complain to the complaints manager or chief executive of the NHS trust.

For complaints about primary care and independent providers such as GP surgeries, dentists, opticians, pharmacists or other independent NHS contractors you have two options - you can complain:

- a) directly to the NHS organisation by contacting the person in charge of complaints (in the case of GPs and dental practices, this will be the practice manager), or
- b) to NHS England

Note:

If you choose to make a complaint directly to the organisation (option 'a' above) and you are not satisfied with their response you cannot then raise the issue with NHS England but must go straight to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).

If you are not sure where to send your complaint you can ask for advice from PALS or the complaints department in larger organisations such as hospitals. You may be able to find the contact details on the organisation's website.

If you need support with any of these processes, our Healthwatch complaints advocates can support you, free of charge. To contact one of our advocates, call 01702 220102.

What will happen next?

Sometimes, when you first make contact, the NHS provider may be able to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not the case they should:

- acknowledge your complaint either verbally or in writing within three working days
- offer the opportunity to discuss your complaint
- advise you of the way your complaint will be investigated
- give you an idea of the time period by which your complaint is likely to be completed
- keep you informed if there is likely to be a delay
- offer assistance to enable you to understand the complaints procedure or give advice on where to get further assistance and support

Investigating and resolving your complaint

You may be offered a meeting to discuss the complaint and speak to staff about what happened. You could take a friend, a relative or an advocate with you if you wish.

Sometimes the NHS uses conciliation or mediation services. The conciliator or mediator is an independent person who can arrange a meeting with you and those involved so you can express your views and try and resolve your differences. These services differ from NHS trust to NHS trust and are not always offered.

It may well help you to prepare a list of questions you want to ask at the meeting and bring these with you. Try to make sure your questions are clear and concise and take any relevant paperwork with you to the meeting

Useful tips if attending meetings:

- Ask before you attend who is likely to be there as sometimes complainants do not wish to see staff members who have been involved in the incident.
- Ask who is taking the minutes and request that a copy is sent to you.
- Ask where the meeting is to be held and how long it is likely to take.
- If you are recovering from an illness tell the complaints manager in advance if you envisage any difficulties with length of meeting, time of day, venue etc.
- Think about taking a friend, relative or advocate for support and to take notes.
- Do not agree with anything at the meeting that you are unsure of or have reservations about.

What happens after the investigation?

Once any meetings have been held and the investigation is finished, the complaints manager should send you a letter containing:

- a summary of your complaint
- what the investigation found and any actions that are going to be taken as a result
- what to do if you are still unhappy with the answers given

Depending on the results of the investigation, the letter may contain:

- an apology, if relevant
- what actions will be taken and when
- who is responsible for taking any actions
- what steps have been taken to prevent a similar situation happening to other people

What if I am not happy with the results of the local resolution process?

If you are not satisfied with the reply be clear about exactly what it is that you are still unhappy about so you can decide what to do next. You might find it helpful to reassess:

- the letters you sent and received
- notes of meetings
- the conciliation or mediation process if applicable
- whether the plan you agreed has been followed
- whether there are still areas of your complaint that remain unanswered
- whether you feel that the evidence you presented was not properly considered
- what more could have been done to achieve the outcome you wished
- whether the complaints manager has followed the ombudsman's good complaints handling principles

If, after considering the above, you still feel there are unanswered questions or areas that still concern you, you could:

- write another letter explaining what you think has not been covered
- call the person handling your complaint and explain why you are still not satisfied with the resolution
- request a meeting to discuss your outstanding concerns
- proceed to stage 2 of the NHS complaints procedure

Stage 2 - The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)

If you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the NHS, you have the right to take your complaint to the Health Service Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is independent of the NHS and of government. The Ombudsman's services are confidential and free.

You should submit a complaint no later than one year from the date of events you are complaining about (or from when you first became aware of this matter), although the Ombudsman can extend this time limit, for example, if the local resolution process took longer than a year.

The Ombudsman will look at every complaint that comes to them. They do not (and are not required to) investigate all the complaints that are referred to them; it is a matter for the Ombudsman's discretion. They will not normally investigate your case unless you have already tried to resolve the problem using local resolution.

The Ombudsman can refer you back to the local resolution stage of the NHS complaints procedure if they think you have come to the Ombudsman too soon, or if they feel that the NHS organisation involved has not done all it can to resolve your issues locally.

The Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint where:

- you do not agree with a decision made by your NHS provider but cannot offer any evidence as to why their decision is wrong or unsatisfactory
- they decide that there is no evidence to suggest that the NHS provider acted wrongly
- they decide that the NHS provider or practitioner has done all that they reasonably could do to put things right
- they decide that there would not be a worthwhile outcome from an investigation (for example, if the remedy sought by the complainant is not obtainable)

Initially, a member of the Ombudsman's staff will consider whether your case meets the Ombudsman's criteria for investigation. To carry out this assessment they may need to see clinical records and other papers involved in your complaint. A member of the Ombudsman's staff will contact you to let you know the outcome of the assessment.

If you take your complaint to the Ombudsman, there are three main outcomes:

1. The Ombudsman may decide not to investigate the case and take no further action (for example, if they think that the NHS has done all it can to resolve your complaint locally).
2. The Ombudsman may decide not to investigate the case but may ask the NHS provider or practitioner to take action which they think may resolve your complaint more quickly without the need for an Ombudsman's investigation. This is called an 'intervention'.
3. The Ombudsman may decide to carry out an in-depth investigation resulting in a detailed report about the case. The investigation will be very thorough and can therefore take some time. The Ombudsman aims to complete 90% of investigations within 12 months of accepting the case for the investigation.

If your complaint is investigated by the Ombudsman

If the Ombudsman carries out an investigation of your complaint they will write a detailed report about the case. If the Ombudsman upholds your complaint they can make recommendations to the NHS provider or practitioner to put things right.

The Ombudsman's decision

The Ombudsman's decision about your complaint is final. This includes their decision whether or not to investigate your complaint and their decision whether or not to uphold your complaint following an investigation.

Questions and answers

My father is elderly and I don't feel he could manage a complaints process. Can I complain for him?

You may complain for a friend or relative as long as they agree to let you complain on their behalf. It is useful to get their permission in writing.

My mother has Alzheimer's disease. Do I still need her permission to make a complaint?

If your friend or family member is very ill or does not have the capacity to give permission because of impairment or a disability, you may complain on their behalf without their permission, although the trust will confirm the patient's lack of capacity before accepting the complaint. If they do not accept the complaint they must inform you in writing if they do make this decision and tell you why.

My mother has died and I did not have her consent to act for her. Can I make a complaint about her treatment?

Yes. You may raise a complaint or take over a complaint on behalf of a friend or relative who has died, even if you do not have their written permission. In some cases the NHS may decide not to accept you as a suitable representative, but they will discuss this with you.

My niece is 15 and has Down's syndrome. Can I complain on her behalf without her written permission?

A complaint can be made on behalf of a child (under 18) if the child is unable to make the complaint themselves. However, NHS organisations must not consider a complaint made by a representative of a child unless they are sure that the child is unable to complain themselves. They must inform you in writing if they make this decision and tell you why.

Can I complain about something that happened in the past?

It depends on how long ago it happened. You should make your complaint:

- within 12 months of the incident happening, or
- within 12 months of you realising you had something to complain about

NHS organisations are allowed to waive this time limit if there are good reasons why you could not complain earlier. One such case might be if you were too ill to complain at the time.

I had an operation in a private hospital - can I complain to the NHS?

It depends. If the NHS paid for your operation in a private hospital, you can complain to the NHS. But if you paid for your treatment yourself or with private medical insurance, you cannot complain to the NHS. The private hospital will have its own complaints procedure that you should follow.

I want to sue the surgeon who operated on me. How do I go about it?

You will need to take legal action if you want to make a claim for clinical negligence. The NHS complaints procedure does not deal with these cases. You can find details of local specialist solicitors by contacting Community Legal Services Direct or the Law Society (refer to useful contact factsheet in pack).

Guidance for accessing medical records

A patient's records include the following information:

- GP and hospital doctor records
- Nursing records and those made by other NHS staff
- Records of your visits to the practice, clinic or hospital
- Records of visits to you
- Details of treatment, medication, tests and their results, diagnosis, referrals etc

Your rights

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you have a right to see your records unless:

- your doctor thinks that to do so would seriously harm you or another person

Note: this refusal can apply to part of your records and there is no obligation to inform you of such a partial refusal. It is worth asking if any part of your records had not been made available.

