

I have a concern – can you help?

Yes – we want to hear about it. Our PALS team can help you with any concerns you may have. If you feel you wish to raise a formal complaint, they will refer you to our Assistance and Complaints Service.

We can only improve our services if we know when there are problems.

We expect you (our patients, relatives, carers and visitors) to tell us when things aren't 'up to scratch'. If you are unhappy we want to hear about it - and we'll do our best to resolve your concerns as quickly as we can.

Will I be discriminated against if I raise a concern?

Telling us your concerns won't affect your care or treatment (or that of your relative or friend). We would take action if we discovered that a patient was treated differently after a concern has been raised.

Can I raise a concern on behalf of someone else?

If you are unhappy with the way a friend or relative has been treated, you can raise a concern for them. However, you must tell them what you are doing and you must have their agreement to go ahead.

They may need to sign a consent form – to confirm that they have given you permission to act on their behalf.

In the same way, a friend or relative can make a complaint for you.

What's the best way of raising a concern?

If your concern is about care and treatment, ask to speak to the member of staff who runs the ward, clinic or department and explain that you need to discuss a problem with them. You might see a Sister, Matron, Senior Matron or a manager.

They will do their best to sort out any difficulties straight away. Most concerns and complaints can be resolved 'on the spot' like this and do not go any further.

If you are not happy with the response, or you would rather speak to someone independently, contact PALS.

What will happen then?

A member of PALS will support you. They will talk to you about how you would like your issue handling and agree a way forward.

Some problems may take longer to deal with, but it may be that we can sort something out while you have a cup of tea in the café.

For more complicated concerns and for complaints we may recommend that a senior member of staff speaks to you on the phone; or that they meet with you at a convenient time.

If you would prefer to raise a formal complaint, PALS will put you in touch with our Assistance and Complaints team for support. They will make sure your complaint is investigated in line with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints (England) regulations 2009.

Whatever process we follow will be with your agreement and all the choices will be explained to you.

Why is a formal complaint different?

Complex issues tend to be about clinical care and treatment. They may need a more in-depth investigation, which takes time to work through to reach a satisfactory outcome.

Formal complaints can be made in writing, or over the phone. If you make your complaint by phone a member of the Assistance and Complaints team will type up the details and send them to you. This is to confirm we have all the facts correct.

A formal complaint will be acknowledged by letter or phone call, depending on your preference. The acknowledgement lets you know that your complaint has been actioned, that an investigation will happen, and the timescale within which you can expect to receive a response.

Although formal complaints involve a final response letter, we can often resolve issues more effectively by inviting you to meet with clinical and nursing staff. Face-to-face meetings like this will be discussed with you and are arranged with your agreement.

What if I am not happy when I receive my final response?

We do our best to resolve formal complaints within the hospital.

If you wish to discuss how your complaint will be dealt with, or the timescale for our response, please contact PALS who will put you in touch with the right person.

If we feel we have done all we can to resolve your complaint, we will let you know.

You can ask for your complaint to be reviewed under the latest national guidance.

We will tell you what you need to do if you want your complaint reviewed.