

# NHS Complaints Advocacy helps people to make their

## NHS complaints

**NHS Complaints Advocates can help if you or someone you know has not had the care or treatment you expect to receive from your NHS services and you want to complain.**

When your health care is provided or commissioned by the NHS you are allowed to make a complaint using the NHS complaints process.

An NHS complaint might include something that happened during care or treatment provided by:

- a hospital
- your General Practitioner (GP)
- a dentist
- a pharmacist
- a optician
- an NHS funded care home
- specialist services
- a paramedic or ambulance staff member
- NHS Community staff
- other NHS staff or clinicians.

# What is NHS Complaints Advocacy?

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

This might mean giving information so you can pursue a complaint by yourself or giving you the support of an experienced advocate who can help you to make your complaint.

### NHS Complaints Advocacy is:

- **Independent of the NHS**
- **Confidential, and**
- **Free**

# How does advocacy work?

VoiceAbility provides advocacy assistance to help people make their complaint.

Advocates support people to speak up for themselves and represent their own thoughts and feelings when things are difficult.

Advocates are specially trained in how to support you to make your complaint.

As advocacy is about helping people to speak up for themselves, your Advocate will not tell you what to do or act on the wishes of others.

# What does an Advocate do to help?

Advocates work with you so that you feel confident to make a complaint.

Advocates will help you explore your options at the different complaint stages and can give you information that can help you to decide what to do.

Throughout the complaints process an Advocate might also do some or all of the following:

- Provide you with information about how the NHS complaints process works.
- Help you to understand what you can expect to achieve from the NHS complaints process.
- Help you to compile the issues you wish to raise in your complaint.
- Help you to write your letter to the right people.
- Prepare you for meetings and go to these with you.
- Answer questions to help you make decisions.
- Give you the opportunity to speak confidentially to someone who is independent of the NHS.
- Where appropriate we will meet you face-to-face to discuss your complaint.
- Help you to monitor the progress of your complaint with the organisation or individual responsible.
- Put you in touch with other people or services that might be able to help you.





## What if I only need information?

Not everyone needs the support of an Advocate to make their complaint. For example, some people just want to know how the complaint system works or know who they should send a letter of complaint to.

Everyone who contacts VoiceAbility for help with an NHS complaint can download, or be sent by email or post, a free Self Help Information Pack.

### The Self Help Information Pack includes:

- A detailed booklet on how the complaints system works.
- Information on how to access your medical records.
- Guidance on how to put together your complaint letter.

This may be enough to help you make a complaint.

Even if you make a complaint yourself, you are still entitled to contact an NHS Complaints Advocate at any point in the complaints process. This might be to get more information or to request the support of an Advocate.

### Can I complain on behalf of somebody else like a child, friend or relative?

You can complain on behalf of a child less than 18 years if they are unable to make the complaint themselves. The organisation you are complaining to must be confident the child cannot complain themselves before they consider the complaint.

You can also make a complaint on behalf of a friend or relative but they will need to agree to this in writing.

If you want to complain on behalf of someone who lacks mental capacity then it is usual that the organisation you are complaining to will check the patient's mental capacity before responding.

## Meeting your needs

NHS Complaints Advocates can adapt the way they communicate with you depending upon your needs.

This might include any of the following:

- Using an interpreter or translator.
- Using alternative formats for written correspondence for example easyread, larger prints, community languages or audio.
- Using British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters.

If you have particular needs, please let us know what these are and we will do our best to meet them.

### Contact Us

You can get in touch:

- If you want more information.
- If you want a self-help information pack to help you make an NHS complaint, or
- Help to compile the issues you wish to raise in your complaints.

We are open Monday to Friday 9-5pm



**0300 330 5454**

Textphone: 0786 002 2939



NHS Complaints Advocacy  
VoiceAbility, Mount Pleasant House,  
Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0RN



0330 088 3762



nhscomplaints@voiceability.org


[www.nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org](http://www.nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org)

# Do you have a complaint about the NHS?

## Independent

## Free

## Confidential



**NHS**  
**Complaints**  
**Advocacy**

**VoiceAbility**

Advocacy  
Quality Services

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