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Communication toolkit

Transfer of Primary Care Complaints function to ICBs

1 May 2023

**Purpose of this document**

This communication toolkit supports the national and regional communications handling of the delegation of NHS England’s direct commissioning functions to integrated care boards (ICB), and specifically relates to the transfer of the primary care complaints function (for complaints made to commissioners) on 1 July 2023. The process for making complaints to providers will NOT change.

The toolkit includes the following practical resources and is aimed at ICB/ICS staff and stakeholders to communicate the changes in arrangements re: making a complaint about primary care services to the public, stakeholders and staff.

* Key messages
* Web and bulletin copy
* Slide deck
* FAQs

ICBs should ideally share the messaging with the following stakeholders with a request to display details of the NHS England complaints process until the end of June, then change over to the ICBs process on 1 July 2023.

* Public via website
* Primary care providers
* POD providers
* Trusts
* Local authorities
* VCSE
* Healthwatch
* MPs and elected members

\*and any other appropriate local stakeholders such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

**Key messages**

* As part of the delegation of NHS England’s direct commissioning functions to integrated care boards, which includes pharmaceutical, general ophthalmic and dental functions from April 2023, is the transfer of the current primary care complaints function from 1 July 2023 which includes:
* The process of managing complaints
* The transfer of staff from the current NHS England complaints team to ICBs
* The transfer of all ongoing complaints and investigations (received on/after 1 July 2022).
* From 1 July 2023 the way members of the public make a complaint about primary care services to the commissioner is changing.
* Rather than contacting NHS England, they will contact their local integrated care board (ICB).
* By primary care services we mean GPs, dentists, opticians or pharmacy services.
* There are two ways you can make a complaint:

* You can complain to the healthcare provider: this is the organisation where you received the NHS service, for example a GP surgery or dental surgery

* You can complain to the commissioner of the service: this is the organisation that paid for the service or care you received.

* After 1 July 2023 if you want to make a complaint about primary care services to the commissioner you will now contact the local integrated care board instead of NHS England.
* Information about how to do this, including ways of contacting the ICB by phone, e-mail or written correspondence will be available on ICB/primary care websites and shared widely by ICBs to relevant stakeholders, partners and patient groups.
* Members of the public will still be able to make a complaint to the provider. This is NOT changing.
* Members of the public with ongoing complaints received on/after 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that the ICB is now handling their complaint with confirmation of their case handler.
* Members of the public with any ongoing complaints received before 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that their complaint is being retained by NHS England with confirmation of their case handler.
* The central NHS England complaints team will retain the handling of complaints for some services commissioned directly by NHSE. Please see a full list in **Annex 1.**
* By giving ICBs responsibility for a broader range of functions, they will be able to design services, including how to make complaints, that better meet local priorities.

**News post for use on websites and bulletins**

**How you make a complaint about primary care services is changing on 1 July 2023**

You have the right to make a complaint about any aspect of NHS care, treatment or service, and this is written into the [NHS Constitution on GOV.UK.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england)

From 1 July 2023 the way members of the public make a complaint about primary care services to the commissioner is changing.

By primary care services we mean GPs, dentists, opticians or pharmacy services.

There are two ways you can make a complaint:

* You can complain to the healthcare provider: this is the organisation where you received the NHS service, for example a GP surgery or dental surgery.

* You can complain to the commissioner of the service: this is the organisation that paid for the service or care you received.

After 1 July 2023 if you want to make a complaint about primary care services to the commissioner you will now contact XXXX integrated care board instead of NHS England.

You can do this by:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Writing to us at:

If you want to make a complaint directly to the provider of the primary care service, you still can – that does **not** change on the 1 July 2023.

Members of the public with ongoing complaints received on/after 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that the ICB is now handling their complaint with confirmation of their case handler.

Members of the public with any ongoing complaints received before 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that their complaint is being retained by NHS England with confirmation of their case handler.

If you have any queries, please contact XXXX.

[Find out more about how to feedback or make a complaint about an NHS service](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/)

**Website copy - complaints page**

The copy below is designed to be used on your current website complaints page. This should already state that if someone wants to make a complaint about a GP practice, dental practice, community pharmacy or optician they should send it directly to that organisation.

Under the title - **what happens if I prefer to complain directly to the commissioning organisation?** Please remember to update the information as follows:

If your complaint is about primary care services such as GPs, dentists, opticians or pharmacy services, you should contact XXXX ICB.

Telephone:

E-mail:

Write to:

Note: changes on 1 July 2023

* From 1 July 2023 the way members of the public make a complaint about primary care services to the commissioner is changing. Rather than contacting NHS England, complaints will be made to directly to the local integrated care board (ICB).

