



Norfolk Fact sheet

Number 5

Making a Complaint

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Introduction:

It can feel difficult to make an official complaint, especially if emotions are running high and you feel angry or upset about the way you, or someone else has been treated. However, it is always worth remembering that most organisations will want to know if you have a complaint and will be willing to help you to resolve it.

Registering an official complaint should never make things worse or prejudice the care, treatment or service which is being received. By registering a complaint, you have the chance to make a real difference, not only for yourself, but for others who may be using the organisation or service in the future.

Complaints procedures:

Most organisations have complaints procedures, which should be made available to anyone who wishes to lodge a complaint. These procedures oblige organisations to deal with complaints in a standard way, in accordance with formal guidelines they have set out. So, at the outset, it is advisable to voice a complaint through a complaints procedure before reaching out to other organisations able to give independent help with complaints.

'Watch dogs' are regulatory bodies which exist outside an organisation you wish to complain about. They will usually ask you to follow an organisation's complaints procedure before they are willing to offer help.

Tips for making a complaint:

- Take the time to find out your basic rights in a situation of conflict. If in doubt, ask your local advice services. This will help you to feel confident and realistic about what can be achieved.
- In order to be able to back up what you are saying, keep a record of dates on which communications take place between yourself and the body to which you are making the complaint, so that there can be no doubt about what has been said, and what was agreed between you and when.
- It is advisable to begin by registering a complaint at the source of the problem before approaching an outside organisation. Try to keep calm and, in this way, you will feel more in control.
- While a telephone or personal call is often effective, unless this resolves your complaint immediately, follow it up in writing. Keep details of all conversations and copies of all correspondence relating to your complaints.

Goods & Services:***Consumer Focus:***

This is a new organisation created through the merger of Energywatch, the National Consumer Council and Postwatch to champion consumer interests. Consumers cannot contact Consumer Focus directly but they can access information on their website www.consumerfocus.org.uk. Advice for individuals on energy and post is given by Consumer Direct on 08454 040506.

Trading Standards Service:

To complain about tradesmen and their work (such as decorating, building, plumbing etc.) or doorstep traders you should contact the Trading Standards Service Help Desk on 0344 8008013. You may write to them at Norfolk County Council, Trading Standards Service, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NORWICH. NR12UD. For further information, go to the Trading Standards website www.norfolk.gov.uk/tradingstandards or contact Norfolk Consumers Support Network (which is their telephone and online consumer service) telephone 08454 040506 or visit their website at www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

Housing:

Sheltered Accommodation (rented):

To complain about rented Sheltered Accommodation, the first step is to approach the manager of the Housing Organisation, who should inform you about the complaints procedure to follow. If, after you have followed their procedure, you do not feel satisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with, you may contact the Housing Ombudsman service (see page 8).

Sheltered Accommodation (for buyers):

The Manager of the Housing Company is the first person you should contact who is required to inform you of their Company's complaints procedure. For more serious complaints about a sheltered home, you may contact ARHM which is a useful organisation for people that own, manage and run retirement properties.

ARHM:

The Association of Retirement Housing Managers represents organisations which manage retirement properties. For more information visit their website at www.arhm.org. You can contact ARHM on 020 74630660 or submit your complaint in writing to the Housing Managers (ARHM), Southbank House, Black Prince Road, LONDON. SE1 7SJ.

AIMS:

AIMS is a specialist housing advice service offering impartial information, advice and mediation for any person who lives or works in private retirement or sheltered housing. This service is presently being redeveloped by Age UK which is the new merger of the Age Concern England and Help the Aged charities. For information, contact the Age UK helpline on 0800 1696565.

Housing (cont):

Private landlords:

If you are not satisfied, after complaining directly to your landlord about a problem concerning the condition of the place you live in or its state of repair, you should contact the ***Department for Environmental Health*** at your local district council. This number will be listed in your telephone directory.

If you are not satisfied, after complaining directly to your landlord about the safety of the property you rent or about the safety of the gas and electricity appliances, you should contact the ***Health and Safety Executive***. For information, go to their website at www.hse.gov.uk. You can call the HSE Infoline on 0845 3450055 or contact their local office at HSE Norwich, Lakeside 500, Old Chapel Way, Broadland Business Park, NORWICH. NR7 0WQ. Telephone 01603 828000.

Care Homes:

It is your right to complain, and making a complaint should in no way prejudice the level of your care. At the outset, complaints should be made to the Manager or Proprietor of the care home. Care homes are obliged to have a procedure for making complaints. If the complaint cannot be resolved via this procedure, you should contact the Care Quality Commission.

Care Quality Commission:

The Care Quality Commission is responsible for making sure that care service providers meet the regulations and standards that apply to them and to use its powers and procedures to investigate complaints.

