



Do you know...? How to complain about a health service...

Are you unhappy with your experience of healthcare services in Southwark? Do you want the issue to be investigated and to receive a formal explanation of what happened, and an apology if appropriate? Follow our guide to making a complaint.

 **Who do I complain to about a Primary Care Service? (this includes GPs, Dentists, Pharmacies and Opticians)**

Keep it local

Raise the issue with the primary care service directly: you can ask to talk to the practice manager informally or ask for details about the complaints policies and procedures. These are often available on a service's website.

When writing a formal complaint, put 'For the attention of the Complaints Manager' in the subject line and include as much detail as you can about the issue, giving dates and names of people involved as well as your own details.

OR Go to the national commissioners

NHS England is responsible for some aspects of commissioning and monitoring primary care services. To complain about a service to them rather than to the service itself, contact 0300 311 22 33 or

England.contactus@nhs.net

Put 'Formal complaint' in the subject line/heading. Include as much detail as you can about the issue, giving dates and names of people involved as well as your own details.



Who do I complain to about a hospital trust's service?

In Southwark, hospital trusts provide a variety of services:

- Hospital services for physical health, plus A&E, are provided by King's and Guy's & St Thomas' Trusts.
- Most mental health services are provided by South London and Maudsley Trust (SLaM).
- Community services (such as foot clinics and sexual health clinics) are provided by Guy's & St Thomas' Trust.

Keep it local

Each hospital trust has a Patient & Advice Liaison Service (PALS) department. They help patients and their families with queries and concerns about their healthcare experiences. They can also tell you about how to make a formal complaint.

Alternatively, you can go straight to the complaints team.

The contact details for PALS and complaints can be found by following these links:

- Guy's and St Thomas' Trust [PALS and complaints](#).
- King's [PALS and complaints](#).
- SLaM [PALS](#) and [complaints](#).

If you wish to complain formally, use the words 'Formal complaint' and include as much detail as you can about the issue, giving dates and names of people involved as well as your own details.



Who do I complain to about the use of the Mental Health Act?

The Mental Health Act is used to detain people in hospital on the grounds of their mental health or put them on a guardianship or community treatment order.

For support to understand your rights under the Mental Health Act, you can contact a local Independent Mental Health Advocate or Mental Capacity Advocate. You can do this by asking the healthcare staff in the relevant service, or by contacting the **local provider of advocacy services, Cambridge House**, directly - see [here](#) for more information.

To complain about the use of the Act, you can complain to the **Care Quality Commission**. You can find detailed guidance on this [here](#).

Who do I complain to about a social care service? (e.g. Home care services or day centres)

- Raise the issue with the **provider** directly
- OR complain to **Southwark Council**, which funds social care services locally. The complaints team can be contacted at sscomplaints@southwark.gov.uk, or on 0207 525 3977.

I've made a complaint at local OR national level but am unhappy with the response. What do I do next?

You should not complain to both the provider itself and the commissioner - this will delay getting the issue resolved. Instead, if you are unhappy with the response to your complaint, next you can submit a complaint to:

- The **Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman**, if your complaint is about healthcare. To find out more information about making a complaint, you can call the Ombudsman on 0345 015 4033 or visit their [website](#).
- OR the **Local Government Ombudsman**, if your complaint is about social care. To find out more information about making a complaint, you can call the Ombudsman on 0300 061 0614 or visit their [website](#).

What if the complaint is about more than one organisation?

If a single event or issue involved more than one organisation - perhaps your local hospital and the ambulance service - you'll only need to make one

complaint. The organisation that receives your complaint must then co-operate with the others to ensure you receive a co-ordinated response.

Can I complain on behalf of someone else?

If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, include their written consent with your letter (if you are making your complaint in writing) as this will speed up the process. However, consent is not required if you are making a complaint in the name of a deceased person or someone who lacks the capacity to make their own decisions, including some children.

Where can I get support with making a complaint?

If you need more help with making your complaint, for example if you need help to write the letter or you do not feel confident enough to deal with the complaints process on your own, you can get help and support from **Pohwer**. Their support is only available for NHS funded services and does not cover social care complaints

Contact them on 0300 456 2370 or visit their [website](#).

Still not sure about the best way to make a complaint? Then contact Healthwatch Southwark using the details below!

Your voice counts

020 7358 7005, info@healthwatchsouthwark.co.uk

www.healthwatchsouthwark.co.uk

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