

Your rights and responsibilities in the NHS

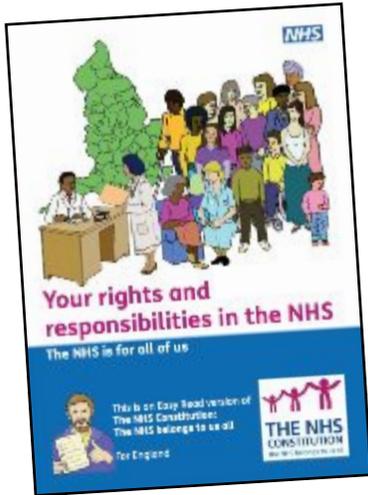
The NHS is for all of us



This is an Easy Read version of
The NHS Constitution:
The NHS belongs to us all

For England





This is an Easy Read version of the NHS Constitution published on 26 March 2013.



What this booklet is about

1



**Part 1 -
What the NHS believes**

6



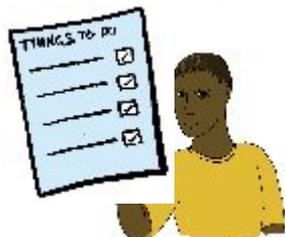
**Part 2 -
How the NHS works**

10



**Part 3 -
Patient rights and NHS promises**

13



**Part 4 -
The things patients should do to help**

26



**Part 5 -
Rights and promises the NHS makes
for NHS staff**

28



**Part 6 -
The things staff should do to help**

32



**Part 7 -
Telling the NHS what you think or
making a complaint about your care**

36

What this booklet is about



This is an Easy Read booklet about your National Health Service, the NHS in England.



It has been written for patients, the public and NHS staff.

Patients and the public will find parts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 of this booklet most relevant. For NHS staff, parts 1-6 of this booklet are most relevant.



Patients, members of the public and people who use Easy Read have helped us write this version.



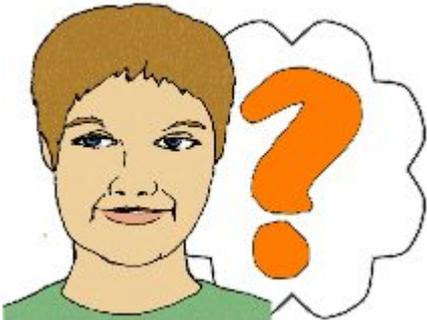
The longer version is called the **NHS Constitution**.



You can read it on the website:
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/
the-nhs-constitution-for-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england)



There is also a Handbook on this website which gives lots more details about all of this information.



We try not to use difficult words in Easy Read booklets.

When we do use difficult words we put them in **bold** and explain what they mean.

The NHS belongs to us all



The NHS saves lives and helps us stay healthy.



It cares for us when we need it most.



It is there to help us all to:

- have good physical and mental health



- get better when we are ill



- be well looked after even if we are dying and cannot get better.



What this booklet talks about

This booklet talks about:



- the things that are important to provide good NHS services to patients



- **Your Rights as a patient** – what you can expect from the NHS if you are a patient



- **Your Rights as a member of staff** - what you can expect from the NHS if you work for the NHS



- **NHS Promises** - the extra things the NHS will try to do



- the things everyone should do to help the NHS work properly.



The law says all NHS organisations must pay attention to the NHS Constitution.



The NHS Constitution applies to all organisations providing NHS services.



No-one can change the things in the NHS Constitution without asking everyone what they think first.



The NHS Constitution will be checked every 10 years to see if it needs any changes, and people will be asked what they think.

The Handbook will be checked every 3 years.



This booklet also tells you extra information about how to tell the NHS what you think or complain about your treatment.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Part 1 - What the NHS believes

There are 7 main things we believe in. They are the 'rules' for everything the NHS does. These are:

1. The NHS is for everyone

The NHS will not treat anyone unfairly because of their:

- gender (if they are a man or a woman)



- race



- disability



- age





- sexual orientation (being straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual)



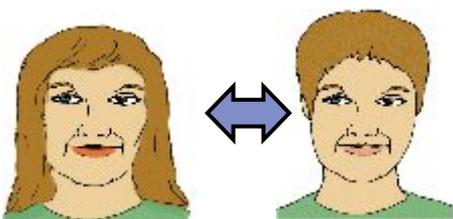
- religion or belief



- pregnancy and maternity status (being pregnant or having a baby)



- marital or civil partnership status



- gender reassignment (this means someone who has, or is planning to, change their sex from a man to a woman, or a woman to a man).