For information, go to their website at www.cqc.org.uk or contact their Customer Service Team on 03000 616161 - email enquiries@cqc.org.uk. Alternatively, write to their regional office at CQC Eastern, Citygate, Gallowgate, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE. NE1 4PA – email: enquiries.eastern@cqc.org.uk.

Domiciliary care complaints can also be referred to the CQC.

Home Care Agencies:

First, address your complaint to the Agency which provides the home care. The Agency is required to inform you of their complaints procedures. If you are not satisfied with the way the Agency handles your complaint, you may contact UKHCA who will offer help and support.

UK Home Care Association (UKHCA):

UKHCA is the professional association of home care providers which helps organisations which provide social care (which may include nursing services) to people in their own homes - promoting high standards of care, and protecting the welfare of users.

For information, go to their website at www.ukhca.co.uk. You may contact UKHCA's helpline on 020 82885291 or write to their Office at Group House, 52 Sutton Court Road, SUTTON, Surrey. SM1 4SL – email: helpline@ukhca.co.uk.

Council Housing and other Council Services:

To complain about any council service, contact the department or the Area office concerned, and ask for information about their official complaints procedure. If, after following this procedure, you are unhappy with the way the Council has dealt with your complaint, you should then contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

Local Government Ombudsman:

The Local Government Ombudsman examines complaints about most Council matters including housing. For information, visit their website www.lgo.org.uk.

If you believe your complaint has not been managed effectively by the Council, you may contact LGO's national advice team on 0300 0610614 or send your complaint to the LGO, PO BOX 4771, COVENTRY. CV4 0EH. Fax: 024 76820001 – email: advice@lgo.org.uk.

Housing Ombudsman Service:

All residents in homes owned or managed by a provider of housing services registered with HOS can make a complaint to the Ombudsman. All social landlords (housing associations) registered in England are included, as are many private landlords and management agents. All member organisations must have a formal procedure for dealing with complaints. Before contacting HOS you should normally have followed these complaint procedures. For information, go to their website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or call on 0300 1113000 or write to them at 81 Aldwych, LONDON. WC2B 4HN – email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Complaints about public housing (i.e. councils and local authorities) have to be made to the Local Government Ombudsman (see page 7).

Social Services:

If you would like to make a complaint about Norfolk Adult Social Services, the first step is to make an informal complaint to the person or the department involved. If you have further cause for complaint, you should contact the department and ask for details of its complaints procedure. For information, go to Norfolk County Council's website at www.norfolk.gov.uk or call the Adult Social Services Customer Service Centre on 0344 8008014. You may complain by email via their website or in writing to Adult Social Services, PO Box 3210, NORWICH. NR7 7AB.

Benefits:

If you wish to make a complaint about Benefits and Social Fund payments, you should first contact the Customer Service Manager at your local Social Security office for information on their complaint procedures. The name and phone number of the Customer Service Manager is at all offices and will be given out on request. Information is available on the Department of Works & Pensions website www.dwp.gov.uk (complaints and appeals section).

The DWP cannot treat a complaint as an appeal against a benefit decision. (To appeal, refer to their leaflet GL24 'If you think a decision is wrong').

Transport:***Rail Services:***

To make a complaint about the railway or the services you have received from a train company, contact the Customer Services department of the company operating the service, train or station which you wish to complain about. Most complaints can be resolved by dealing directly with the company responsible. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint or you do not feel the service provider handled it appropriately you should contact **Passenger Focus**.

Passenger Focus is an independent public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of passengers. If you make a complaint and you are unhappy with the response, they can take up your complaint with the rail company involved. For information, go to www.passengerfocus.org.uk. If you want to complain about any aspect of service you may call their Passenger Helpline on 0300 1232350 or write to Passenger Focus, FREEPOST (RRRE-ETTC-LEET), PO BOX 4257, MANCHESTER. M60 3AR. Fax: 0845 8501392 – email: info@passengerfocus.org.uk.

Bus & Coach Services:

When you wish to complain about a bus service or company, the first step is to find out whether it is a private and commercial organisation, or services contracted by Norfolk County Council. A bus timetable should give you this information, or you can contact **Traveline East Anglia** on 0871 2002233, which is a council-run service for information on all bus and coach services in this area. For information, go to their website www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk

To complain about a bus service provided or subsidised by Norfolk County Council, contact their Transport Dept. at County Hall, Martineau Lane, NORWICH. NR1 2SG. Tel: 0344 8008020. Fax: 01603 223219. Email: pt@norfolk.gov.uk. To complain about a commercial company, contact their Company's Customer Services Department. Their contact details should be in your local telephone directory, or on their bus timetable.

If you are dissatisfied with the response, you can then refer to the Bus Appeals Body who will examine your complaint. For information, go to www.busappealsbody.co.uk or www.bususers.org or write to Bus Users UK, PO BOX 2950, STOKE-ON-TRENT. ST4 9EW. Tel: 01782 442855.

