

Chief Executive
Chief Executive's Office, Level 7
Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, Devon PL6 8DH
Ann James
Tel: 01752 202082
Email: plh-tr.CorporateAdminSupport@nhs.net

Our Reference:

Date:

Private & Confidential

Ensure these details are accurate and spelt correctly

Dear Mr/Miss/Mrs/Dr etc

Principles covering any complaints response:

- *The letter should be personalised and demonstrate sincerity and compassion.*
- *The tone should match the seriousness of the complaint.*
- *The writer should ensure that the response is in a style that can be easily understood by the person receiving – plain English, not excessively formal, nor overly casual, avoiding jargon or specialist terminology.*
- *Avoid defensive statements/wording.*

*In the opening paragraph – thank the complainant for writing/emailing and refer to the date of the communication and receipt at the Trust if required, especially if there has been a gap between the date on the initial complaint letter and the time we received it. Refer to any communication or meetings that you have had for example, thank you for meeting/speaking with *** on ****; personalise the paragraph to reflect their concerns in a general sense and add in any condolences as appropriate.*

In the second paragraph, reassure the complainant how seriously you have taken their concerns, detail how the complaint has been investigated, for example, an account of events by the complainant, who you have spoken to. Include any policies or procedures that you have referred to during your investigation and other parties/witnesses/staff accounts, relevant documentation including clinical notes, applicable law, policy, guidance, etc., and any independent advice.

Acknowledge how their experience has made them feel, and use their wording if appropriate to reassure them that you have fully read their initial complaint letter.

Outline that you will address each of the points raised/agreed for the investigation, so that we can clearly see each issue has been fully addressed.

If your investigation is detailed and is likely to take up multiple pages, then consider an investigation report and a summary CEO cover letter.

Content of a response:

- *A summary or statement of the complaint.*
- *A full and honest account of events – often better to detail these in date order.*
- *A response to each issue raised by the complainant.*

- *Conclusions reached, including a thorough explanation of what you think happened, and if different, what you think should have happened.*
- *Where conclusions could not be reached, this should be stated, with reasons why.*
- *Any actions you have or will undertake to prevent recurrence, lessons learnt.*
- *Acknowledgement of responsibility where appropriate.*
- *Apologise wherever something has gone wrong.*
- *Opportunity to discuss the outcome if the complainant would like to discuss the matter further. Offer to meet with them and provide your contact details in case they would like to discuss the response in more detail. A large proportion of complaints are resolved via local resolution meetings. Evidence suggests these are more effective in addressing all the issues raised and complainants are more satisfied with the outcomes.*
- *When conducting the investigation and finalising the response letter, it is important to bear in mind that they can be subject to scrutiny by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) and other outside agencies. It is vital that we are able to demonstrate within the response letter that a good quality, fair and unbiased investigation has been carried out, actions have been identified if appropriate and we have been open and honest with the complainant. On occasions, the PHSO will undertake an initial review of a complaint by reviewing only the complaint letter and response letter provided by the Trust and the quality of the response can impact their decision about whether to investigate a case further. Please see Appendix 16 for more information about the PHSO process.*
- *Advise of their right to seek independent review and signpost to the appropriate body, e.g., Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. These details have been included below.*

Yours sincerely

Lenny Byrne, Chief Nurse and Director of Integrated Clinical Professions
Signed on behalf of
Ann James, Chief Executive

If you remain dissatisfied about how your complaint has been handled, you are entitled to put your complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's team can be contacted by telephone on 0345 015 4033 or via their website: www.ombudsman.org.uk Alternatively, you can write to the Ombudsman at the following address:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP