

# How to make a complaint

## Our Commitment

The Health and Social Care Board commissions health and social care services principally, but not exclusively from the six HSC Trusts and aims to improve the health and well-being of people in Northern Ireland. In most instances we succeed, but sometimes things can go wrong.

If you have a complaint concerning a Family Practitioner Service or about the work of the Board (for example, if you have been personally affected by a commissioning decision of the Board concerning the funding of a particular service or by the lack of a particular service), please contact the Board's Complaint's Officers for advice and assistance. You may do this by:

- E-mailing - [Complaints.hscb@hscni.net](mailto:Complaints.hscb@hscni.net)
- Telephoning - 028 9536 3893
- Text Phone - 18001 028 95363893
- Calling in person
- Writing

The Board's Complaints Officers are based at;

**Complaints Department,  
Health and Social Care Board,  
12-22 Linenhall Street,  
Belfast  
BT2 8BS**

## What happens next?

Your complaint will normally be :

- Acknowledged within two working days
- Investigated thoroughly
- Treated confidentially
- Responded to fully, in writing, within 20 working days

If there is to be any delay we will let you know the reason for this and when you may expect to receive a detailed reply.

At any stage a meeting can be arranged to discuss your complaint when you may be accompanied by a relative, friend or someone from the Patient and Client Council.

### Family Practitioner Services

(Family Doctors, Dentists, Pharmacists and Opticians)

We would encourage you to let someone at the Practice or Surgery, know about the problem so that they can try to sort it out immediately.

The Practice will have an information leaflet which will detail how to make a complaint, the telephone number of the complaints officer and when to expect a reply. This should be within 10 working days.

However, you may not want to approach the Practice directly. If this is the case, please contact one of the Board's Complaints Officers for advice and assistance.

The HSC Board Complaints Officer may act as '**Honest Broker**'. Within this capacity the Board's Complaints Officers will;

- act as an intermediary between you and the practice;
- where appropriate make arrangements for independent expert advice, conciliation, lay person assistance; and
- ensure you are kept informed about the progress of your complaint.

Honest Broker is not an alternative to local resolution, nor is it an opportunity for the Board to take over investigation. It is about facilitating communications and building relationships between the practice/pharmacy and the complainant. As an 'Honest Broker' the

Complaints Officer will also provide advice to both you the complainant and the practice and facilitate/attend meetings. In addition, you or the Practice can ask the Board to act in this role at any point in the complaints process; however agreement must be sought from both parties.

## **Trust Complaints**

Complaints will be handled directly by the Trusts in the first instance, under local resolution. Should you remain unhappy following consideration of the response you receive from the Trust, you can approach the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

Under the HSC Complaints Procedure the Board will receive information relating to Trust complaints for monitoring and performance management purposes, the Board **will not** investigate Trust complaints.

## **If you are still dissatisfied**

You can ask the Public Services Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) to investigate your complaint. Although you have the right to approach the Ombudsman at any time, she will not usually take on a case unless it has first been through the complaints procedure.

## **The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman:**

The NI Public Services Ombudsman  
33 Wellington Place,  
Belfast  
BT1 6HN

**Freephone:** 0800 343 424

**Text phone:** 028 9089 7789

**Email:** [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

## **Please remember**

- The Patient and Client Council.

Throughout the complaints investigation you also have a right to seek the help of the Patient and Client Council.

The Council is an independent body set up to represent your interest in health and social care. It is willing to assist you at any stage of your complaint by providing advice and support.

The Council can be contacted by:

**Freephone:** 0800 917 0222

**E-mail:** [complaints.pcc@hscni.net](mailto:complaints.pcc@hscni.net)

## **Accessibility**

This document can be made available on request and where reasonably practicable in an alternative format, to include, Easy Read, Braille, Audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.