

The Board of Community Health Councils and Community Health Councils in Wales:

Making a complaint about us

March 2021



CYNGOR IECHYD CYMUNED
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

Accessible formats

This publication is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us. You can ask for a copy by contacting our office (see contact details later).

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About Community Health Councils (CHCs)

CHCs are the independent watchdog of NHS services in Wales. We encourage and support people to have a voice in the design and delivery of NHS services.

CHCs seek to work with the NHS and inspection and regulatory bodies. We provide an important link between those who plan and deliver NHS services in Wales, those who inspect and regulate it and those who use it.

CHCs hear from the public in many different ways. We visit NHS services to talk to patients and carers. We talk to people at events, and through community groups. We use surveys, apps and social media. Our advocacy services help people who want to raise a concern about NHS care or treatment.

There are 7 CHCs in Wales; each one represents the "Patient voice" in a different part of Wales.

The Board of Community Health Councils represents the collective voice of CHCs, sets standards and guidance to underpin their activities and monitors and manages their performance.

Introduction

We welcome your comments and suggestions about how well we are carrying out our activities on your behalf. We value your feedback and use it to develop and improve our work and the way we carry out our role.

This booklet explains what to do if you think your Community Health Council or the Board of Community Health Councils has got something wrong and want to complain. It also explains how we will handle your complaint.

This guide does not explain what to do if you have a concern or complaint about a healthcare provider.

For concerns about the NHS you should follow the NHS complaints procedure "Putting Things Right".

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/ourservices/publicaccountability/puttingthingsright>

Our complaints advocacy service can help you with this.

When you complain about us we will:

- be polite and helpful
- deal with your complaint fairly and efficiently
- tell you how we are getting on with your complaint
- acknowledge any mistakes we have made and put matters

right whenever possible

What you can complain about

We recognise that we may not always get things right. If this happens, it is important that you tell us about it as soon as possible so that we can take immediate action.

We can deal with complaints about how we carry out our activities, including complaints about members of our staff or people working on our behalf.

This may include:

- something that we may have done or should have done
- how well we have carried out our activities
- how we have treated you
- failure to comply with the Welsh Language Standards or to provide a bilingual service.

Who can complain about us

We will deal with your complaint if:

- you have been directly affected; or
- you are acting on behalf of someone who has been directly affected
- there is something we have done or not done while carrying out our activities.

If we decide that we cannot deal with your complaint, we will explain our reasons promptly and efficiently.

How to complain about us

Making your complaint

We think that it is best to deal with things straight away. If you have a complaint, raise it with the person you are dealing with first, either by phone, letter or email (the contact details are on the back cover of this booklet). Further information on how to raise your complaint informally can be found on the next page.

If you share your complaint with us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to you.

If you would like help to complain you can ask another person to make the complaint for you but please tell us you are doing so.

We will:

- acknowledge your complaint and tell you who will be dealing with it
- discuss with you how we will handle your complaint and whether we need more information to help with our enquiries.

Once we fully understand what you are complaining about and what you would like to see happen we aim to reply in writing within 28 working days. If this isn't possible, we will let you know as soon as we can. We will also let you know when we think we will be able to reply.

We will tell you what we have done or plan to do to put things right.

If we cannot reply within that time we will tell you about the delay and explain the reason for it.

Dealing with your complaint

Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a complaint, raise it informally with the person you're dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then.

If you do not feel able to raise your concern directly with the person you are dealing with, you may contact the CHC Chief Officer (their contact details are on the back of this booklet).

For concerns about the Chief Officer of your CHC, you can also contact the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales.¹ If the person you are dealing with is unable to help, they will explain why.

If you are not happy taking forward your complaint informally, you can ask for it to be treated as a formal complaint at any time.

¹ For concerns about Board office staff you can also contact the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales.

Formal complaint

You can express your complaint formally in any of the ways below.

You can:

- ask for a copy of our complaint form from the person you are already in contact with or tell them that you want your complaint dealt with formally,
- write a letter to the Chief Officer² in your CHC office³⁴,
- call the Chief Officer if you want to make your complaint over the phone. If no one is able to take your call, please leave a message and someone will call you back,
- e-mail the Chief Officer
- ask for a meeting to be arranged (we usually do this by video conference using Microsoft teams) or,
- use the form on the Board or your CHC's website.

² For concerns about the CHC Chief Officer or Board office staff you can express your complaint formally to the Chief Executive in any of the ways listed here

³ Please let us know by phone or email if you are planning to send a letter to our offices to ensure that there is no delay in responding to your concerns

Once we receive your formal complaint

We will try our very best to contact you **within 10 working days** and let you know how we intend to deal with it. **We will ask you how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements.**

Normally, we are only able to look into your complaint if you tell us about it **within 12 months**. This is because it is better to look into your complaint while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may, exceptionally, be able to look at complaints which are brought to our attention later than this.

However, you will need to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier. If you have been unable to raise your concern with us within 12 months because you have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, we will take this into account.

We will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly.

If you're complaining on behalf of someone else, we will need their permission for you to act on their behalf.

Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your complaint.

We will set out our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have understood your concerns correctly. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask if you're happy to accept this.

For example, where you asked for a service and we immediately establish that you should have received it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority of informal complaints **within 10 working days** of receipt and formal complaints **within 28 working days** of receipt.

If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation
- keep you updated.

We will look at all relevant information. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be

relevant to your particular complaint. We will, on occasion, need your consent to view all related information.

Where possible, we will carry out as much of the investigation electronically. This might mean that meetings take place using video-conferencing facilities (for example using Microsoft teams or Zoom) or asking you to forward relevant information by email.

If necessary, we will talk to the people involved, look at our policies and consider legal advice and guidance.

