

Information about the Trust's Complaints Procedure

The Complaints Procedure, followed by the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, provides the method for dealing with formal complaints where there is dissatisfaction with our services. The procedure conforms to national guidance and the principal aim is to provide an open process, which is timely, honest and thorough with two central objectives to:

- Respond to complaints in a satisfactory manner;
- Identify if and how we can improve our services.

Our aim is to continually improve, resolve dissatisfaction and uphold the values of the Trust.

Further information on the Complaints Procedure may be found at www.nnuh.nhs.uk (click on 'Patients – Visitors – Your Feedback').

If you need any further information about the complaints process, please contact our PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) and Complaints Department (details below).

You can also obtain support and advice from an independent advocacy service provided by POhWER (www.pohwer.net): 0300 456 2370.

Specialist advice can be obtained from Age UK Norfolk (www.ageuk.co.uk/norfolk) or Equal Lives (www.equallives.org.uk).

In order to investigate and fully answer your complaint, it may be necessary to examine your medical records and associated documents.

If you do not agree to the examination of your records then please tell our PALS and Complaints Department at the outset. Without such agreement, however, it may not be possible to fully answer your complaint.

Your Questions Answered

Who may complain?

- A complaint may be made by any person who is affected by an action, omission or decision of this Trust. Complaints may be made on a person's behalf by a representative who may be, for instance, a family member or friend.
- In the case of someone who has died or who lacks mental capacity, the representative must be a relative or other person who has a sufficient interest in the person's welfare and is suitable to act as a representative.
- If a complaint is about the care of a particular patient, who is not the complainant, the Trust will usually request the signed consent of the patient. This is necessary in order to safeguard the confidentiality of patient information and to ensure that the complaint reflects the views of the patient. Without the consent of the patient, the complaint is unlikely to be processed.
- When an MP writes on behalf of a patient, it will be assumed that the MP does so with the patient's consent.

How may I complain?

- By writing to the Chief Executive of the Trust at the Hospitals Address or via e-mail to Palsandcomplaints@nnuh.nhs.uk
- With the assistance of the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
- Via the Trust's website
- By email to palsandcomplaints@nnuh.nhs.uk or by phone on 01603 289036. This line is staffed from 10am to 4pm weekdays excluding bank holidays, please note this is a busy line and your call will be answered in turn if an assistant is available if not an answerphone service is available, please leave us a message, clearly giving your name and telephone number, an assistant from the team will then call you back.

What information should I provide?

It is helpful if you specify:

- the background to your complaint including relevant dates, times and names if possible;
- any specific grievances, questions or issues that you wish to be addressed; and
- what it is that you hope to achieve through the complaints process.

What should a complaint not contain?

- The Trust may reject any complaint that contains offensive or foul language or which expresses gratuitous personal abuse of staff.
- It is not helpful for complaints to be phrased in a sarcastic manner and, as a general rule, efforts at humour and irony in this context may be ill judged.
- Persistent or repeated complaints or complaints accompanied by aggressive or abusive behaviour will represent an abuse of the complaints process and will be excluded.

Is there a time limit for making a complaint?

Ordinarily a complaint must be made within twelve months of the date on which the matter occurred or came to the notice of the complainant.

What will happen after the receipt of my complaint?

The Trust aims to acknowledge complaints in writing within 3 working days of receipt.

Will I face discrimination if I make a complaint?

- The commitment of the Trust is that persons who complain about the Trust or its services will not face prejudice or discrimination from the Trust or its staff as a consequence.
- If a complaint is about a patient's clinical care, it may provide an opportunity to improve a difficult situation.
- It may reflect an irretrievable breakdown in the therapeutic relationship. If that is so, it may be appropriate for ongoing responsibility for care of the patient to be transferred to another clinician. This is not a 'penalty', but a mechanism to provide appropriate ongoing patient care.

Who will investigate my complaint?

Staff of the PALS and Complaints Department with appropriate support from Senior Managers and Clinical Staff within the Trust.

How will my complaint be answered?

- The Trust aims to complete its investigation of the majority of complaints within 25 working days of receipt.
- The investigation findings are then reviewed by the Chief Executive and a written response is sent to the complainant.
- In some cases, it will be possible to complete the investigation much sooner than 25 working days.
- In other cases, it is appropriate or necessary that it takes longer. If this applies, we will keep you informed. If you wish to discuss the progress of our investigation at any stage, please telephone our PALS and Complaints Department (01603 289036). This line is staffed from 10am to 4pm weekdays excluding bank holidays, please note this is a busy line and your call will be answered in turn if an assistant is available if not an answerphone service is available, please leave us a message, clearly giving your name and telephone number, an assistant from the team will then call you back.

What if I am not satisfied by the Chief Executive's response?

- You may ask the Trust to make further enquiries in order to address your remaining concerns.
- The Trust may attempt to achieve resolution of outstanding issues through further correspondence, through meetings with clinical or managerial staff or through the use of an Independent Conciliator.

It is important that the Trust is given the opportunity to resolve any outstanding concerns you may have arising out of your complaint.

What if I am still not satisfied?

If you remain dissatisfied once efforts to resolve your complaint have been made by the Trust, you may ask The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (www.ombudsman.org.uk) to review your complaint.

The Ombudsman can be contacted by telephone on 0345 0154033 or by email at phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk. Please note that matters should not be referred to the Ombudsman until local efforts to resolve the complaint have been concluded.

What if I intend to make a claim for compensation?

The Complaints Procedure is not intended as a vehicle for the recovery of compensation.

If you wish to claim compensation, please write to the Legal Services Department at the Hospital address below with details of your claim. You may wish to seek independent legal advice.

Legal Services, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, Colney Lane, Norwich, NR4 7UY
or E-mail: Services.Legal@nnuh.nhs.uk

If you wish to write to PALS or complain please contact PALS and Complaints Department, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals Foundation Trust, West Outpatients, Level 2, Colney Lane, Norwich, NR4 7UY