- providing them would involve 'disproportionate effort' on the part of a trust or GP practice

Note: Disproportionate effort is not defined but the data protection information commissioner has warned against abusing this clause to block access to records.

Applying to see your records

You have to apply to see your records and some GP practices and trusts have a form specially designed for this that you are asked to complete. Most trusts also have a specially appointed person responsible for dealing with such requests.

Records should be made available within 40 days of applying to see them, or 21 days if they have been added to within the last 40 days.

Trusts and GP practices are allowed to charge you for seeing your records if they have not been added to within the last 40 days. This charge should not be more than £10.

Trusts and GP practices also have to explain to you anything in the records that is not easy to read or which uses technical language that you do not understand.

If you want copies of the records, trusts or GP practices can charge you for the actual cost of postage and photocopying, up to a maximum of £50, including the £10 charge, if that is

made. It is a good idea to get copies if you need to use something in your records as evidence in your complaint.

If you are applying to obtain someone else's records, the person must give you authority to do this in writing. This includes parents applying to see a child's records, if the child is able to understand matters. Where a patient is unable to give permission because of incapacity or illness, you may need to seek legal advice and a court authorisation.

In the case of a deceased patient, records can only be obtained by a personal representative. A representative is usually an executor or someone making a claim arising from the death, unless the deceased specifically requested in the records that they did not want the person to have access to their records

Other information

If you think your records are inaccurate, you can ask for them to be corrected. If the trust or doctor disagrees with the changes you want to make, ask for a note recording your disagreement to be attached to the records.

Any complaint about this can be made to:

The data protection information commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 01625 545 745 or 0845 630 6060

www.dataprotection.gov.uk

Writing a complaints letter

- Clearly outline your complaint
- Ask for it to be investigated under the NHS complaints procedure
- If you are writing on behalf of the patient you must show you have their permission

Helpful tips:

- Be brief - try and keep your complaint to no more than two pages
- Be clear and straightforward - use short sentences, don't repeat yourself, don't be afraid to say what has upset you, avoid aggressive or accusatory language
- Be constructive - explain what you would like to achieve as a result of your complaint, for example, an apology or a service improvement
- Keep copies of all letters and emails (sent and received) and keep a log of any phone calls made
- Send photocopies of documents, not originals
- Make sure your letter has been received - consider using special or recorded delivery

What happens next?

You should receive a letter of acknowledgement within three working days.

The NHS will contact you to discuss your complaint and arrange a plan to resolve your concerns with you.

The plan should include an agreed timescale for resolving issues and keeping you informed of progress. If there is a problem with keeping to this timescale, then they should contact you before it expires to agree an extended timescale.

If you make a complaint about a service which is provided in partnership with the NHS, the organisation that received your complaint will approach the other organisations. Between them they will agree who will take the lead in handling the complaint, coordinate the handling of the complaint and any investigations. You should receive a single response, addressing all issues you raised and were agreed at the outset.

Private and confidential

insert your address
insert your telephone number

Complaints Manager or Chief Executive
insert name of their organisation
insert address of their organisation
postcode

Dear insert name if known, otherwise Sir or Madam

Re: NHS Complaint - insert your name and date of birth

I am writing to complain about the treatment I received from insert names(s) of staff at insert place where incident happened or treatment was received on insert date of incident/period of treatment

insert description of what happened, when and where

Insert explanation of what, if anything, you have already done to try and resolve matters

I would like the following points addressed in the response to this complaint:

- Put the most important matter first
- Explain why you are not satisfied
- Ask the questions you would like the answers to and list them in order of importance

As a result of my complaint I would like insert what you want to achieve - an apology, an explanation of what happened or action to remedy the problem you experienced

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this letter. I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns and provide a response in accordance with the NHS complaints procedure.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information. Thank you for your attention to this complaint. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely, (use faithfully if you don't know the person's name)

[insert your signature]

[insert your name, clearly printed]

If you are sending copies of your letter to other people, show this here

Private and confidential

insert your address
insert your telephone number

Complaints Manager or Chief Executive
insert name of their organisation
insert address of their organisation
postcode