The NHS will give extra support to some groups so they have the same chances as other people to be healthy.



2. NHS services are free

NHS services are free, except in some cases. For example, some people have to pay for their medicines.



3. The NHS gives really good, safe care

The NHS thinks about what things are like for patients. We support staff to learn and do their jobs well.



4. The NHS puts people at the centre of everything it does

The NHS supports people to look after their own health and to have choices about their care and services.



5. The NHS works with other organisations to give better care

Organisations supplying NHS services will work together to give good health care.



6. The NHS will spend taxpayers' money carefully

The NHS will spend money carefully and only in ways that make things better for patients.



7. The NHS will show people how it makes decisions

Everyone can see how local NHS services decide on the treatment and services they give.



This list of how the NHS works was written after talking to patients, the public and staff.

The NHS has 6 main ways of working:



1. The NHS works together for patients

Patients come first in everything the NHS does.



The NHS works with people and puts patients' needs first.



The NHS tells the truth when things go wrong.



2. Respect and dignity

Patients, families, carers and staff are important. The NHS listens to what people say and tells the truth about what it can or cannot do.



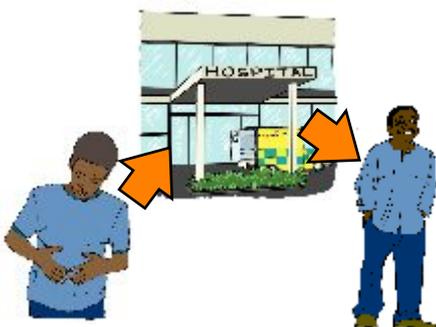
3. The NHS works hard to give good safe care

The NHS listens to patients, carers, families, staff and the public and uses what they say to make services better.



4. The NHS cares about people

The NHS does everything it can to make patients, families, carers and staff feel safe, healthy and happy.



5. Making people's lives better

The NHS wants people to get better and have good services from it.

NHS



We can all do things to keep ourselves and other people well.



6. Everyone is important.

The NHS makes sure nobody is left out.



It understands some people need more help than others.

Part 3 - Patient rights and NHS promises



This part tells you more about your rights and the NHS's extra promises to you.



A Right is something the law says people can get.



NHS promises are the extra things the NHS will try to do.

1. Getting health services

You have the right to:

- use NHS services





- free health care, apart from some services that Parliament has decided must be paid for



- expect the NHS to plan and give the services people need to keep them healthy



- in some situations, go to another country in Europe for treatment



- not be treated unfairly because of your gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity or marital or civil partnership status



- get some treatments within a set amount of time and be helped to choose another organisation if you have to wait too long for some treatments.



The NHS promises to:

- have local services that are easy to use and treat you in the time they should



- make it easy to see how it decides about services



- make it easy to move between health services and for you, your family and carers to make decisions.

2. Good care and good places to get care



You have the right to:

- good safe care from staff who are trained and know what they are doing



- expect the NHS to check that healthcare services that they run or pay for are good enough.

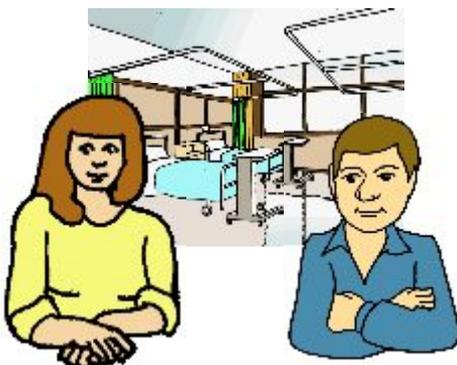


The NHS promises to:

- give healthcare in clean, safe places



- share ideas about good care and treatment



- make sure that if you have to stay in hospital, you do not sleep in accommodation with people of the opposite sex except in some situations (for example, emergencies).

3. Medicines and treatments



You have the right to:

- have medicines that **NICE** recommends and that your doctor says are right for you



(**NICE** is an organisation that recommends which medicines the NHS should use)



- know why the NHS will not pay for a medicine that you and your doctor think is right for you



- have the **jabs** the government says people should have

(these are injections to stop you getting some diseases).



