

How to make a complaint about Care Services

A guide for carers



This document was written by the **Carers Wales**. It is an easy read version of '**Making a complaint. A guide for carers**'.

March 2023

How to use this document



This is an easy read document. But you may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 40**.



Where the document says **we**, this means **Carers Wales**. For more information contact:

Website: www.carersuk.org/wales

E-mail: info@carerswales.org

Phone: 029 20811370



Easy Read Wales made this document into Easy Read using **Photosymbols**. To tell us what you think about this easy read version, [click here](#).

Photosymbols Licence number 403527247.

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Making complaints and raising concerns	6
Raising a concern about care from NHS Wales	9
Getting help to raise concerns about NHS services.....	10
How the NHS will respond to your concerns	11
Making a complaint about services run by your local authority	13
Making a complaint about Social Services	15
After an investigation	24
Making a complaint about care provided by a care service.....	27
Making a complaint about a Social Care Worker.....	29
Making a complaint about a Nursing home or Care home	31
NHS funded nursing and care homes.....	32
Private and Independent care homes.....	33
Things to think about when you are making a complaint	34
Help to manage your emotions.....	37
Hard words	40

Introduction



This is a guide to help you make a complaint about care services provided by:

- The local authority or Council.
- Health care.
- Social care, including social workers.
- Care homes.



You might want to make a complaint If you or a person you support are not happy with the service you are getting.



For example, you may want to complain if the service:

- Is delayed or cancelled.
- Is not good enough.
- Is too expensive – it costs too much.
- Does not meet your needs any more.

This guide will tell you:



- How to make a complaint.



- Things to think about when you are making a complaint.



- How to get emotional support if you are making a complaint.



- Other types of support that might help you. For example, **Advocacy** services.

Advocacy services are services that provide you with an **advocate**. This is a person with special training that can help make sure your thoughts and views are heard and speak up for you.

Making complaints and raising concerns



There are usually 2 stages when making a complaint.



Stage 1. Informal complaint

This means telling the service you are not happy with the care they are providing.



Informal complaints can often be dealt with quickly and easily.





Stage 2. Formal complaint

You might make a formal complaint if your complaint is more serious.



Or if you are not happy with the way your complaint was dealt with in Stage 1.

If you make a formal complaint the service will need to:



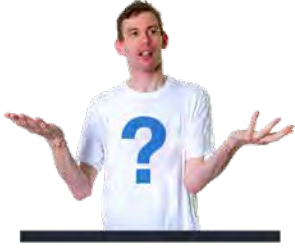
- Investigate it to find out what happened and why.



- Tell you what they have found out.
- Tell you how they will improve their service.



In some services making a complaint is called **raising a concern**.



How you make a complaint or raise a concern depends on:

- What your complaint is about.
- What service you are making a complaint about.



Every organisation will have its own **complaints process**.

A **complaints process** is a written document telling you how complaints are made and dealt with.



You can ask for a copy of this if you need it.

Raising a concern about care from NHS Wales



In the NHS in Wales making a complaint is called **raising a concern**. You can raise a concern about:



- Problems with how a service is working or



- Anything that affects the safety of patients.

If you have a concern about an NHS Wales service, you can:



- **Raise your concern with the service you have a problem with.** You can do this by speaking to someone in person, writing a letter or sending an email.



- **Ask them for information about their [complaints process](#).**

Getting help to raise concerns about NHS services



You can get help from the **Citizen Voice Body (CVB)**. This used to be called the Community Health Council (CHC). The **CVB** can help you:

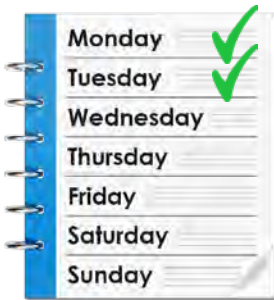
- Understand the complaints process.
- Find the right information to support your complaint.
- Write letters.
- Get ready for meetings.
- Go to meetings.
- Get more support from a complaints **advocate**. This is a person who does not work for the NHS and can advise and support you through the whole **complaints process**.



[Click here to find your local CVB.](#)

How the NHS will respond to your concerns

If you have raised concerns about an NHS service, they will:



- Let you know they have seen or heard your concerns within 2 **working days**.

Working days are the days the organisation is open for business. Usually Monday to Friday.



- Investigate your concerns.



- Let you know what they are going to do about your concerns within 30 days.



- Let you know if they cannot investigate your concerns within 30 days and the reasons why.



- Tell you when you can expect to hear from them.

If you are not happy with the response to your concerns, you can contact the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**.

An **Ombudsman** is a person employed by the Government to investigate complaints about an organisation or public service.