Dear insert name if known, otherwise Sir or Madam

Re: NHS Complaint - insert name of patient and their date of birth

I am writing on behalf of insert name of patient and I enclose their written agreement to act on their behalf. *(if the patient is unable to give consent as they are too young, ill or deceased, you should explain this)*

insert description of what happened, when and where

Insert explanation of what, if anything, you have already done to try and resolve matters

I would like the following points addressed in the response to this complaint:

- Put the most important matter first
- Explain why you are not satisfied
- Ask the questions you would like the answers to and list them in order of importance

As a result of my complaint I would like insert what you want to achieve - an apology, an explanation of what happened or action to remedy the problem you experienced

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this letter. I would like you to carry out a full investigation into my concerns and provide a response in accordance with the NHS complaints procedure.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information. Thank you for your attention to this complaint. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely, (use faithfully if you don't know the person's name)

[insert your signature]

[insert your name, clearly printed]

If you are sending copies of your letter to other people, show this here

What is a Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)?

PALS was set up by the NHS for patients to have a voice in their local health services. PALS can:

- provide you with information about the NHS and help you with any other health-related enquiries
- help resolve concerns or problems when you are using the NHS
- provide information about the NHS complaints procedure and how to get independent help if you decide you may want to make a complaint
- provide you with information and help and introduce you to agencies and support groups outside the NHS
- inform you about how you can get more involved in your own healthcare and the NHS locally
- improve the NHS by listening to your concerns, suggestions and experiences, ensuring that people who design and manage services are aware of the issues you raise

What is the difference between PALS and Healthwatch?

PALS:

- staff are employed by the NHS
- staff work in every hospital trust
- will support you to achieve a local resolution to your concerns

Healthwatch:

- is an independent service
- has an office in Southend
- will support you to voice your concerns and complaints throughout the whole complaints process

PALS and Healthwatch will work closely together to try and resolve a complaint quickly and to your satisfaction. It is always your choice which service you prefer to use. PALS and Healthwatch will refer you to each other if it is more appropriate that you use the other service and if the patient consents to this course of action.

Contact numbers for PALS:

Southend Hospital - 01702 385333

Basildon Hospital - 01268 524900

South Essex Partnership Trust - 0800 085 7935

Formal complaints - where to raise them?

NHS service	Option 1	Option 2
<p>Southend Hospital</p> <p>Lighthouse Centre Paediatric services</p>	<p>Complaints department Southend University Hospital Prittlewell Chase Westcliff on Sea Essex SS0 0RY</p> <p>Email: complaints@southend.nhs.uk</p> <p>Phone: 01702 435555 ext 5144 or 6449</p>	<p>Angela Paradise Head of Corporate Services NHS Southend CC G <i>FREEPOST RTBZ-GAKR-AECG</i> <i>Suffolk House</i> <i>102-104 Baxter Avenue</i> <i>Southend on sea</i> <i>SS2 6HZ</i></p> <p>Email: southend.ccg@nhs.net</p> <p>Phone: 01702 314282 or 313619</p>
<p>Basildon Hospital</p>	<p>Patients Experience Team Basildon Hospital Nethermayne Basildon Essex SS16 5NL</p> <p>Email: pet@btuh.nhs.uk</p> <p>Phone: 01268 524900 ext 3222</p>	<p>Essex Commissioning Support Unit Complaints Dept Phoenix Court Christopher Martin Road Basildon Essex SS14 3HG</p> <p>Email: bbccg.complaints@nhs.net</p> <p>Phone: 01268 594566 http://www.basildonandbrentwoodccg.nhs.uk/complaints for more details</p>
<p>SEPT services (South Essex Partnership Trust)</p>	<p>Complaints department The Lodge The Chase Wickford Essex SS11 7XX</p> <p>Email: complaints.department@sept.nhs.uk</p> <p>Phone: 01268 407817 or 739717</p>	<p>NHS Castle Point & Rochford CCG Performance & Corporate Services Team, 1st floor, Phoenix Place Christopher Martin Road Basildon Essex SS14 3HG</p> <p>Phone: 0800 917 4694</p>

