

Writing to your healthcare provider to ask for proper protection from Covid-19 infection

This advice covers:

- A. How to use the letter template
- B. Let us know the outcome of your letter if you would like to
- C. How to give informal feedback and reviews of NHS services
- D. Making a formal complaint to the NHS

A. How to use the letter template

1. Address your letter to PALS (Patient Liaison and Advice Service, for England and Wales) at the hospital – this should be easy to find on the hospital website. You can also phone PALS and discuss your concerns. In Scotland contact PASS: <https://www.cas.org.uk/pass> and in Northern Ireland contact PCC <https://pcc-ni.net/contact-us/>; they will tell you how to raise issues with your hospital or clinic.
2. PALS will pass on your letter to the relevant people, eg the manager of the service you are under (eg haematology, oncology, paediatrics, orthopaedics), and the infection control team and then reply to you. See below if you are not happy with the reply.
3. Send a copy of your letter to the Chief Executive; responsibility for patient safety lies primarily with the hospital management. If you are comfortable doing so, you can also ask that your letter also goes to the doctors or nurses of the clinic you are under, or you could raise the issue with the staff at your clinic visit, if you feel able to. You may know the staff already, like the consultant or clinical nurse specialists. If you feel this may negatively affect your relationship with your doctor or nurse however, you do not need to do this.
4. Personalise your letter. Your personal circumstances are important and people will give it more attention than a standard letter. The template letter has various suggestions, about personal circumstances. You don't need to include all the points, decide which ones are important for you. Add anything else you think is important.
5. Try to be brief and to the point. Remember the aim is to ask why these protections are not in place in the hospital; they are essential to keep you as safe as possible.

6. Be assertive in your letter, we have the right to safe health care and not to be infected with a dangerous pathogen.
7. Attach a copy of the factsheet to your letter, or put in the link to it.
8. Please leave in the paragraph about the Covid Pledge, this will help the campaign grow.
9. If you get a reply and are not happy, write back to the hospital and say why. You can also give informal feedback (see below). If you are not getting anywhere, consider making a formal complaint – see below for how.
10. Consider writing to your MP as well, and ask them to raise the issue with the Secretary of State for Health, Steve Barclay. You can find your MP's [email address here](#).

B. Consider sharing the outcome

1. If you feel comfortable with sharing the response, please do so. You aren't alone, lots of other people are in the same position and feeling very isolated. Sharing can help them know they aren't alone and give them confidence to challenge unsafe medical practice. It also shows the world in general that we won't and don't accept this.
2. If you want to let us know about your experience with the hospital, please email us at this address: healthcare@covidpledge.uk

You could also consider sharing your experiences on social media and in support groups. Do be careful about sharing your personal information on social media. If you post something use the hashtags [#SafeNHSNow](#) and [#MasksInHealthcare](#) so we and other people get to see it, and can share it.

Also please tag us by adding [@CovidPledge](#) and [@cv_cev](#) to your post

3. Please note: we may not be able to respond to individual requests for advice, but we will address common themes, like replies which say “We are following the guidelines”, or “Covid is mild, its just like the flu”.

4. We want to build up a picture of what's happening in our hospitals. This is a big task so if you'd like to help, please let us know. Contact us through the email address.

C. Feedback and reviews of NHS services

1. Most NHS services have informal feedback options online and on social media. This can be effective because other people will see this and NHS organisations are keen to be seen in a positive light.
2. You can give reviews or feedback through [NHS reviews](#), and the [Friends and Family Test](#), (for England and Wales) For Scotland contact [NHS Inform](#) and for Northern Ireland [nidirect](#). Some hospitals have feedback forms on their websites
3. Most hospitals and services have accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Linked-in etc, and sometimes on Google reviews. As stated above be mindful about sharing personal information on social media.
4. If you're happy with the service you have received, say so. Its always nice to be complimented for doing a good job.
5. If you're not happy, say why and ask that the issue is raised urgently with management.

D. Making a formal complaint

1. If the hospital or other service do not address your concerns, you can make a formal complaint. You have the right to make a complaint about any aspect of NHS care, treatment or service, and this is written into the [NHS Constitution on GOV.UK](#). (this is for England, see note A below for other nations) NHS organisations are sensitive about complaints and have to take them seriously. They have to report on complaints on a regular basis to regulatory bodies like the Care Quality Commission and to whoever commissions (pays for) the service.
2. There is a comprehensive section on the NHS website about complaints: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/>. (see note B below for other nations) This is very helpful; it tells you how and where to make a complaint and where to get advice about making a complaint if you need it.

3. If you need help you can contact an [NHS complaints advocate](#) who can advise about making a complaint and can help you to write a complaint letter and attend meetings with you. (They cannot make the complaint for you or give medical or legal advice). There are organisations like [Healthwatch](#) which is an independent statutory body that helps make sure your feedback is listened to.
4. You can also telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service **PALS** at the hospital and discuss the issue, before writing to them. PALS can also advise on the process of making a complaint. For **GP services or community services, talk to the manager** of the service.
5. Make a written note of phone calls concerning your complaint – date and time and what was said.
6. If you are not happy with the outcome of your formal complaint you can escalate it. For hospital services the formal complaints route is: **PALS, Chief Executive**, then the **Integrated Care Board (ICB)**, then the Parliamentary and Health Service **Ombudsman**, which is independent of the NHS, and makes a final decision. (see note B)
7. For GP services the formal complaints route is: **Practice Manager, GP Partner, NHS England**, then the Parliamentary and Health Service **Ombudsman**. (see note B)

Notes

A. The core principles of the NHS are shared across all parts of the UK. However, the NHS Constitution applies only to the NHS in England, but there will be similar provisions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

B. For Scotland and Northern Ireland the organisations may be different, please check with the advice services: Scotland contact PASS: <https://www.cas.org.uk/pass> and in Northern Ireland contact PCC <https://pcc-ni.net/contact-us/>