The NHS promises to:

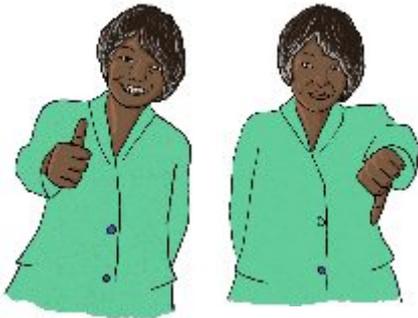
- check or test you for illnesses.



4. Respect

You have the right to:

- be treated properly and have your human rights respected



- say yes or no to being treated or checked



(there are rules about who can make decisions for you if you cannot make these decisions yourself)



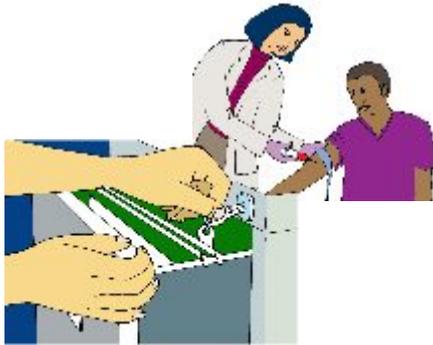
- have information to help you decide about tests or treatment



- look at information about your health and care and fix it if it is wrong



- expect the NHS to keep your information safe and tell you how your information is used



- ask the NHS to only use your information for your care and be told why if it cannot do this.



The NHS promises to:

- make sure everyone involved in your care has the information they need to treat you safely



- take your personal details out of your health information before it uses the information to learn about better care



- give you the chance to say it cannot use information with your personal information in it



- tell you about **research** that you can get involved in



(**research** is a planned way to find out about health problems and helps other people with the same health condition as you)



- give you copies of letters about your care.



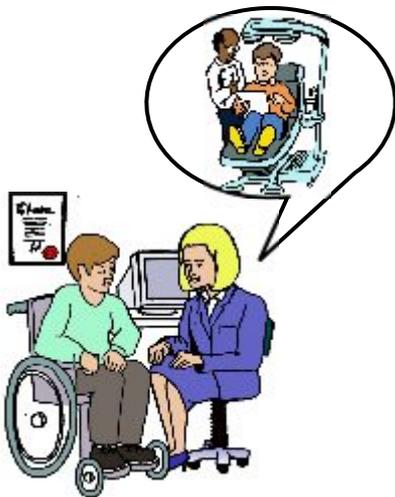
5. Choice

You have the right to:

- choose your doctor or be told why you cannot choose

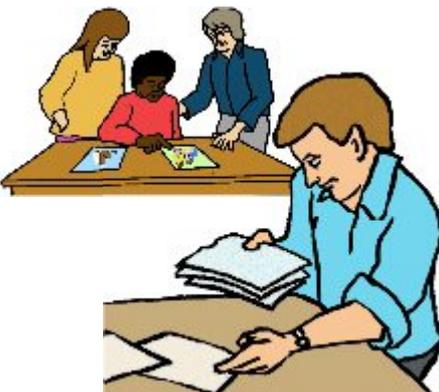


- choose the services that meet your needs. These options will depend on what you need and will develop over time.



The NHS promises to:

- tell you about healthcare services you can use



- give you information you can understand to help you choose your healthcare.

6. Being involved



You have the right to:

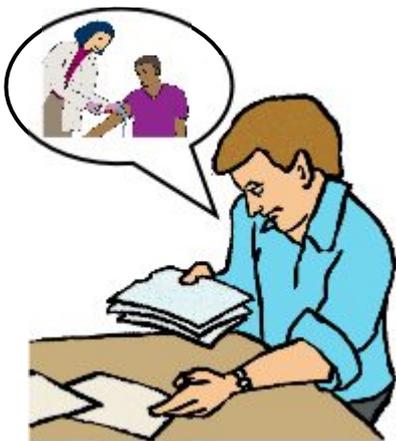
- be involved in decisions about your healthcare, including if you are dying



(this can include your family and carers)



- be involved in decisions about services the NHS runs or pays for.



The NHS promises to:

- give you information to help you say what you think about NHS services



- work with you and your family, carers or people who speak for you



- involve you in decisions about your care and give you a copy of what is written down about it



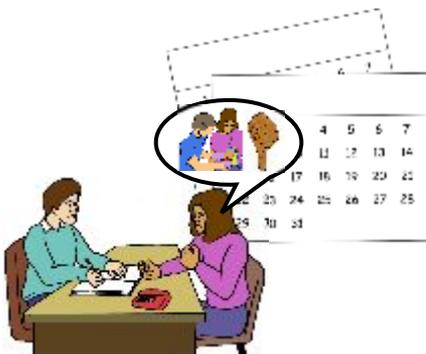
- ask what you think about services and use this to make them better.

