

How to give feedback or raise concerns about your NHS care in Wales

A guide for bereaved
parents

We are very sorry that your baby has died.

The Sands National Helpline provides a safe, confidential place for anyone who has been affected by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby before, during or shortly after birth.

Whether your baby died long ago or recently, we are here for you.

The telephone helpline is free to call from landlines and mobiles on 0808 164 3332.

You can also email the team at helpline@sands.org.uk.

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1. Introduction

Your experiences are important. By sharing them, you can show where improvements are needed and help make care safer. But parents at Sands have told us that they don't always know where to start.

If you want information on feedback and concerns raised before 1 April 2025 please click [here](#).

This guide applies from 1 April 2025 it explains

- Deciding if you want to give feedback or raising a concern about your care.
- Getting ready to give feedback or raise a concern.
- Different options for sharing feedback.
- Raising a Concern.
- Getting the right support.

If you need help at any stage, you can speak to your [local Lias team](#).

2. Deciding if you want to give feedback or raise a concern

There are different reasons why people might give feedback or raise a concern.

Feedback - Feedback can be either positive or negative. Providing feedback is a less formal process, so you may not get a meaningful response.

Concerns - A hospital must respond to your concern. If care wasn't good enough they must show how they have learnt from this.

Thinking about why you want to share your experience and what you want to happen will help you decide which approach is the best for you. You do not have to choose between providing feedback and raising a concern, you can do both.

3. Getting ready to share your experience

Planning what you want to talk about

Planning what you want to talk about will help you focus on the parts of your experience that are important to you.

Your feedback or concern can be about any part (or parts) of your own or your baby's care, including:

- during pregnancy
- during the birth or delivery
- after the birth or delivery
- after your baby died (this could include bereavement care, the hospital review process, mental health care, and any other support).

Making written notes

Having detailed written notes can make it easier to write or talk about your experience. You can make notes about:

- What happened.
- Who was involved (include names if you remember them).
- When and where things happened.
- How this has affected you (for example, changes to your physical or emotional health or financial situation).
- What you would like to happen.

Getting your medical records

You might want to see the record that the hospital has made about your care. Your hospital records should say what care was given, when, and who was involved. They might also include hospital letters and results from tests and scans. The information you want may be in different records.

Information about care given in pregnancy is in the mother's or birthing person's medical record. Only they can ask to see them. Fathers and partners can only see these records if the mother or birthing person agrees.

A baby who is born alive will have their own medical record. Either of the baby's parents can ask for their baby's medical records. A baby who dies before they are born will not have their own medical record.

You can get a copy of these records by asking a member of staff or writing a letter or email. You might also be asked to fill out a form. To find out how to do this, search the name of your hospital and 'medical records request' online.

The hospital cannot charge you for a copy of your medical records. It can take up to 28 days to receive them.

If you need help to understand your notes, speak to a trusted midwife or doctor or your [local Llias team](#).

Making a subject access request

You can also ask for copies of any other information the hospital has about you. This is known as a 'subject access request'. [Get more information on how to make a subject access request.](#)

4. Options for giving feedback

The table below shows different options for contacting staff, managers or support services to share your feedback. It is up to you who you contact. It could be the person you feel most comfortable approaching. Or it might be the person you feel is best placed to act on your feedback, for example if your feedback is about the hospital review you could get in touch with your key contact.

| Who to contact | How |
|---|---|
| The midwives or doctors involved in your care | You might already have an email address or telephone number for a doctor or midwife you feel comfortable talking to. |
| Your key contact from the hospital review (sometimes this is called the Perinatal Mortality Review Tool or 'PMRT') | After your baby died, you should have been given the contact details for a key contact who will support you through the review of your care. |
| The Head of Midwifery and Neonatal Services | You can email or write a letter addressed directly to the Head of Midwifery and Neonatal Services in your area. |
| Your hospital's Feedback and Complaints Officer | This role can have different names depending on the hospital. Your hospital's website should have information about how to contact their complaints team. |
| Your local health boards and trusts | You can contact your local Health Board by phone, email or in writing. Get more |

[information about how to contact your health board](#)

Online feedback forms

The hospital's maternity feedback webpage
Most hospitals have a webpage where you can give feedback on maternity care. Some maternity services have feedback services especially for bereaved parents. To find your local service, search for the name of your hospital and 'give feedback maternity care'.

Your local Neonatal Operational Delivery Network (ODN) You can identify your local ODN using the online [map](#). Each ODN has a website, and many of them have a feedback webpage.

Care Opinion, an independent feedback platform [Give feedback through Care Opinion](#)

5. How to raise a concern

Wales has a distinct approach called [Listening to People](#), this applies to all healthcare concerns and complaints **raised after 1 April 2025**. For concerns and complaints raised before 1 April 2025 please see [this guide](#).

Issues you raise may be called concerns, rather than complaints. Listening to People requires that the hospital is open and honest with you. There should be support for you to raise your concern.

