



**Complaining about
the Care Quality
Commission**

About the Care Quality Commission

We are the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Our job is to register, monitor and inspect health care and social care services, such as local hospitals, GP surgeries and care homes. We do this to make sure they provide care that is safe, effective and caring.

When we inspect each service, we judge how good it is and give it a rating of 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. We publish a report about each service on our website.

If our inspection finds that a service needs to improve, we will take action to make sure this happens.



Introduction

We welcome your comments and suggestions about how well we are doing our job. We value your feedback and use it to improve how we work as an organisation, and how our staff carry out their roles.

This booklet explains what to do if you think we have got something wrong and want to complain to us. It also explains how we will handle your complaint.

Our standards of service

If you complain to us, we will:

- listen carefully to your concern;
- be polite and helpful;
- deal with your complaint fairly and efficiently;
- tell you how we are getting on with your complaint;
- admit any mistakes we have made and put matters right whenever possible; and
- try to help you find the right organisation to talk to if we cannot deal with your complaint ourselves.



Complaints we can deal with

Our National Complaints Team can deal with complaints from anyone directly affected by the way we carry out our work, including complaints about members of our staff or people working for us. You can also make a complaint on someone else's behalf with their consent (such as a relative or someone you care for). You should contact us within a year of the reason for the complaint, or within a year of becoming aware of it.

Examples of what you can complain about include where you think we have:

- made administrative mistakes (such as providing the wrong information or taking longer than we said we would to do something);
- behaved in an unprofessional way;
- not followed our policies and procedures.



Complaints we cannot deal with

There are some issues that our National Complaints Team cannot deal with. These include complaints about the following.

- Evidence from our inspections and the ratings we give to services. These complaints are handled under separate processes, which are explained on our website at www.cqc.org.uk/ratingreview.
- The action we take if we find that a care provider or manager is not meeting the standards expected of them, or other enforcement action. These complaints are also handled under separate processes, which are explained on our website at www.cqc.org.uk/enforcementrepresentations.
- Employment issues, from current or past CQC employees, and staff from services we regulate.
- Disputes with suppliers about contracts.
- The Government, the Department of Health, NHS bodies, local councils and other organisations that we work with.
- The fees that care providers pay us to stay registered. The only exception to this is where we have made a mistake and charged the wrong fee.
- Providers of health care and social care (see opposite).
- Legislation and the role of CQC as set by Parliament.

If we are taking enforcement action against a care provider, we may not be able to consider a complaint from them until the legal process has finished.

If you contact us, we will always reply, even if we are not able to deal with your complaint.



Complaints about providers of health care and social care

We are responsible for checking that every care provider registered with us meets certain standards (known as the fundamental standards) of quality and safety. However, the duties we've been given by Parliament do not include dealing with individual complaints about providers' services.

We have published a separate leaflet that explains how to complain about a care provider. This is available on our website at www.cqc.org.uk/providercomplaints.

Our website also has information about how to report a serious concern.

- If you are a member of staff at a health care or social care service, go to www.cqc.org.uk/staffconcerns.
- If you are a member of the public, go to www.cqc.org.uk/publicconcerns.



How we will handle your complaint

If you tell us something has gone wrong, we want to make sure you feel that we will handle it efficiently and helpfully.

If we are able to look at your complaint, our National Complaints Team will consider whether to handle your concerns under our First Line Resolution or Investigation process.

First Line Resolution. We will identify the issues and tell you within seven working days what we plan to do to look into your complaint.

Investigation. Not all complaints can be resolved quickly, and in some cases, we will need to carry out an investigation. We will contact you about how we will handle your complaint and whether we need more information to help with our enquiries.

Once we fully understand your complaint and what you would like to see happen, we will try to complete our investigation and provide a written reply within 30 working days. This will tell you everything we have done, or plan to do, to put things right. If we cannot reply in that time, we will tell you about the delay and explain the reason for it.



Recording complaints

To improve our customer service, we keep a record of all the complaints we receive. This helps us decide the best way to sort out new problems. We also share what we learn from complaints with our staff, making sure people cannot be identified. See page 7 for more information about how we handle your information.

Support in making a complaint



Advocacy services

If you would like help in making your complaint, you can contact a local advocacy service to support you. For a list of advocacy services in your area, contact your local council or citizen's advice bureau (www.citizensadvice.org.uk).



Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman is a free service that looks at complaints from individuals about public organisations. You can tell them about your complaint at any time, but they may encourage you to go through our complaints procedure before they look into your complaint.

If you want the ombudsman to look at your complaint, you must ask a Member of Parliament to send it to them.

To find out more, visit the ombudsman's website at www.ombudsman.org.uk or ring their helpline on 0345 015 4033.



Data protection and freedom of information

We will handle your information in line with the law. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) gives you the right to see some of the information that we hold about you (personal data). For more information on how CQC processes personal data, and your rights under GDPR, see www.cqc.org.uk/privacy-statement. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you can also see other information, such as our policies and procedures or statistics about our work.

If you are not satisfied with the way we respond after you have asked us for information, you should contact our Information Access Team by sending an email to information.access@cqc.org.uk.

If you are still not happy with the way we have dealt with your request, you can complain to the Information Commissioner. To find out how, visit the Commissioner's website at www.ico.org.uk or ring their helpline on 0303 123 1113.

How to contact us

If you have a complaint about CQC, please contact our National Customer Service Centre who will quickly pass it on to our National Complaints Team.

 Phone us: **03000 616161** (national rates apply)

 Email us: **enquiries@cqc.org.uk**

 Write to us: **Care Quality Commission
National Customer Service Centre,
Citygate, Gallowgate,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA**

 Look at our website: **www.cqc.org.uk/contact**

Please contact us if you would like to receive this publication in other formats or languages. If you need help to make a complaint, we can arrange for an interpreter, translator or signer to support you.

Order code: CQC-146-5000-WL-022017