7. If you are not happy with your care

You have the right to:



- expect the NHS to tell you within 3 working days that it has got your complaint and will look into it properly



- talk to the NHS about how it will deal with your complaint and how long it will take



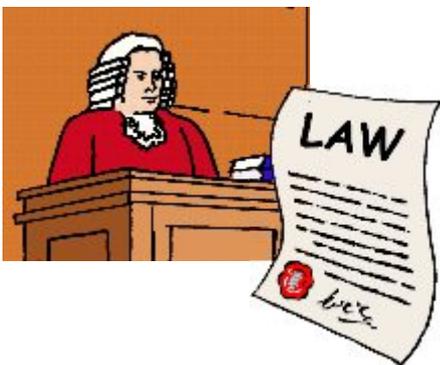
- know what is happening with your complaint



- ask an independent person called the **ombudsman** to look at your complaint if you are not happy with how the NHS deal with it



(the **ombudsman** is not part of the NHS and can look into things again)



- ask a court to look at your complaint if you think you have been affected by a decision or process that is outside the law.



In addition, you may have the right to money if you are hurt or made ill by poor treatment.



The NHS promises to:

- deal with your complaint fairly



- be polite and help you complain and not treat you differently because you complain



- say sorry if it has made a mistake and explain why it happened



- learn from complaints to make services better.

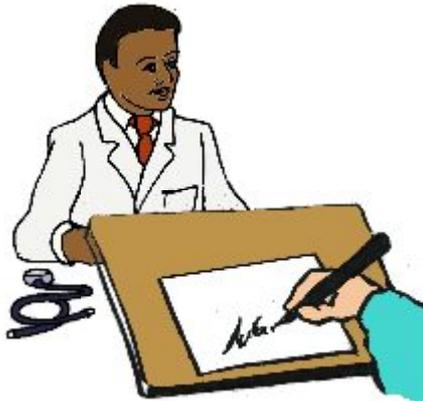


Part 7 of this booklet has more information about how to tell the NHS what you think and complain about NHS services.

Part 4 – The things patients should do to help



You should do these things to keep yourself and your family healthy:



- sign up with a GP (General Practitioner)



- treat NHS staff and other patients properly, and with respect



- give the NHS the right information about your health



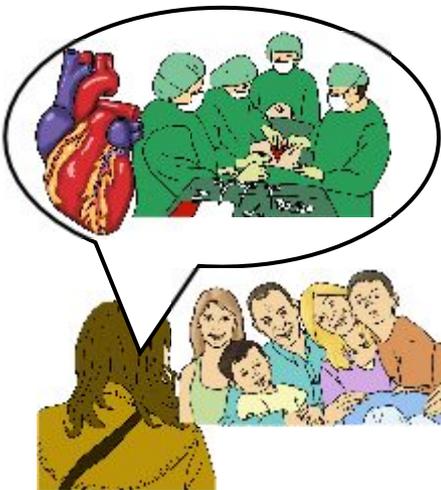
- turn up for appointments on time, or cancel in plenty of time



- stick to your treatment or talk to your doctor if this is difficult



- have jobs if you need them

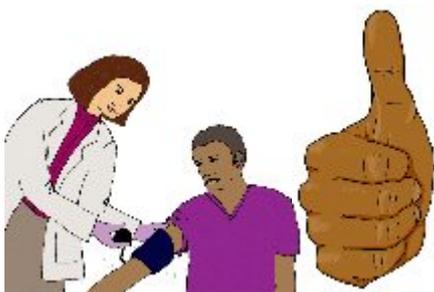


- tell your family if you want to have any parts of your body used to save someone else's life after you die



- tell the NHS what NHS care is like for you and your family so it can make services better.

Part 5 - Rights and promises the NHS makes for NHS Staff



Staff make sure the NHS gives good quality healthcare.



It is important that good staff want to work for the NHS.



The Handbook to the NHS Constitution tells staff what rights the law says they have. This section tells staff how those rights help them at work, and the NHS's extra promises to them.



Staff rights help them to:

- work in a way that is best for patients and staff



- be paid fairly



- be involved in decisions at work and have someone to speak up for them if they need them



- work in a safe place where they are treated fairly and not bullied or hurt



- speak up or complain if they are worried or are not happy with someone at work.