You make a complaint to the **Public Services Ombudsman** on their website: www.ombudsman.wales/how-to-complain



Making a complaint about services run by your local authority

If you want to make a complaint about services run by the local authority, you can:



- Get a feedback form from a member of staff you are already in contact with or from your local authority website.



- Phone them.
- Send an Email or letter.



- Visit their offices.



You can find your local authority and their website on the government website here: www.gov.uk/find-local-council



The local authority deals with complaints in 2 Stages.



Stage 1. Informal complaints - when the complaint can be dealt with quickly and easily.



Stage 2. Formal complaints - when:

- You or the local authority think the complaint is more serious or



- You are not happy with the way your complaint was dealt with in stage 1.

Making a complaint about Social Services



There is a different way to make a complaint about Social Services.



Social services are an organisation that aim to protect the wellbeing of:

- Children.
- **Vulnerable adults** – adults more at risk from harm.



This includes services that provide care and support for people who need it.



Local Authorities run some care services themselves.



They also pay some other care agencies to work for them.



Your local authority will have a **Complaints Officer**. This is the person you should contact to make a complaint about:



- Care services the local authority provide themselves or



- A care service the local authority pay a care agency to provide.



You can find your local authority and their website on the government website here: www.gov.uk/find-local-council



You can ask your local authority to send you a copy of their **complaints process**.



There are 2 stages to the local authority **complaints process**.



Stage 1. Local resolution

Local resolution aims to deal with your complaint quickly.



You will need to contact your local authority.



Make a note of who you spoke to and when you spoke to them.



You will be offered the chance to talk to a complaints officer within 10 **working days**.

You can talk about your complaint:



- Face to face.



- On the phone.



If your local authority is not able to speak to you within 10 **working days** they should contact you to arrange another time, or you should contact them and make a note of who you spoke to.



The local authority must contact you again within 5 **working days** of dealing with your complaint.

Please remember from 1 August 2024, you must make any complaint you have:



- Within 1 year of the issue happening that you want to complain about or
- Within 1 year of you finding out about the issue.

The local authority will only investigate a complaint more than a year after the issue if:



- There are good reasons why you did not make the complaint earlier.



- It is still possible to find out reliable information about the issue.



Stage 2: Formal investigation

You can ask for your complaint to be investigated by someone outside your local authority.



This is known as a formal investigation.

If you want, your local authority must find an **independent investigator**. This must be a person who:



- Does not work for the service you are making a complaint about or



- Is not married or in a **civil partnership** with someone working for that service.

A couple in a **civil partnership** have the same legal rights as a married couple.



An independent person will also need to support the investigation if your complaint involves a child or young person.



The independent person and the independent investigator must be different people.

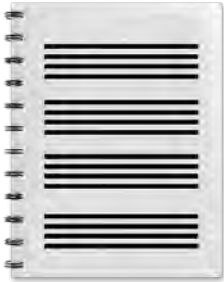


There is more information about the **independent person** in the Welsh Government guide here: www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/a-guide-to-handling-complaints-and-representations-by-local-authority-social-services.pdf



This guide is not in easy read.

When you have told the local authority about your complaint they must:



- Send you a written record of your conversation within 5 **working days**. You can tell the local authority if you do not agree with anything in the written record.
- Give you details about:
 - How your complaint will be investigated.
 - The name of the person investigating it.
 - The name of the Independent Person if one is needed.



- Finish their investigation and send you a written response within 25 **working days**.



- Tell you if they are not able to send you a written response in that time.



Contact your local authority if you have not heard from them 25 **working days** after you made your complaint.



Make a note of who you speak to, the date and time.



The local authority must send you the response in the way you need it.



For example, if you make your complaint in the Welsh language, they must respond in Welsh.

After an investigation



The response to the investigation will tell you if your complaint is upheld or not.



If your complaint is upheld, it means the investigation found that you had good reasons to complain.



The local authority will look at what they must do to put things right.



If your complaint is not upheld it means the investigation did not agree with it.

If you are **not** happy with the result of the investigation you can ask for help from:



- The **Public Services Ombudsman** for Wales.



- Your local Councillor, Member of the Senedd (MS) or Member of Parliament (MP).



- The **Children's Commissioner** for Wales - www.childcomwales.org.uk/contact-us/



- The **Older People's Commissioner** for Wales – www.olderpeople.wales/contact-us/

A **Commissioner** works to support and protect the rights of a particular group of people.



You can also ask for help from **Citizens Advice** or a solicitor if you think the local authority has:



- Acted against the law.



- **Discriminated** against you. For example, treated you differently because of your:
 - Disability.
 - Race or religion.
 - Beliefs.
 - Gender.



