



WRITING A COMPLAINT RESPONSE

Top tips on how to respond

Every complaint is different, so every response will be different too. When planning your response, think about what you want to achieve and how you will come across to anyone reading it.

Take a look at our template complaint response which will give you an idea of what constitutes a good response. Don't forget, we can advise and support you through every stage of the process, including reviewing your draft response.

YOUR OPENING

1

This should include:

- your name and your role
- an expression of regret that the complainant has concerns about their care
- an explanation about how the investigation has been undertaken and who has been involved in producing the response.

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

2

- Read through the letter and highlight each point the complainant is raising to make sure you don't miss any issues.
- List the concerns you have investigated. For example:

I understand that your specific concerns are as follows:

-
-
-

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

3

- Include a full explanation of each and every relevant consultation and event.
- Use a new paragraph for each date when the complainant was seen, particularly if they were seen by different clinicians.
- Make clear who did what. For example:

On 6 June 2020 you saw the practice nurse (add name) who took your blood pressure.

- If you are incorporating text written by someone else, make this clear. For example:

I asked Dr X about the consultation on 15 June 2020 and she has written this account...

RESPOND TO THE SPECIFIC POINTS OF COMPLAINT

4

- You have already identified the specific concerns earlier in the letter.
- Once you have provided a chronological account of what happened, you can then provide a response to each of the specific concerns.
- A clear way of doing this is putting the specific issue, followed by your response.
- This might mean partial duplication of some of the information you have in the chronology of events, but it ensures your response fully covers each and every concern raised by the complainant.

LEARNING AND REFLECTION

5

- Include details of learning points and changes made to organisational and individual practice as a result of the complaint.
- Try to include some specific learning points or actions, rather than a general statement.
- All but the most minor complaints should be discussed in a Significant Event Analysis meeting and the response should include reference to this and its outcomes.

NEXT STEPS

6

- The complainant should be offered the opportunity to raise any questions they have following your response.
- You should also usually offer to meet with the complainant if they want to discuss the complaint.
- You should tell complainants they have the right to seek a review of their complaint by the relevant ombudsman. You should also provide information on how they can contact them and make the complainant aware that there are time limits for seeking a review.

For individual medico-legal advice:

24-hour advisory helpline

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