The NHS promises to:

- give staff a good place to work and support them to do their job as best they can



- make it clear what the NHS expects from staff



- give staff good training and support



- help staff stay safe and well



- involve staff or organisations that speak for them in decisions that affect them



- listen to their ideas about how to make services better



- support staff to complain or speak up if they are worried or not happy with something at work.

Part 6 - The things staff should do to help



The law says staff must:

- take responsibility for what they do and stick to rules about their job



- look after their own health and safety and the health and safety of people they work with



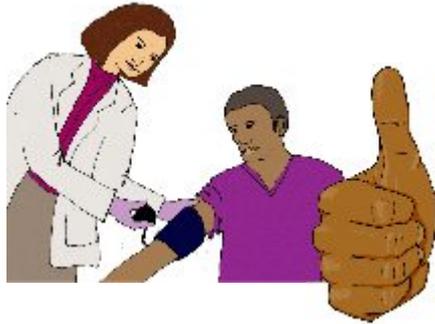
- not treat any patients or staff unfairly because of who they are



- keep information about patients private



- tell the truth when they ask to work for the NHS and when they do their job



- make sure the NHS gives good, safe care.



Staff should also try to:

- work with other staff and NHS services to make sure they give good care and treat everyone nicely



- do training to get better at their jobs



- work with patients, the public and local communities to make services better



- speak up straight away if they are worried about something that might affect patients, staff or the NHS



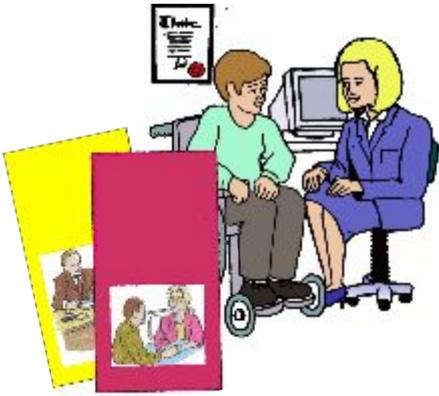
- involve patients and their families and carers in decisions about their care



- be honest if something goes wrong, and learn how to make services better



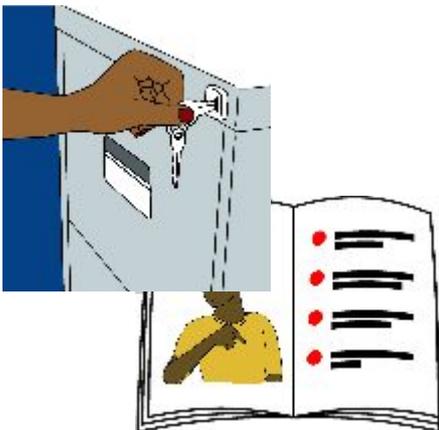
- think about what services are like for patients



- support patients and staff to get involved in looking after their own health



- help make sure everyone has the same chance to be healthy



- tell patients what happens with their personal information and write down if the patient wants to share it with other people or not



- share information about patients with other staff so that they get the best care possible, as long as the law says they can.



Part 7 – Telling the NHS what you think or making a complaint about your care



This part of the booklet is about how to tell the NHS about something that is good or bad about the NHS, and how to complain if you are unhappy with your care.



How to tell the NHS what you think

The NHS wants to know what you think about their services.

All NHS organisations have ways for you to tell them what you think.



You can say what you think while you are in hospital or at your doctor's surgery, or after you leave.



The different ways you can have your say will be posted on your ward or at your doctor's surgery.



Sometimes NHS staff or volunteers will ask you to tell them what you think of the service.



For example, the Friends and Family Test asks if you would tell your friends and family that they should use the service if they needed to.



Please tell the NHS what you think. You do not usually have to say who you are.

How to complain



A **complaint** is different from just saying what you think.

If you are not happy with your care, you or someone who speaks for you can complain.



An NHS organisation must take complaints seriously and have rules about how to deal with them.



You should try to complain within 1 year.



2 steps to make a complaint

All organisations that provide NHS services should give you information about how to complain.



Step 1:

This is how most complaints are sorted out.

You can complain to the service you are not happy with or the organisation that pays for your care by:

- writing to them





- sending an email



- talking to them.



If you talk to the organisation first you might be able to sort things out without making a complaint.



Part 3 of this booklet tells you information about your rights when you make a complaint.