Outcome

We will let you know the outcome of our investigation. We will usually let you know in writing, unless you have asked us to communicate in another way. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will always apologise. We will let you know what we have learned and what we are doing about it so it doesn't happen again.

If you are not satisfied with the way we dealt with your complaint

You can request a review of a decision we have taken by contacting the Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee of the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales. Or you can contact the Board Chair at:

enquiries@waleschc.org.uk

02920 235558

You may request a review of a decision we have taken when you do not agree with:

- our decision not to investigate your complaint
- our decision to discontinue an investigation that we have started
- our findings following our investigation of your complaint.

You may request a review of a decision we have taken when:

- the decision you wish to have reviewed was made within one month; and
- you have new and additional evidence or information; or
- you can show that we have not properly considered specific information you have provided previously.

If you prefer, or if you are still unhappy after a review, you can take your complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

Normally, they will expect you to go through the formal stage of our complaints procedure before they look into your complaint.

All new complaints are first considered by the Ombudsman's Complaints Advice Team, who will aim to tell you within 6 weeks, whether or not they can help you. Where necessary they may contact you for more details. You can contact the PSOW at:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae

Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Phone: 0300 790 0203

E-mail: ask@ombudsman.wales

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

If your complaint is about a failure to comply with the Welsh Language Standards or provide a bilingual service you may, if you prefer, or if you are still unhappy after a review, take your complaint to the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC). You can contact the WLC at:

Welsh Language Commissioner

Market Chambers, 5-7 St Mary Street

Cardiff CF10 1AT

Tel: 0345 6033 221

Email: post@welshlanguagecommissioner.wales

What we expect from you

We recognise that in times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. Our staff will do everything reasonable to help you. However, we will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

When NOT to use this procedure

This procedure **does not** apply in the following circumstances:

- if you want to complain about our handling of a request for information. You will need to complain to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office - Wales

2nd floor

Churchill House

Churchill Way

Cardiff

CF10 2HH

Tel: 0330 414 6421

Email: wales@ico.org.uk

- if you are a member of staff and your complaint relates to your work in a CHC or the Board of Community Health

Councils in Wales. You will need to contact the HR Department for advice on the appropriate way to raise your concern

- if you are a member of a CHC or an independent member of the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales and your complaint relates to your role. You will need to contact your CHC Chair or the Chair of the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales.

Learning from complaints about us

We keep a record of all complaints about us so that we can:

- monitor the types of problems people have
- decide the best way to sort the problems out
- look at how long we are taking to deal with them
- share learning across CHCs

This helps us to further improve our service.

We review how well we have handled complaints about us each year.

We report on how we handle complaints about us each year.

You can find out more on our website.

If you need help

The following organisations may be able to assist you if you need help to complain.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Children's Commissioner for Wales works to make sure that children and young people are kept safe and that they know about and can access their rights.

Tel: 07507648245 or 07377367071

E-mail: post@childcomwales.org.uk

Website: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/>

Meic

Meic is an advocacy, information and advice helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales.

Tel: 08088023456

Text: 84001

IM/Online chat: <https://www.meiccymru.org/>

Citizens Advice Cymru

Citizens Advice Cymru provides free, confidential and impartial advice.

Tel: 03444 77 20 20

TEXT RELAY: 03444 111 445

Website: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/>

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Cambrian Buildings

Mount Stuart Square

Butetown

Cardiff

CF10 5FL

Tel: 03442 640 670 / 02920 445030

Email: ask@olderpeoplewales.com

Website: <http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/home.aspx>

Contact us

Board of Community Health Councils in Wales

Chief Executive

Address: 33-35 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9HB

Tel: 02920 235558

E-mail: enquiries@waleschc.org.uk

Website: www.boardchc.wales

Board Chair

Address: 33-35 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9HB

Tel: 02920 235558

E-mail: enquiries@waleschc.org.uk

Website: www.boardchc.wales

Corporate Governance Committee Chair

Address: 33-35 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9HB

Tel: 02920 235558

E-mail: enquiries@waleschc.org.uk

Website: www.boarchc.wales

Aneurin Bevan CHC

Chief Officer

Address: Raglan House, Llantarnam Business Park,
Cwmbran, NP44 3AB

Tel: 01633 838516

E-mail: enquiries.aneurinbevanchc@waleschc.org.uk

Cwm Taf Morgannwg CHC

Chief Officer

Address: Tŷ Antur, Navigation Park, Abercynon, CF45 4SN

Tel: 01443 405830

E-mail: enquiries.ctmchc@waleschc.org.uk

Hywel Dda CHC

Chief Officer

Address: Suite 5, Ty Myrddin, Old Station Road,
Carmarthen, SA31 1BT

Tel: 01646 697610

E-mail: hyweldda@waleschc.org.uk

Powys CHC

Chief Officer

Address: Neuadd Brycheiniog, Cambrian Way, Brecon,
Powys, LD3 7HR

Tel: 01874 624206

E-mail: enquiries.powyschc@waleschc.org.uk

North Wales CHC

Chief Officer

Address: Unit 11 Chestnut Court, Ffordd y Parc, Parc Menai,
Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 4FH

Tel: 01248 679284

E-mail: admin2@wales.nhs.uk

South Glamorgan CHC

Chief Officer

Address: Procopy Business Centre, Parc Ty Glas, Llanishen,
Cardiff, CF14 5DU

Tel: 02920 750112

E-mail: southglam.chiefofficer@waleschc.org.uk

Swansea Bay CHC

Chief Officer

Address: 1st Floor, Cimla Hospital, Cimla, Neath SA11 3SU

Tel: 01639 683490

Email: swanseabay@waleschc.org.uk