Health:

NHS Norfolk:

The NHS complaints procedure covers complaints made by a person about any matter connected with the provision of NHS services by NHS organisations or primary care practitioners (GPs, dentists, opticians and pharmacists). The procedure also covers services provided overseas or by the private sector where the NHS has paid for them. If you are unable to complain yourself, then someone else (usually a relative or close friend) can complain on your behalf, with your consent.

GP's, dentists, pharmacists and opticians all have their own complaints procedures so the easiest way to sort out any concerns is to contact the practice manager or senior partner there. If you are not happy to do this, you can contact the NHS Norfolk Complaints team.

A person can choose to complain directly to NHS Norfolk as the commissioner of the service, instead of to the service provider. Patients who want to feedback to NHS Norfolk can do so by contacting the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 5874132 or email pals@norfolk.nhs.uk or write to NHS Norfolk Complaints Team, Lakeside 400, Broadland Business Park, Thorpe St. Andrew, NORWICH. NR7 0WG. (Tel: 01603 257093).

If the complaint involves more than one organisation, the person complaining will receive one, co-ordinated response which will mean that the person does not have to retell his/her story several times and will have one point of contact. The complaint has to be made within 12 months of an incident happening.

For complaints about the commissioning of services, contact the Complaints Manager (Commissioning), NHS Norfolk, Lakeside 400, Old Chapel Way, Broadland Business Park, Thorpe St. Andrew, NORWICH. NR7 0WG. (Tel: 01603 257017). For matters concerning NHS Norfolk's Provider Services, contact the Complaints Manager, NHS Norfolk Provider Services, Elliot House, 130 Ber Street, NORWICH. NR1 3AG. (Tel: 01603 697381). Any misdirected complaints will be forwarded onto the appropriate team via internal channels.

Health (cont):

NHS Norfolk PALS:

PALS is the first point of contact for those who have concerns or complaints about the quality of service they are receiving from NHS Norfolk. NHS Trusts and Primary Care Trusts all have Patient Advice & Liaison Services (PALS) who can advise you about formal complaints procedures and about the Independent Complaints Advocacy Services (ICAS). NHS Norfolk has details on their website of NHS Norfolk PALS, go to www.norfolk-pct.nhs.uk for information or call on 0800 5874132. Other PALS in Norfolk are listed on the HERON website, go to www.heron.nhs.uk.

PALS, ICAS and the Ombudsman work closely together to help guide NHS users through the complaints procedure.

ICAS – Cambridgeshire, Norfolk & Suffolk:

The Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) provides advocacy support to people who wish to make a complaint about the service – or lack of it – that they have received from the NHS. The ICAS service is free, independent and confidential and will help you through the complaints process. For information, go to their website www.pohwer.net or call their Helpline on 0845 4561084 or write to ICAS, Unit 26A, E Space North, 181 Wisbech Road, Littleport, ELY. CB61RA.

Health Service Ombudsman for England:

If you have already complained, using the NHS complaints procedures, but are still unhappy, then you can complain to The Health Service Ombudsman (HSO) who carry out independent investigations into complaints made by, or on behalf of, people who have suffered because of poor treatment or service provided through the NHS in England. For information, go to their website at www.ombudsman.org.uk.

The HSO is completely independent of the Government and the National Health Service. Their services are available to everyone and are free of charge. Before making a complaint, they recommend that you contact their Helpline on 0345 0154033 for information and advice. Your complaint must be made in writing to the HSO for England, Millbank Tower, Millbank, LONDON. SW1P 4QP.

Private Dentists:

The NHS complaints procedure does not cover private treatment even if the dentist concerned also offers NHS treatment. Dental practices have their own complaints procedure for private treatment. Advice may be obtained from:

Dental Complaints Service:

The Dental Complaints Service assists private dental patients and dental professionals to resolve complaints about private dental services. They are an independent dental complaints service funded by the General Dental Council. For information, go to www.dentalcomplaints.org.uk. You may contact the DCS helpline on 08456 120540 or write to them at the Dental Complaints Service, Lansdowne Building, 2 Lansdowne Road, CROYDON. CR9 2ER.

The British Dental Health Foundation:

Offers a free advice service on all aspects of oral health. For information, go to their website www.dentalhealth.org. Their Dental Helpline can be accessed by email via their website or call on 0845 0631188

Employment:

There are a number of organisations you can contact for information and advice on your rights under the law:

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service) offers free, confidential and impartial advice on all employment rights issues. Advice and guidance can be found in their Acas Guide 'Discipline and grievances at work'. For information, go to www.acas.org.uk or call their helpline on 08457 474747.

