



Complaints Tool

This tool helps you think through how to make a complaint if things are starting to go wrong.



What to do when things go wrong

Sometimes you might be unhappy with how your relative is being treated in hospital, or under the Mental Health Act, or how you have been treated by staff.

If you are concerned and have questions about an issue or incident, it can be helpful to start by approaching a member of staff to ask for clarification or an explanation about it. (See the How to Engage with Staff Tool for some pointers on how to do this).

If you are not satisfied with the initial response you have had from staff or the hospital about the issue, you can submit a formal written complaint as an email or a letter. The hospital or unit should have information about their complaints process, including where to send the complaint.

Try to be clear on:

The issue or incident you want to complain about – what has happened; and

What you want the outcome or resolution to be – what you want to change.

Where to go for advice

It can be useful to get some advice and support to help you with a complaint. **The Patients Association** is a national charity that provides advice and support on health and social care to patients and their families/ carers across the UK. It has a free helpline, open every weekday from 9.30am-5pm : **0800 345 7115**

In England, most hospitals have a **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** to provide confidential advice, support and information for patients, families, and carers about health-related matters, including how to raise a concern about health care.

In Wales, you can contact the local **Llais Advocacy Service** for advice and support to raise a concern or make a complaint about health and social care.

You might be worried about what could happen to your relative if you raise concerns about their care and treatment. The Mental Health Code of Practice says that staff should make every effort to support patients and those supporting them to make a complaint without any negative impacts on the quality of the care and support provided (Paragraph 4.54).



Here is a complaint letter template that you can use to think through what you want to write.

[Date of complaint]

[Name of who you are writing to and their address or email address]

Dear *[Name of who you are writing to]*

Re: Formal complaint about *[name of unit/ hospital]*

I wish to make a formal complaint about the matter described below.

[Say if you have already raised this with the unit/ hospital e.g. I spoke to 'X' about this on 'X' date and they said 'X' but there are still problems.]

Say what the issue/incident relates to e.g. The issue/incident relates to how staff behave; or the issue/incident relates to how my relative is treated; or the issue/incident relates to how powers in the Mental Health Act are being used.

Describe the issue/ incident.

Say when, where, and how, the issue/ incident occurred.

Identify any staff involved, if known, including any witnesses to an incident, if applicable.]

I would be grateful if you could investigate this matter as soon as possible and provide a response to me in writing within 7 days.

[Include here anything that you want them to do differently e.g. I would like you to ensure that staff treat my relative with respect; or my relative has a particular kind of food; or I can visit them at particular times; or I am given information about discharge planning.]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

*[Your name and contact details,
Nearest Relative to XXXX]*