

Complaints: Policy and procedure

Our policy

Individuals and organisations have the right to express their views about the performance of Healthwatch Somerset and the way in which it conducts its business.

Anyone who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the service received by Healthwatch Somerset can make a complaint.

We will treat both concerns and complaints in the same way.

It is the policy of Healthwatch Somerset to:

Listen carefully to your concern.

Be polite, helpful and deal with your complaint fairly and efficiently.

Let you know how we are getting on with your complaint, admitting any mistakes made and putting matters right wherever possible.

Give the right of appeal against a decision made by the Manager

Provide reasonable adjustments to the procedure set out below to empower those who need support in making a complaint, such as the right to be accompanied in any necessary meetings and providing accessible information formats.

Use your feedback to improve our service for all who need it.

Complaints we cannot deal with include but are not limited to:

1. Complaints or concerns about the NHS, which should be dealt with through the NHS complaints procedure.
2. Complaints about the provision of social care services which should be dealt with by Somerset Council complaints procedure.

Our team can signpost you to the correct organisation that is best placed to handle your complaint.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Healthwatch Somerset is committed to ensuring all complaints are handled free from any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Healthwatch Somerset will monitor this policy in order to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly.

Data protection

To help us handle your complaint we will keep a record of all the information we gather. All information held and processed shall be treated in confidence. Such information will be shared with representatives of Healthwatch Somerset only to the extent required to resolve the complaint in accordance with this policy and procedure.

If the details of a complaint are to be used for quality improvement or training purposes, express permission will be sought from the complainant and personal details will be anonymised from all information prior to it being used.

All personal information collected by Healthwatch Somerset shall be handled in accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as detailed in our Data Protection Policy.

How we will handle your complaint

How to raise a concern or make a complaint about Healthwatch Somerset

Let us know if you need our complaints procedure in a different format such as Easy Read, large print, another language or any other format and we will make reasonable adjustments to support you in sharing your concern or complaint with us.

1. In the first instance we would encourage you to tell us as soon as possible if you are unhappy with our service so that we can understand your concerns and quickly try to put things right for you.
2. Providing information or discussing misunderstandings and misconceptions at this early stage may enable your concern or complaint to be successfully resolved. You can discuss with any member of the team or contact us via telephone, email or letter (contact details below).

If your concern or complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, then you should notify the Manager of Healthwatch Somerset to enable an investigation to take place:

- Telephone: 07483 151670
 - Email: Gillian.Keniston-Goble@healthwatchesomerset.co.uk
 - Letter: Healthwatch Somerset, Suite 12, Wellworthys Business Centre, Parrett Way, Colley Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 5LB
3. If your concern or complaint relates to the Manager, then you can notify the Chair of the Healthwatch Somerset board
 - Telephone: 0800 999 1286 NB you will have to leave a message for Judith.
 - Email: Judith.Goodchild@healthwatchesomerset.co.uk
 - Letter: Healthwatch Somerset, Suite 12, Wellworthys Business Centre, Parrett Way, Colley Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 5LB. NB please mark the letter Private and Confidential for Judith Goodchild only
 4. The Manager or Chair will acknowledge your concern or complaint in writing (or in your preferred method of communication) within 7 days. They will contact you to acquire as much information as possible and explain how your concern or complaint will be handled.

5. The Manager or Chair of Healthwatch Somerset will review and arrange investigation of all concerns and complaints. They will gather relevant information and carefully evaluate that information to decide on your complaint.

They will act to resolve your complaint within 15 working days, and will advise you of the outcome in writing, explaining the decision and how it has been reached. If more than 15 working days are needed, you will be contacted and updated with progress and a new timescale agreed.

6. If you are not happy with the outcome at this stage, you will be able to appeal. Let us know within 20 working days of receiving your written reply from us, and your concern or complaint will be passed to two members of the Healthwatch Somerset board who has not previously been involved with your complaint.

They will review the facts and consider all the evidence to decide if your appeal is upheld. They will share their findings and confirm their decision to you in writing within 20 working days. The concern or complaint will then be closed.

7. If you are still not satisfied you can take your concern or complaint to the Senior Management Team of The Advocacy People, who are the host organisation for Healthwatch Somerset. They can be contacted in the following ways:

- o Telephone: 0330 440 9000
- o Email: info@theadvocacypeople.org.uk
- o Letter: Mr Steve John, Head of Operations, The Advocacy People, PO Box 375, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 9HU.

The board of Healthwatch Somerset will review the effectiveness of the complaints policy and procedures set out in this document every three years. Any amendments to this policy and the procedures governing complaints will require a simple majority of board members voting in favour.

The amended policy document will be published on the website of Healthwatch Somerset as soon as is practicable.

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