



Helpful tips: raising a complaint

In the first instance, The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) encourages complaints to be raised with the service provider.

Many complaints are the result of a lack of communication between the people involved. Offering the provider a chance to address the issues usually results in quicker complaint resolution.

Raising a complaint directly can sometimes be daunting. This sheet provides some helpful tips on how to raise and resolve complaints directly with service providers.

This sheet provides helpful tips when raising a complaint, including:

- Things to consider before lodging a complaint
- Tips for making a complaint in writing
- Tips for making a complaint in person
- Tips for making a complaint via the telephone.

Things to consider before lodging a complaint:

Who needs to see the complaint: Many organisations have dedicated complaint departments; others may deal with complaints via their insurance company. An organisations website may be the best place to find this information, or simply call the organisation and ask.

Establish a suitable medium: Complaints can be lodged online, face-to-face, in writing or via the telephone. Consider the pros and cons of each method.

The information to include within the complaint: Consider the relevant points to make and what results are expected by lodging a complaint.

External assistance: There are a number of agencies which can help when raising a complaint. The Health Consumers Council for example can provide advocacy services and help with writing a complaint. People with complaints regarding disability services could use advocacy services from People with Disabilities.



Making a complaint in writing

If the complaint is complex, providing it in writing can be the best option for the following reasons:

- Emotions can influence rational thought: setting out points in a written format can help to focus the complaint and make it clear
- It enables the complainant to ensure all important details are provided
- It encourages the service provider to respond in writing, this response can be kept and referred back to
- It allows time for planning and reflection
- It allows the service provider time to review the complaint, consult their own documents and provide a thorough response.

Complaint letter template:

Return address
Recipient name
Recipient address
Date
Dear Name of Recipient,
RE: Subject line
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details of who was involved, including the service provider's details• Details of the consumer (e.g. name, short history if relevant) if complaining on someone else's behalf• A summary of what happened, include relevant dates and locations• Copies of any relevant documents• Details of what is hoped to be achieved by making a complaint. Try to set realistic objectives• A list of questions that require a response
Yours sincerely/faithfully
Signature



Making a complaint in person

Making a complaint in person can often be the quickest route to resolution. However, depending on the circumstances and the personalities involved, it can also be the most stressful and unconstructive.

When making a complaint in person, it is important to take some time to prepare and consider the following:

- When the best time to discuss a complaint face to face would be. In a heated situation, conversations can go round in circles. By taking time out to gather information and consider concerns in depth, the complaint can be made more effectively
- Making an appointment or set up a scheduled meeting
- A list of questions that require a response or circumstances that need clarification.
- Sending this to the provider before meeting will provide them with time to prepare a detailed response
- Taking time to consider what the desired outcomes from making the complaint are
- If it is suitable to bring support to the meeting e.g. a friend or advocate
- Taking any supporting documents and a pen and paper to the meeting
- Make a note of the people involved in the complaint, e.g. who in the organisation has the complaint been lodged with
- Following up any unresolved concerns in writing.

Making a complaint via the telephone

When making a complaint over the telephone, consider the following:

- When the best time to discuss a complaint would be. In a heated situation, conversations can go round in circles. By taking time out to gather information and consider concerns in depth, the complaint can be made more effectively
- A list of questions that require a response or circumstances that need clarification
- Sending this to the provider before making contact by telephone will provide them with time to prepare a detailed response
- Details of what is hoped to be achieved by making a complaint. Try to set realistic objectives
- Follow up any unresolved concerns in writing
- Make a note of the people involved in the complaint, e.g. who in the organisation has the complaint been discussed with
- Have a pen and paper to hand
- Request to speak with the relevant person and take note of their name.

