

CARERS FACT SHEET 14

Comment or Suggestions about services

Don't be afraid to complain about things if they are not right for you and the person you care for – you are the most important people. It is understandable to think that, if you complain, you may lose some of the services that you have, but you should not let that stop you from trying to sort out the problem. Speak to your local Carers Support Worker or Citizens Advice Bureau, ask them to complain on your behalf and support you in keeping the services you are already getting.

Any organisation you come into contact with has a duty to keep you informed about any decisions they make, and you need to make sure that they do. The majority of complaints arise because of a misunderstanding or a failure in communication between the parties involved and can be speedily resolved with no harm to anyone and positive benefit to you and the cared for person.

In the case of NHS Trusts and Primary Care Trusts you can ask the PALS service to work with you to liaise with the ward or medical staff.

If you find that someone you are dealing with is using jargon that you don't understand, ask them to explain things more simply.

If there is a problem and talking to the person you are in contact with or their manager doesn't help, ask for the organisation's formal complaints procedure. You have a right to be heard, and if you feel there is a need to make a formal complaint, it will then be dealt with in accordance with the policy, which should be explained to you. The advantage of a formal complaints procedure is that it sets out very clearly how it works, when you will get responses and what options you have. The trigger word in any letter you send is 'complaint', this will make sure the process is started.

Don't forget that, if your complaint is not resolved properly, you can contact your M.P. (write to your local MP at The House of Commons, London SW1A 1AA), county councillor, district or city councillor or even take advice about legal proceedings. However, if you feel you need to use the law, you should be aware that it can be a costly process for all concerned, with uncertain outcomes, so make sure you have good advice before you start.

The organisations you deal with won't only want to hear complaints, though. If you feel that someone has given you a particularly good service, tell them so and try to tell their manager – it may mean that the good service is spread to others in a similar situation.