If someone cannot speak for themselves a 'representative' handles the concern. Concerns about babies will always have a representative. The Representative acts on behalf of the baby and in such cases you will be your child's representative. Some parents find the term 'representative' difficult. If you would prefer something else, tell the hospital what you want to be called.

For information about other healthcare concerns, eg concerns about a GP practice, see the [Welsh Government Website](#).

Time limits

You should raise a concern within 12 months of the incident you want to complain about. There might be some flexibility in this time limit based on your circumstances. If it is more than 36 months since you realised the poor care occurred your concerns are unlikely to be looked into.

Once you have raised concerns with your care, the [Listening to People](#) Process has time limits on each stage:-

- A concern should be **acknowledged** within five working days
- **Stage 1 - Early resolution.** Following acknowledgement of your concern the hospital has 10 working days in which they must see if they can resolve your concern. You must be offered a **Listening Discussion**, which takes place within this 10-day window.
- **Stage 2 - Investigate Report and Learn.** More complex concerns and those which cannot be resolved in Stage 1 move to Stage 2. Your concern will be investigated with a pre-agreed timeframe 30, 60, 90 or a maximum of 120 days. If the investigation cannot be completed in 120 days the hospital must explain why and let you know when to expect a response. Concerns about a death often take longer to investigate. The hospital should tell you when to expect a response.

If you have not heard from the hospital within these time limits, you can ask the [the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales](#) for help. If the Ombudsman investigate your case you will not be eligible for Welsh Redress, see page 11.

What you should include when raising your concern

You can raise your concern by talking to someone in person or on the phone (**a verbal concern**) or by writing it down in an email or letter (**a written concern**). Or you can do both, for example speak to someone then follow it up in writing.

In any written or verbal concern, you should:

- Explain clearly that you are raising a concern using the Listening to People process.
- Describe what happened, including who was involved and when and where things happened.
- Explain how this has affected you (for example, changes to your physical or emotional health or financial situation).

- Tell them what you would like to happen.
- Ask what the next steps will be.
- Make a record of the person or service you contacted, when (date and time), and how (e.g. by email, letter or by speaking to them).

If you are raising a written concern:

- Keep copies of any emails or letters you send.

If you are raising a verbal concern:

- Note down the name of the person you speak to and what they said.
- Check they are writing down what you talk about.
- Ask when you will receive a copy of the written notes they have made of your conversation.
- If you don't get a copy of the notes by the time they said you would, you can contact them and ask for it.

People or services you can contact to raise a concern

Which people or services you contact to raise your concern will depend on:

- Who you feel most comfortable talking to.
- What your concern is about.
- What you want to happen.

Below, we have listed some people and organisations you might want to contact with your concern. Please read this information carefully to help you decide the best option for you.

For help getting the contact details you need, speak to your [local Lias team](#).

The midwives, nurses or doctors involved in your care

Some parents find that a conversation with the people who looked after them is a good first step. It might give them the answers they need and reassure them that their concerns have been taken seriously.

You could contact your:

- community midwife
- bereavement midwife
- named obstetrician (the doctor who was responsible for your care during pregnancy and around the time of the birth)

- named neonatologist (a doctor who specialises in caring for newborn babies)
- neonatal nurse

A manager or other senior member of hospital staff

You might feel more comfortable raising your concern with a manager or other senior member of hospital staff who was not involved in your care. Or you might decide to speak to a manager or other senior member of staff because you are not happy with the response you got from the midwives, nurses or doctors involved in your care.

You might want to share your concern with one or more senior staff members, including:

- The Chief Executive (most NHS Trusts list the Chief Executive's email and postal address on their website)
- The Head of Midwifery
- The Director of Women's Services
- The Director of Nursing
- A consultant obstetrician or neonatologist

The Concerns or Listening to People Officer at the hospital

You can raise a formal concern by speaking to your hospital's Concerns or Listening to People Officer. To find the right contact details, search the name of your hospital and 'Listening to People team phone number'.

The Local Care Board (LCB)

You can raise a concern with your Local Care Board (LCB) at any time. This could be because the team who treated you has not resolved your concern. Or you might want to contact the LCB in the first instance. You can raise a concern with the LCB either verbally or in writing. Regardless of how you contact them, make sure you include all the relevant details including what happened, who was there, when and where, and the impact on you.

Local Health Boards contact details are [here](#).

The response to your concern

The hospital complaints team must **acknowledge** your concern within five working days.

In Wales there are two stages for complaints.

- **Stage 1 - Early Resolution.** Most complaints will go down an Early Resolution pathway which aims to have an agreed outcome in ten working days. An important part of Early Resolution is a **Listening Discussion**. This is a conversation with your key contact. Your key contact will be a bereavement-trained midwife or nurse. During the meeting you can tell them your concerns. It can happen on the phone, in a video call or face to face. You do not have to have a Listening Discussion, it is up to you. If you want one it should happen within the ten working day Early Resolution window.
If you are not happy with the outcome from Early Resolution you can ask to move to Stage 2.
- **Stage 2 Investigate, Respond and Learn.** Investigations are more in-depth. They are used for more complex complaints and complaints that have not been resolved by Early Resolution. The way in which issues are investigated and the timeframes depend what happened to cause the concern.

