



How to make a complaint about Family Practitioner Services

Family Practitioner Services

(Family Doctors, Dentists, Pharmacists and Opticians)

If you have a concern regarding one of these services, 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.

Under the HSC Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP), which is a two-stage process, this should be:

1. **Frontline response** - 5 working days (can be extended to 10 working days)
 - If you remain dissatisfied after being informed of the outcome of this stage, you can progress to the next stage, and have 30 working days to do so if resolution has not been possible.
 - It should be explained that you can progress to Stage 2 and how to do so.
2. **Investigation stage** - within 20 working days (can be extended if required)

Complainants must be kept informed if investigations need more than 20 working days.

However, you may not want to approach the Practice directly. If this is the case, please contact the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health for advice and assistance.

The SPPG Complaints Team may act as '**Honest Broker**' at any stage in the HSC Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

Honest Broker is not an alternative to local resolution, nor is it an opportunity for the SPPG Complaints Team to take over investigation. It is about facilitating communications and building relationships between the Practice/pharmacy and the complainant.

You or the Practice can ask the SPPG Complaints Team to act in this role at any point in the complaints process. However, agreement must be sought from both parties.

The Honest Broker role and responsibilities include:

- ❑ Neutral Intermediary: The SPPG Complaints Team serves as a go-between for the complainant and the practitioner to help resolve issues locally.
- ❑ Facilitating Communication: May provide advice to both parties, act as a negotiator, attend and facilitate meetings.
- ❑ Alternative Resolution: This can include mediation or conciliation via separate or joint meetings.
- ❑ Independent Support: May arrange for input from independent experts or lay persons to help resolve the complaint.

If you have a complaint concerning a Family Practitioner Service, please contact the SPPG Complaints Team for advice and assistance. You may do this by:

- ❑ E-mailing - complaints.sppg@hscni.net
- ❑ Telephoning - 028 9536 3893
- ❑ Text Phone - 18001 028 95363893
- ❑ Calling in person
- ❑ Writing

The SPPG Complaints Team are based at:

Directorate of Primary Care, SPPG
12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BS

What happens next?

Your complaint will normally be:

- ☐ Acknowledged within three working days, investigated thoroughly
- ☐ Treated confidentially
- ☐ Managed and responded to under the relevant stages of the HSC MCHP

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.

If you are still dissatisfied

You can ask the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) 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

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: info@pcc-ni.net

HSC Trust Complaints

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

Under the HSC Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) the SPPG will receive information relating to HSC Trust complaints for monitoring and performance management purposes. However, the SPPG Complaints Team **will not** investigate HSC Trust complaints.

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.