

Writing to healthcare commissioners in England

Before you write your letter

Who are you writing to? The NHS bodies responsible for the planning and commissioning of most healthcare services at a local level are Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). CCG members include GPs and other clinicians, such as nurses and consultants. They are responsible for about 60% of the NHS budget. They have a legal duty to support quality improvement, which means they need to listen to local people and meet their needs. You can find the contact details for your local CCG [here](#).

Identify the problem. This will help you to know who the most relevant person to contact is. In most cases this is likely to be the person listed as the Accountable Officer, or could be the Chief Executive.

Identify the goal. When campaigning for positive change, or to prevent negative change, it's important to identify what you want your end goal to be, and then identify the stepping stones that will help you reach this goal. Ensuring that those making the decisions are aware of how this change would affect local people and users of a service is an important first step.

Show wider support. This can be from other organisations and individuals affected. This will help you build a broader picture of the challenges, as well as strengthening your voice and showing this issue affects many people.

Do your research. Our glossary of terms might be useful for navigating some of the jargon and acronyms. If your concerns are about a particular service, it may help to speak to them first about how the system works and where the decisions are made, to help understand this better.

If you choose to make a complaint directly to the provider of a service commissioned by the CCG, and you aren't happy with the outcome, you can't then raise the same issue with CCG. You must go directly to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and ask for an independent review. However, if you do raise a concern with the provider and they fail to deal with it properly (for example, if there are unreasonable delays) you can report this to the CCG.

You can also make a complaint about the way that the CCG carries out its functions. They have to deal with your complaint following the [NHS complaints procedure](#).

Writing your letter

These top tips will help you to structure a letter or meeting.

- Keep it concise – try for a maximum of one side of A4.
- Give a key 'headline' and outline the situation, explaining why you are writing.
- Briefly outline the current situation. Outline the issue and any proposed changes.
- Talk about how the current situation or any changes will affect you/your family, and if possible, mention how many other people this will affect.
- Discuss what you would like to happen.
- Be sure to include your contact address, telephone number and email address.
- Ask for an appointment to discuss the issue.
- Encourage others affected by this issue to write to their CCG too.

After you have sent your letter

It can take time for your CCG to respond, so be patient. If you have not heard within three weeks, you might want to give them a telephone call to follow up the enquiry. Remember, if you need any more support you can contact one of the campaigns team via campaigning@beateatingdisorders.org.uk.

If this person can't help you, ask them to let you know who can.

Template letter

[Your name]
[Your address]

[Accountable Officer/Chief Executive's name
Name of CCG
Address of CCG]

[Date]

Dear (Miss/Mr/Mrs/Dr) (insert Accountable Officer/Chief Executive's surname, if known)

Introduction – Explain why you are writing and what you are asking for (briefly), and if you would like to arrange a meeting.

Outline the area – Introduce any important legislation or new initiatives that are relevant to why you are writing. Discuss why you are interested, such as a personal connection.

Outline the issue – Explain your main concern(s) about your area. For example, these might be about delays in getting referred to a specialist team, or about waiting for treatment once referred. Try to keep this short, with just one or two main points.

What would you like them to do – You might ask them to explain what progress is being made regarding this issue, and the implementation of any key legislation.

Arranging a meeting – If you feel able to, explain that you would like to meet to discuss the issue further, and ask them to contact you to arrange a suitable time.

Contact and thanks – Provide your email address and telephone number. Thank them for their help, and let them know that you look forward to their response.

Best wishes,

[Your name]

Example letter

Vicky Horne
Beat
1 Chalk Hill House
19 Rosary Road
Norwich
NR1 1SZ

[Accountable Officer/Chief Executive's name
Name of CCG
Address 1
Address 2
Address 3
Postcode]

Tuesday 28 March 2017

Dear (Miss/Mr/Mrs/Dr) (insert Accountable Officer/Chief Executive's surname, if known)

Eating disorders treatment in Norwich

I am writing to discuss access to local treatment services for people with eating disorders in Norwich. I would also like to arrange a meeting with you to discuss this issue.

The recently published 'Eating disorders - recognition and treatment' National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines outline that GPs should refer to specialist treatment providers 'without delay' if an eating disorder is suspected. We have seen from the newly released Access and Waiting times data that children and young people in Norfolk are still facing significant delays in receiving treatment once referred. The existing recommended therapies are more effective at an early stage of an eating disorder's development, and individuals can better engage with treatment, so it's important that once referred, people are able to access treatment straight away.

As Campaigns and Engagement Officer for Beat, the UK's eating disorder charity, I am keen to see that the new NICE guidelines are implemented effectively and that patients are referred without delay, but also that once referred, people are not subject to a long wait before treatment is able to start.

I would like to meet with you to discuss what progress is being made towards implementing the new NICE guidelines in GP practices, and what plans you have for addressing the waiting time for specialist eating disorders treatment for children and young people, and also for adults. Please could you contact me to arrange a suitable time?

You can contact me at [email address] or on [telephone number]. Thank you for your help with this matter – I look forward to your response.

Best wishes,

Vicky