* Members of the public will still be able to make a complaint to the provider. This is NOT changing.

* Members of the public with ongoing complaints received on/after 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that the ICB is now handling their complaint with confirmation of their case handler.

* Members of the public with any ongoing complaints received before 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that their complaint is being retained by NHS England with confirmation of their case handler.
* [Find out more about how to feedback or make a complaint about an NHS service](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/)

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. What is the current process for making primary care complaints and how will that change on 1 July 2023?

From 1 July 2023 the way members of the public make a complaint about primary care services to the **commissioner** is changing. Rather than contacting NHS England, they will contact their local integrated care board (ICB). The public can still complain directly to the provider (GP, dentist etc) - this is not changing.

1. What date will ICBs start to handle primary care complaints?

Operational responsibility for the complaints function will move to ICBs on 1 July 2023.

Members of the public with ongoing complaints received on/after 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that the ICB is now handling their complaint with confirmation of their case handler.

Members of the public with any ongoing complaints received before 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that their complaint is being retained by NHS England with confirmation of their case handler.

1. Where can you find information about how to make a complaint about a primary care service?

There are many organisations that will help signpost people to information about how to provide feedback or make a complaint about healthcare services. These are some of the main ones.

* Your local ICB [website](https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/ics-leadership/)
* The NHS [website](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/)
* [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/how-do-i-give-feedback-or-make-a-complaint-about-an-nhs-service)

1. Does the delegation of the primary care complaints function from NHS England to ICBs on 1 July 2023 include all primary care services?

In the main, yes. There are some specialised services, such as Health and Justice, where the care provided by a GP in a prison setting is still commissioned directly by NHS England and therefore NHS England would still manage these complaints. See  **Annex 1**

1. Where should information be available in each ICB area about how to make a complaint about a primary care service?

It should be available on the websites of the ICBs, Healthwatch, providers of primary care services, VCSE organisations, health charities and local MPs.

1. Do ICBs have to publicise the change happening on 1 July 2023?

Yes, NHS England expects ICBs to communicate to the public, stakeholders and staff the changes to the way people can make a complaint about primary care services.

1. Will the staff currently handling a complaint manage them through to the end or will another member of staff pick them up as part of the new arrangements?

Staff from the NHS England regional complaints teams are being transferred to ICBs to support the delegation of the complaints function. The transfer of complaints staff from NHS England regions to ICBs will differ from region to region but complainants should be reassured that the information about their complaint will transfer to the ICB and they will not need to repeat their complaint or reshare any information already provided.

Members of the public with ongoing complaints received by NHS England on/after 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that the ICB is now handling their complaint with confirmation of their case handler.

Members of the public with any ongoing complaints received before 1 July 2022 will receive a letter from NHS England informing them that their complaint is being retained by NHS England with confirmation of their case handler.

1. What do ICB comms directors need to know about media handling concerning the transfer of primary care complaints?

Whilst NHS England receives very few media enquiries pertaining to complaints, who should handle them will be determined by who signed the complaint response. If the response was signed by an NHS England director (or equivalent) then the enquiry should go to the relevant NHS England regional/national comms team. If the complaint response was signed by an ICB CEO/director then the enquiry should go the ICB comms team.

If a complaint is open and being handled by NHS England (in keeping with timelines above) then the enquiry should go to the national NHS England comms team. If the complaint is open but being handled by the ICB the enquiry should go to the ICB comms team.

1. Where can I find information to support staff moving from NHS England to ICBs as part of the transfer of the Primary Care Complaints function?

[FutureNHS workspace](https://future.nhs.uk/ICBCommissioningDelegation/groupHome) hosts comprehensive HR FAQs, consultation support documents, template HR letters and line managers briefing pack.

**Annex 1**

**Retained services commissioned directly by NHSE**

The following is a list of services that NHS England central complaints team will retain the handling of after 1 July 2023.

* Specialised Commissioning
* Health and Justice
* Armed Forces Health
* Section 7a (Public Health Immunisations and Vaccinations)
* PCSE
* Services delivered nationally by NHSE to patients/public (such as Screening Call and Recall, NHS App etc)

This list is not exhaustive.

**ICB Map**

This [map](https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/integrated-care-boards-in-england/#map) outlines details of the 42 integrated care boards (ICB) across England.

**ICB websites**

Details of how to make a complaint about primary care services should be available on the [ICB websites.](https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/ics-leadership/)

**Key messages slide deck**

There is also an accompanying slide deck as an additional resource to accompany this toolkit outlining key messages – what is changing and when.

Ends.