If things take longer than 6 months, the organisation must write and tell you why.



If you are not happy with what they decide you can ask someone independent to look at it again.



Step 2:

If you are not happy with how the NHS organisation has looked at your complaint, you can make a complaint to an independent person called an **ombudsman**.



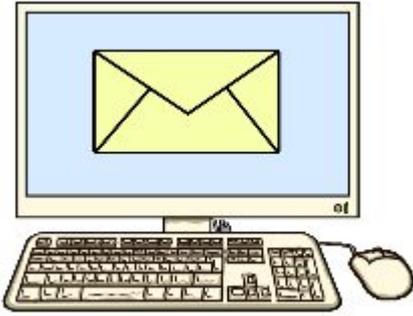
To contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman:



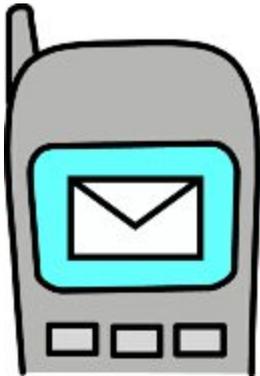
Telephone:
0345 015 4033



Textphone:
0300 061 4298
for people who are deaf or find it difficult to use a telephone



Email:
phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk



Text 'call back' and your name and mobile number to:
07624 813 005



Write to:
**Parliamentary and Health Service
Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP**



Look on their website:
www.ombudsman.org.uk

You can get in touch with the **Local Government Ombudsman** for complaints about **public health services**.



Public health services are things like:

- help to stop smoking



- help with drinking problems



- help with illegal drug problems.



To get in touch with them:

Telephone:
0300 061 0614



By using their online form:
www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint



Or you can get more information on their website:
www.lgo.org.uk

People who can help with complaints



If you want extra help with complaints, you might want to ask these organisations first:



Patient Advice and Liaison services (PALS) can tell you how to complain about NHS hospital care.

You can ask your hospital or look at the hospital's website for information about how to contact PALS.

healthwatch



Local Healthwatch can give you advice and may be able to help you make complaints.

To get in touch with them:



Website:
www.healthwatch.co.uk/find-local-healthwatch



Telephone:
03000 683 000



Email:
enquiries@healthwatch.co.uk



There are also other organisations that can help you:



Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) sometimes have people to support patients, called ‘patient liaison teams’.

Local Healthwatch can tell you more about this.



You can also ask your local CCG. Information about how to find and contact your local CCG is at www.england.nhs.uk/ccg-details



Complaints Advocacy Services are independent. They can help you make a complaint but cannot look into it.

Your local Healthwatch can tell you more about how to contact complaints advocacy services.



The Citizens Advice Bureau can also help with complaints.

Information about how to contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau is available at www.citizensadvice.org.uk



Telling other organisations



The Care Quality Commission (CQC) checks health and adult social care services such as hospitals, GPs or care homes.



It cannot look into individual complaints but your feedback can help it to check problems.

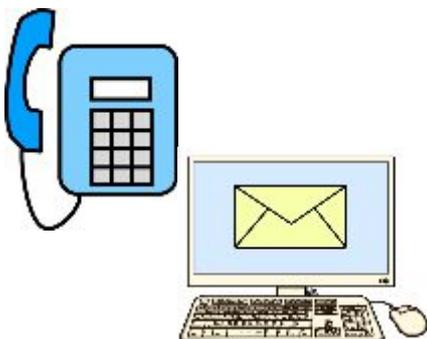


This could result in actions against organisations that give poor care.



There is more information on their website:

www.cqc.org.uk



Telephone:

03000 616 161

Email:

Enquiries@cqc.org.uk



Credits

This paper has been designed and produced for the Department of Health by the Easy Read service at Inspired Services Publishing Ltd. Ref ISL 193/13. March 2014.



www.inspiredservices.org.uk

It meets the UK and European Easy Read Standards.



Artwork is from the Valuing People Clipart collection and cannot be used anywhere else without written permission from Inspired Services Publishing Ltd.

www.valuingpeopleclipart.org.uk



© Crown copyright 2014
2902162 1p 1k Jul14 (TAU)
Produced by Williams Lea for the Department of Health

If you require further copies of this title visit www.orderline.dh.gov.uk and quote 2902162/ The NHS Constitution Easy Read
Tel: 0300 123 1002
Minicom: 0300 123 1003 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)
www.dh.gov.uk/publications