Citizen Advice Bureaux can provide free and impartial advice – you can find your local CAB office in the phone book or go to website www.citizensadvice.org.uk for local CAB details or to www.adviceguide.org.uk for online advice.

www.direct.gov.uk

This government website includes an 'Employment' section and covers 'Resolving problems at work' including Grievance procedures. Grievances let you make complaints or raise problems with your employer. BIS (Dept for Business) provides advice and guidance in their leaflet 'Problems at Work'. For information, go to www.bis.gov.uk or call their publications order line on 0845 0150010.

Trade Unions can offer help, advice and support if you are a member.

Age discrimination has been unlawful in employment since October 2006. . It is important that people with possible age discrimination cases seek expert legal advice

Age UK provide advice and guidance in the following facts sheets which are downloadable from their website www.ageuk.org.uk or from Age Concern Norfolk's website www.ageconcern.org.uk - free copies are available from Age Concern Norfolk on 01603 787111:

FS4 Rights at work

FS70 Dealing with disputes at work

FS77 The law on age discrimination

Solicitors:

If you are not happy with the service you receive from a solicitor, you should complain to them first. Give them a fair chance to sort out the complaint before you take it any further. All solicitors must be a member of the Law Society. All firms of solicitors have a procedure for handling complaints. If you feel that your solicitor has failed to deal with the problem, then contact the Legal Complaints Service (LCS) which is part of the Law Society.

The Legal Complaints Service (LCS) operates independently and investigates complaints about solicitors. Their service is independent, impartial and free. For information, go to their website www.legalcomplaints.org.uk. If you are not satisfied with your solicitor's response to your complaint, call LCS's helpline on 0845 6086565 or email via their website.

The Legal Services Ombudsman is a statutory officer who investigates allegations about solicitors. If you are not satisfied with Legal Complaints Service's decision, you may then refer the matter the Legal Services Ombudsman. For information, go to www.olso.org or call their helpline on 0845 6010794. You may write to them at Third Floor, Sunlight House, Quay Street, MANCHESTER. M3 3JZ. Email: iso@olso.gsi.gov.uk.

Police:

You can complain about police officers of any rank or other members of police staff. If a friend or relative has been treated badly by the police, you can complain if you are distressed as a result. You can also complain if you personally saw someone you didn't know being treated badly by the police. A friend or relative or member of a community group can make a complaint on your behalf as long as you agree in writing that you are happy for them to complain for you. Most complaints will be dealt with by your local police, called 'Local Resolution'.

You can ask a solicitor or your MP to make a complaint on your behalf.

Norfolk Police Authority:

Norfolk PA is an independent body which oversees the work of Norfolk Constabulary. If your complaint is about the overall policies of a police force, you should contact Norfolk PA which has a statutory duty to oversee complaints against the police and handle complaints against senior officers. For information, go to www.norfolk-pa.gov.uk or call on 01953 424455, email policeauthority@norfolk.pnn.police.uk or write to them at Wymondham (address below).

Norfolk Constabulary:

If you wish to make a complaint against any member of Norfolk Constabulary under the direction and control of the Chief Constable, write to the Professional Standards Department, Jubilee House, Falconers Chase, WYMONDHAM. NR18 0WW. For information, go to their website www.norfolk.police.uk or call on 0845 4564567, email psd@norfolk.pnn.police.uk.

If you have made a complaint against the police which has been dealt with under Local Resolution and you are unhappy with the way it has been handled, you may be able to complain to the IPCC.

Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC):

If you are dissatisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with you may wish to contact the IPCC which is an independent body which has oversight of police complaints. Their leaflet 'How to make a complaint against the police' is downloadable from their website or available from police stations and the IPCC. For information, go to the 'complaints' section of their website www.ipcc.gov.uk. To contact the IPCC, call Customer Services on 0845 3002002, or write to them at Independent House, Whitwick Business Park, Stenson Road, COALVILLE. LE67 4JP. Email: enquiries@ipcc.gsi.gov.uk.

See also Age Concern Norfolk's Fact Sheet No.9 'Consumer Rights & Trading Standards'.



- Age Concern Norfolk is an independent county-wide charity with over 60 years experience of working for the well-being of older people and their carers in Norfolk.
- In Norfolk there are a number of independent Age Concern organisations and groups working to promote the well-being of older people.
- Age Concern Norwich with Age Concern Norfolk is an 'organisation' member of the Age Concern Federation. Contact Age Concern Norwich at: Boardman House, Redwell St, Norwich. Tel: (01603) 496333.
- Other Age Concern groups working in the county are supported by Age Concern Norfolk. For information on your nearest Age Concern group, and for details about our work contact: Age Concern Norfolk.

**Age Concern Norfolk
Age Concern County Office
300 St Faith's Road
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Telephone: 01603 787111**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Community
Legal Service



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