

The NHS Complaints Procedure and how it works

This information is for people who wish to make a complaint about NHS treatment or services. It tells you what to do before you make a complaint, who to go to if you would like to make a complaint and what will happen once you have complained.

What should I do before I make a complaint?

The clinical staff can explain your condition, treatment or clinical procedure clearly. You should always talk to your doctor, nurse or other health professional about any concerns you may have about the treatment or service you have received. The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to help you. They provide on the spot advice, support and assistance to patients. Please contact PALS if you need advice or information about how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

What will PALS do?

They will listen closely to what you have to say and will try to resolve any problems quickly and satisfactorily. If they cannot help you themselves, they will be able to point you in the right direction. They will help you to contact other hospital staff to make sure that you can voice your concerns.

Where can I find PALS?

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

How can I contact them?

You can contact PALS on 020 8725 2453. A 24-hour answerphone

service is available and staff will return your call as soon as possible. You can also email them at PALS@stgeorges.nhs.uk

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm.

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

PALS has an interview room if you would like to discuss your concerns in private.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times. The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

What happens if I am still not satisfied?

If you feel that you have made every effort to try to resolve your concern directly with staff or through PALS, but this has not been successful, you have the right to make a formal complaint.

Who can complain?

Anyone who is receiving or has received NHS treatment or services can complain. You can complain on your own behalf but if you complain on behalf of a friend or a relative or a child you must have their consent to represent them. You can also get further advice from the Complaints and Improvements Department.

When should I complain?

It is always best to make your complaint as soon as possible and not more than 12 months after the incident. This time limit may sometimes be waived if there is a genuine reason why you could not make a complaint sooner.

What does the hospital need to know about my complaint?

You should telephone us or write a letter of complaint and give as much information as possible about what, where and when it happened (please see the example letter).

Don't forget to include your full name, address, telephone number, date of birth and your hospital number if you know it. Wherever possible, you should give the name and the job title of any member of staff involved in the complaint. Please indicate how you would like your complaint to be resolved e.g. • over the phone • by having a meeting • by a written response • and the outcome you would like.

To whom should I send my complaint letter?

You can send your letter to the:

Chief Executive or the Complaints and Improvements Department
St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Blackshaw Road
London SW17 0QT.

They will make sure your complaint is acknowledged and investigated. Please make sure you enclose written consent if you are complaining on behalf of someone else. You should keep a copy of your letter.

Example letter of complaint

Name and address

Telephone number

Date

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Patient's name, date of birth and hospital number

I am writing to complain about treatment received at *name of hospital and ward or department*.

Details of what happened and when and where it happened. It helps to include the names or titles of members of staff. For example Staff Nurse Brown or Dr Smith.

Details of what you want to complain about. You should do this by asking questions.

For example 'Why did this happen?' It helps if you number the questions.

Details of what you would like the outcome of the complaint to be. For example an apology or tell us what we could do to improve.

If you need further information please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Sign and print your name

Further information

For more information about making a complaint please speak to the Complaints and Improvements Team on 020 8725 3492 or 020 8725 1609. Alternatively you can send an email to

complaints.compliments@stgeorges.nhs.uk If you need independent advice or support about your complaint you can contact POhWER – London Independent Health Complaints Advice Service (IHCAS). IHCAS can help you make a formal complaint about your NHS practitioner. IHCAS provides support, help, advice and advocacy from experienced advisors and caseworkers. Tel: 020 3553 5960 Minicom: 0300 456 2364 Text: The word pohwer, your name and number to 81025 Email: LondonIHCAS@pohwer.net

What if I do not want to write a letter?

You can email your complaint to

complaints.compliments@stgeorges.nhs.uk or you can contact the Complaints and Improvements team on 020 8725 3492 or 020 8725 1609 and they can take the details of your complaint or arrange for an appropriate person to contact you to resolve and address your concerns.

When will I hear from you?

We will aim to contact you within three working days of receiving your complaint to acknowledge it and arrange to resolve and address your complaint to your satisfaction. It is therefore very helpful if you could provide a daytime telephone number for us to contact you. At this time we will also discuss the timescales for responding to your concerns.

What will you do about my complaint?

Our reply to you will show how we have listened to and investigated your concerns. This might mean giving an apology, explaining what changes and improvements we will make.

Can I take my complaint further?

If you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint, you can ask for a meeting or for us to explain or clarify our response or discuss other possible resolution options. If, after this, you still feel that your concerns have not been resolved, you have the right to ask the Health Service Ombudsman to review your case. You should do this within 12 months of our final response to you. For further details of how to pursue your complaint, please refer to our leaflet 'Following our Complaint Investigation'. A copy of this can be obtained from the Complaints and Improvements Department.



Reference: COM_NHS_LP_01 **Published:** January 2024 **Review date:** January 2026