- You may also be able to make a financial claim if you have been hurt or treated unfairly.



There is more information about how citizens advice could help you here: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/family/looking-after-people/social-services-complaints-w/social-services-complaints-other-action-you-could-take-w/

Making a complaint about care provided by a care service



This is about care services that are:

- Provided by the local authority.
- Paid for and organised by the local authority.



Who you make your complaint to depends on what it is about.



If you are not happy with the **quality** of care, you should contact the **Care Inspectorate Wales**.



You can find out how to contact the **Care Inspectorate Wales** here: www.careinspectorate.wales/contact-us

You should contact your local authority if your complaint is about:



- Advice you have been given.



- Assessments.



- The way care services are organised and paid for.



Making a complaint about a Social Care Worker



Social Care Workers should be working to a **Code of Professional Practice**. These are the rules about how Social Care Workers should do their job.



You can read the **Professional Code of Practice for Social Care Workers** here: www.socialcare.wales/dealing-with-concerns/codes-of-practice-and-guidance



You can contact **Social Care Wales** if you are worried about a Social Care Worker.



For example, if you think:

- They have not been honest.
- They are not doing their job properly.



For more information about making a complaint to **Social Care Wales** click here: <https://socialcare.wales/dealing-with-concerns/codes-of-practice-and-guidance>



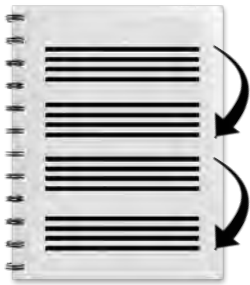
You should phone 101 if you think a crime has been committed. For example:

- Abuse.
- Theft.



101 is the number to contact the police when it is not an emergency.

Making a complaint about a Nursing home or Care home



All nursing and care homes should have a **complaints process**.



It will tell you how you can make a complaint.



You can ask for a copy of this.



NHS funded nursing and care homes



Some nursing and care homes get money from the NHS to run their service.



If you want to make a complaint about one of these nursing or care homes. You should contact your:

- Local health board.
- Or your local authority.

Private and Independent care homes



Other care homes are run by a private or independent companies.



They do not get money from the NHS.

If you want to make a complaint about a private or independent care home you should:



1. Ask to see their **complaints process**.



2. Make your complaint to the care home and wait for their response.

3. Contact the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales** if you are not happy with their response.

Things to think about when you are making a complaint



Making a complaint can be hard and take a long time. It is helpful if you:



- Make notes about who you have spoken to, when you spoke to them and what was said.



- Keep copies of any letters or emails about your complaint.

When you make your complaint:



- Stick to the facts about:
 - What the problems is.
 - What has gone wrong.
 - What happened.
 - Dates and times things happened.
 - Who you have spoken to.
 - What you have been told.
 - How this has affected you and the person you are caring for.



- Try not to guess what someone might have thought, said or done.



- Talk about any written information you were given about the service before the issue happened.



- Say if the written information suggests a different service to what you are getting.



- Talk about anything you have already done to try to sort out the problem.



- Send copies of anything you have that is related to your complaint. For example:
 - Photos.
 - Documents.
 - Letters or emails.



- Make any suggestions about how you would like the problem to be dealt with. For example:
 - Finding out information.
 - Improvements to the service.
 - Getting an apology.
 - Money back or refund.

Help to manage your emotions



Making a complaint can be stressful.



It is important that you can talk to someone about how you are feeling.



You might have friends and family you can talk to.



Or you might prefer to use other services that can offer support.



We can help. We offer:

- A free Listening Support Service.
- Online training sessions.
- Online support sessions including mindfulness and managing difficult emotions.
- Support for money issues, wellbeing and working carers.



To find out more go to our help and advice pages on our website: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice



You can also contact us by:

Email: info@carerswales.org

Phone: 029 20811370

Carers UK have:



- An online group here: www.carersuk.org/get-involved/join-us/our-forum



- **Helpline:** 0808 808 7777



- **Email:** advice@carersuk.org



The Samaritans are available to talk or listen 24 hours a day, every day.



- **Phone:** 116 123
- **Email:** jo@samaritans.org

Hard words

Advocacy and Advocate

Advocacy services are services that provide you with an advocate. This is a person with special training that can help make sure your thoughts and views are heard and speak up for you.

Civil partnership

Couples who have the same legal rights as a married couple.

Commissioner

A person who works to support and protect the rights of a particular group of people.

Complaints process

A written document telling you how complaints are made and dealt with.

Ombudsman

A person employed by the Government to investigate complaints about an organisation or public service.

Working days

Are the days the organisation is open for business. Usually Monday to Friday.