<p>Primary care services: GP surgery Pharmacy Optometrist Dentist</p> <p>Military health</p> <p>Specialised services</p> <p>Health and justice</p>	<p>Practice manager at each surgery/branch</p> <p>Please ring our office and we can confirm contact details</p>	<p>NHS England Customer contact team PO Box 16738 Redditch B97 9PT</p> <p>Email: england.contactus@nhs.net</p> <p>Please state: 'For the attention of the complaints manager' in the subject line.</p> <p>Phone: 0300 311 22 33 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm, excluding English Bank Holidays)</p>
<p>East of England Ambulance Service</p>	<p>Patients Services Department EEAST Hammond Road Bedford MK41 0RG</p> <p>Email: eoasnt.feedback@nhs.net</p> <p>Phone: 01234 243320 Freephone: 0800 028 3382</p>	<p>Wendy Tankard Chief Contracts Officer Rushbrooke House Paper Mill Lane Bromford Ipswich IP8 4DE</p> <p>Email: wendy.tankard@suffolk.nhs.uk</p> <p>Phone: 01473 770000</p>
<p>Out of Hours clinic at Southend hospital</p> <p>NHS 111 helpline</p>	<p>Clinical Governance Team Integrated Care 24 Ltd The Long Barrow Orbital Park Ashford Kent TN24 0GP</p> <p>Email: cg@IC24.nhs.uk</p> <p>Phone: 01233 505450</p>	<p>NHS Castle Point & Rochford CCG Performance & Corporate Services Team 1st floor, Phoenix Place Christopher Martin Road Basildon Essex SS14 3HG</p> <p>Phone: 0800 917 4694</p>

If any other local NHS service is not listed here, please contact our office for information - 01702 220104

Useful contacts

<p>NHS Southend CCG Suffolk House 102-104 Baxter Avenue Southend on Sea Essex SS2 6HZ</p> <p>Telephone: 01702 314299</p>	<p>A clinical commissioning group in South Essex. The CCG is a group of GP and clinicians who from April 2013 commission (buy) health services for their local community.</p>
<p>NHS England PO Box 16738 Redditch B97 9PT</p> <p>www.nhs.uk</p> <p>Telephone: 0300 311 2233</p> <p>Email: england.contactus@nhs.net</p>	<p>NHS England customer contact centre handles general enquiries, freedom of information request and complaints.</p>
<p>The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) Millbank Tower Millbank London SW19 4QP</p> <p>Telephone: 0345 015 4033 www.ombudsman.org.uk</p>	<p>Their role is to investigate complaints that individuals have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from government departments and other public organisations and the NHS in England. PHSO make the final decisions on complaints about UK government departments and other public organisations and the NHS in England</p>
<p>General Medical Council Regent's Place</p> <p>350 Euston Road London NW1 3JN</p> <p>Helpline: 0845 357 0022 Switchboard: 0845 357 8001</p>	<p>Responsible to ensure that doctors in the UK meet the standards of good medical practice.</p>
<p>General Dental Council (GDC) 37 Wimpole Street London W1G 8DQ</p>	<p>Set and maintain standards in the UK. Your dental professional must be regulated and continue to meet expectations throughout their careers.</p>

<p>Telephone: 020 7009 2701 Email: complaints@gdc.uk.org</p>	<p>GDC can take action if they do not.</p>
<p>General Optical Council 41 Harley Street London W1G 8DJ</p> <p>Telephone: 020 7580 3898 Email: goc@optical.org</p>	<p>Regulator for the optical profession in the UK. One of their core functions is to investigate and act where registrants' fitness to practice, train or carry on business is impaired</p>
<p>Community Legal Services Direct</p> <p>Telephone: 0845 345 4345 www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk</p>	<p>For information on public funding of legal action and local specialist solicitors</p>
<p>AvMA (Action against medical accidents)</p> <p>Medical Accident Helpline: 0845 123 2352</p>	<p>AvMA has a team of medically and legally trained caseworkers who can provide free and confidential advice following a medical accident. This includes advice on your rights; medical information or explanations; help in getting the issues investigated; assessment of potential for obtaining compensation; referral to an appropriate solicitor for your individual case; and other sources of practical and emotional support.</p>
<p>Healthwatch England</p> <p>Citygate Gallowgate Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA</p> <p>Telephone: 03000 683 000</p> <p>www.healthwatchengland.co.uk</p> <p>Email: Enquiries@healthwatch.co.uk</p>	<p>Healthwatch England is the national consumer champion in health and care. We have significant statutory powers to ensure the voice of the consumer is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services.</p>