When a concern moves onto Stage 2 the hospital must tell you:

- how they will investigate
- what support and advocacy services are there for you
- how long the investigation will take. This will be a pre-agreed timeframe of 30, 60, 90 or a maximum of 120 days. If the investigation cannot be completed in 120 days the hospital must explain why and let you know when to expect a response.

If you do not want to speak to them then the hospital should give you this information in writing.

When a concern moves to Stage 2 raised a hospital must consider if you might be eligible for Welsh Redress. Welsh Redress is for people who:

- would probably win if they sued the Welsh NHS, and
- would get a court award of £50,000 or less,
- have not started legal action against the hospital, and
- have not had a Public Services Ombudsman for Wales investigation.

Hospitals must consider if your concern could be eligible for Welsh Redress. They must tell you if they think you might qualify for Welsh Redress. **If you have been told you are, or might be, eligible for Welsh Redress, please use our Guide to Welsh Redress**, which you can find [here](#).

A **response** to your concerns should normally be sent within the agreed timeframe. Concerns about a death often take longer to investigate

Concerns that are not covered by Welsh Redress will get a **Full response**. It should:

- summarise the care you and/or your baby received and your concerns
- describe the investigation that the hospital has carried out
- include copies of any medical records and expert opinions they used

The Hospital should offer to discuss the response with you.

The response must contain contact details for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. You can use the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been handled.

If you have not heard from the hospital within the timeframes set out above you can ask [the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales](#) for help.

Concerns about an individual doctor, midwife or nurse

If you are worried about the skills or safety of a doctor or midwife, you can make a complaint directly to their professional regulator. Professional regulators set the standards that doctors and midwives have to meet in their work.

- To complain about a doctor, you need to [contact the General Medical Council \(GMC\)](#).
- To complain about a midwife or nurse, you need to [contact the Nursing and Midwifery Council \(NMC\)](#).

Concerns about systematic failings

Sometimes poor care happens because the hospital or the NHS has systemic failings. These are failings which may impact more than one family. The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales can investigate systemic failings of care. If you

think you were affected by a systematic failure you can tell the Ombudsman about it using this [online form](#).

<https://www.ombudsman.wales/own-initiative-investigation-suggestion/>

If you are taking legal action

If you are taking legal action against a healthcare provider, you should talk to your solicitor. The investigation of your concern will be paused while you are taking legal action. You will not be eligible for consideration for Redress if you are taking legal action.

6. Concerns raised by staff

In Wales a concern can also be raised by hospital staff. Hospitals should tell you about concerns raised by the staff. A member of staff may raise a concern because you asked them to. Or it could be because they felt it was the right thing to do. When a member of staff raises a concern about the treatment of a baby the law requires that a 'representative' is notified.

The process and timeframes for concerns are the same regardless of whether they raised by staff or by you.

7. If you are not happy with the Listening to People process and want to speak to someone else

The Listening to People process may have given you the answers and outcomes you wanted. If not, you may want to continue looking for answers.

Once the Listening to People process has finished, raising further concerns with the hospital may be more difficult. You might find that they are slow to respond or do not respond at all.

If you want to speak to someone else about your concerns, you can contact:

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Ombudsman's role is to investigate unresolved complaints. They are independent of the NHS and government. You can approach the Ombudsman once the Listening to People process with has ended. The Ombudsman will not

accept your complaint until this time. If the Ombudsman investigate your case you will not be eligible for Welsh Redress.

Contact the [the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales](#).

Your Elected Representatives

You can also contact your local elected representative to raise your concerns. Your Member of the Senedd (MS) represents you in Cardiff. Your member of parliament (MP) in Westminster. MPs, MSs and local officials often have a good understanding of what's happening in their local Trust or Health board. While they can't have start an investigation, they can raise issues on your behalf or apply pressure to Trusts and Health boards.

You can use the [They Work For You website](#) to find out who your MP is and how to contact them. The [Senedd/Welsh Parliament website](#) tells you about your MS.

8. Support and more information

We hope you have found the information in this guide useful.

If you would like support or more information, please look at the list below.

Where to go for support and information

Your hospitals' Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

You can find this service in all hospitals in Wales. It is sometimes called the 'patient experience team' or 'concerns team'. PALS is independent of the hospital. They can help you make a complaint and offer confidential advice, support and information.

Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA)

AvMA is a UK charity that provides free, independent advice and support to people affected by medical accidents. They have helpful guides for making a complaint.

[Find out more about AVMA.](#)

Citizens Advice

An independent charity offering free support to people facing a range of problems in the UK **Citizens Advice offers guidance on taking legal action and making a complaint about care.**

[Find out more about Citizens Advice.](#)

LLIAS Wales

[LLIAS Wales](#) is a charity that helps people in Wales to have their say and make complaints about health and social care services. Details on how to find your local LLIAS team are [here](#)

<https://www.llaiswales.org/in-your-area>

Sands can support you online and over the phone, too. For more information visit: sands.org.uk/Support.

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