

## Time limits

There are time limits for making complaints. Complaints should be initiated within one year of the issue or within a year of you realising you had something to complain about. The Complaints Managers and Ombudsman can use their discretion for some cases which fall outside of this time frame.

## How to refer

You can refer yourself or be referred by someone else.

Contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

## Confidentiality

Everything you say to your advocate is kept confidential within The Care Forum. However, there are rare occasions when we may have to breach confidentiality and are obliged by law to notify other organizations and services. Our confidentiality policy will be explained in full at our first meeting with you.

## Advocacy Service

The advocacy service is free of charge. At times we have more requests for our service than we can meet. This means that sometimes we have to prioritise our service to those clients who most need it. During busy periods we provide self help packs and phone support to all clients.

## Contact us

**Phone** 0808 808 5252

**Fax** 0117 965 0200

**E-mail**

NHScomplaints@thecareforum.org.uk

**NHS Complaints Advocacy Service**

**The Care Forum**

**The Vassall Centre**

**Gill Avenue**

**Fishponds**

**Bristol BS16 2QQ**



the care forum

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Bristol and South Gloucestershire

# NHS Complaints Advocacy Service

Supporting you to complain  
about NHS services



the care forum

## What do we do?

We support people who wish to make a complaint about health services.

Our advocates can:

- Explain how the complaints procedure works
- Listen to the problems you have had with health services
- Support you through the process of complaining
- Provide a self-help pack about the complaints procedure

We can provide two levels of support; arms-length support or full casework support:

- Arms length – we can provide a self-help pack and telephone support for people who need guidance on the complaints procedure
- Casework support – we can assist people to write their letters of complaint, liaise with complaints managers and attend complaints meetings

The level of support we offer is dependent on individual need and on how busy the Advocacy Service is. We prioritise our casework support for the people we assess to need it the most.

## Health Services Complaints Procedures

There are two stages to the complaints procedure; Local Resolution and the Ombudsman.

1. Local Resolution is the opportunity for the health service in question to respond to your issues of complaint.

Complaints Managers prefer you to raise your complaint in a letter; however you can also call or e-mail them. The Complaints Manager should acknowledge your complaint within three working days. They will work with you to agree a plan for dealing with your complaint which will include the outcomes you are seeking, how the complaint will be dealt with, who will be involved and the expected timescales. Sometimes they may offer a meeting when you can raise your concerns in person.

2. The Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman can be approached if you are not satisfied with the outcome from the Local Resolution.

The Ombudsman will assess whether or not it will investigate your complaint.

- If it does investigate, it will write a thorough report. The Ombudsman aims to complete most investigations within a year.

- If the Ombudsman does not accept to investigate your complaint, it may ask the NHS provider to take further action to meet one or more of your stated outcomes.

### Your advocate will

- Find out about your complaint and not pass judgement on you
- Empower you to take on as much of the complaint as you feel able to
- Write letters, make phone calls and attend meetings, if required
- Be on your side.

### Your advocate will not

- Take action without your consent
- Pass on information without your consent (your advocate will explain our confidentiality policy which states when we have to pass on information)
- Act as a counsellor, social worker or legal advisor
- Know everything about the health service – but if they don't know they will try to find the answer!