Department of Health

Care Quality Commission

NHS England

healthwatch

General Dental Council | protecting patients, regulating the dental team

Statement on dental complaints

It is important that dental patients give feedback about their experiences, so that services know what they are doing well and where they can improve.

If you are not happy with the treatment or service you have had, it is usually best to tell the practice directly that you're unhappy, and give them a chance to put things right. They may be able to sort out the problem there and then.

If you do need to make a more formal complaint to the practice, ask for a copy of the policy that explains what you need to do.

If you had NHS dental treatment (including NHS treatment that you paid for)

1. The quickest and simplest way to resolve the problem is to contact the practice, who may be able to sort it out there and then.

   If an informal approach doesn't solve the problem, ask for a copy of the complaints procedure. Any NHS dental practice must have one.

   If you would like support to make a complaint, you can get help from an NHS Complaints Advocate. Contact your local Healthwatch to find out who provides Independent Health Complaints Advocacy in your local area.

2. If you would rather not go directly to the practice, you can contact NHS England instead. NHS England is responsible for commissioning (buying) NHS dental services.

3. If you are not happy with the way in which your formal complaint was handled (either by the dental practice or NHS England, if you chose to go to them) you can go to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). The Ombudsman makes the final decision on complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS in England.

You can find more information about the NHS complaints process, what to expect from it, and other ways to give feedback, on the NHS Choices website.

If you had private dental treatment

1. The quickest and simplest way to resolve the problem is to contact the practice, who may be able to sort it out there and then.

   If an informal approach doesn't solve the problem, ask for a copy of the complaints procedure. Any private dental practice must have one.

2. If you have already made a formal approach to the practice, and the problem has not been resolved, you can contact the Dental Complaints Service (DCS).

   The DCS provides a free and impartial service to help private dental patients and dental professionals to settle complaints about private dental care fairly and efficiently.

   The DCS can deal with your complaint if you would like an apology, a refund or a contribution to the cost of further treatment. They cannot deal with claims for compensation, or with complaints about dental plans.

   If your private treatment was through a dental plan, you should contact your plan provider as they will have a complaints process.

If you have safety concerns about a dentist or practice

If the problem is so serious that you think the dental professional could be a risk to other patients, you should contact the General Dental Council (GDC), which regulates dental professionals in the UK. If the issue is serious enough, the GDC can stop individual dentists from practising. The GDC does not get involved in complaints that are being managed locally. It does not resolve complaints or award compensation.

If the problem is so serious that you think the care provided at the practice could be a risk to other patients, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) would like to know about it. CQC cannot investigate individual complaints, but its inspectors use information when they inspect services to make sure that they are meeting quality and safety standards.

Where to get help with your complaint

If you need further advice, you can contact local Healthwatch for information about how to make a complaint about NHS dental services.

Citizens Advice also provides information and advice about making complaints.

If you have been unable to find an NHS dentist or your usual NHS dentist is unable to see you

NHS Choices lists local dentists that provide NHS services. If you've tried to find an NHS dentist but been unable to, contact NHS England or your local Healthwatch.