

A guide for witnesses attending a hearing

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Supporting witnesses during a dental hearing

Witnesses play a vital role

Your role as a witness at a hearing is vital. It gives those hearing the evidence a first-hand account of what has happened, so they can make informed decisions about whether a dental professional's fitness to practise dentistry is impaired. Witnesses play an important role in the regulatory system that works to protect the public and patients.

Giving evidence can be a rewarding experience, but we understand that it can be daunting for some. You can find out more about how we support witnesses before, during and after a dental hearing below.

Get in touch with the Support Officer

The Dental Professionals Hearings Service is the adjudication service for the General Dental Council (GDC). Our Support Officer is responsible for making sure participants of the hearing are properly informed and supported.

The Support Officer will provide help to all witnesses (sometimes also referred to as informants or complainants), whether you are acting as a witness for the GDC or the dental professional as well as unrepresented Registrants.

You can contact the Support Officer:

by email at: support@dentalhearings.org

by phone: 020 7167 6068 or 020 7167 6080

Or you can write to:

Support Officer
37 Wimpole Street
London
W1G 8DQ

Compensation awards or recovering costs

We work to protect patients. We are not able to award compensation or recover costs related to the treatment or dental services you received. We do not have the regulatory powers to financially compensate you.

If you are looking to recover costs or compensation, you will need to take legal action against the dental professional. If you would like more information you should speak to your own lawyer or Citizens Advice.

You may be able to get a repair or retreatment for NHS dental work. You should contact your dental practice in the first instance or make a complaint through the NHS system within 12-months. You may also want to contact the Ombudsman if you're not happy with how your complaint is handled.

You can contact the [Dental Complaints Service](#) if you need help with settling a complaint about private dental treatment.

Information for witnesses

Investigating complaints and concerns

When a General Dental Council (GDC) investigation into the behaviour, clinical practice or health of a dental professional results in an allegation, a hearing is held to determine whether their fitness to practise dentistry is impaired.

Allegations are made by the GDC, the UK regulator of dental professionals following an assessment of evidence. When an allegation is made, the Dental Professionals Hearings Service (Dental Hearings) will schedule a hearing before three independent panellists, known as a practice committee.

Witnesses may be asked to give evidence during an investigation or at the hearing. The aim of the hearing is to decide whether the allegations are true, based on the evidence put forward.

Who can act as a witness?

A wide range of people can be called as a witness at a hearing, including:

- those who raise complaints or concerns with the GDC about a dental professional (sometimes referred to as informants or complainants)
- any person with knowledge of the issues being investigated (e.g. NHS colleagues, patients, practice managers)
- professional clinical experts
- professional medical examiners
- professional assessors
- GDC staff members.

Dental professionals can also call witnesses to support their case. If a dental professional has asked you to be a witness, some of the information here may not be relevant to you. If you're in this situation, you should contact the dental professional concerned, or their lawyer, for further information.

You can also contact our [Witness Support Officer](#).

Preparing witness statements

The GDC must gather and present evidence to support its case. That evidence may include interviewing and taking written statements from witnesses. The purpose of the witness statement is to set out your evidence. Legal teams will assess witness statements and other relevant evidence, and make decisions about how the case should be handled.

Two people in the legal team will normally be allocated to work on the case, a lawyer and an assistant, they will be your point of contact. You can ask them any questions you might have about the case and the process.

The GDC's legal team will turn your evidence into a formal witness statement. They will ask you to check that your draft statement is a full and accurate account of what's happened, and to sign it to confirm.

Once signed, your witness statement cannot be changed. If you do need to add something later, you can make a further statement, but it's important that every effort is made to ensure your first statement is complete and correct.

The evidence collected by the GDC legal team, including witness statements (and any substantive changes to your draft statement) is then passed to the dental professional, and their lawyer (known as 'disclosure').

Providing a witness statement allows the dental professional and their lawyer to prepare their defence, and an opportunity to consider your account of events. They may wish to ask you questions about the contents of your witness statement at the hearing.

Witness statements will not be given to the committee before the hearing, unless all parties agree with the content of your statement. Where both legal teams agree, your witness statement will form part of the evidence concerned and be given to the committee to read before the hearing. In some cases, some witnesses may not need to attend a hearing to answer questions.

If you are asked to attend a hearing to give evidence first-hand, you may be asked questions by the GDC's case presenter, the dental professional or their representative and the committee.

Documents put before the committee

There will be a bundle of relevant documents put before the committee. This usually includes your witness statement and any documents which were attached to it as exhibits.

You will not normally be given any other documents before you give evidence. After the hearing, you can ask for copies of documents presented. Requests will be considered in line with our duties and obligations under the Freedom of Information Act and UK General Data Protection Regulation. Acting as a witness does not make it more likely that you will receive these documents.

Taking part in a dental hearing

If your evidence supports the GDC's case, you may be asked to attend a hearing to give evidence. The GDC will only ask you to appear as a witness if it is necessary to protect the health and wellbeing of anyone who contacts a dental professional or otherwise in the public interest.

It is important that you review your witness statement before giving evidence. You can refer to your witness statement while giving evidence, and you can ask for a copy to be provided. The committee may ask questions to clarify matters with you.

You will not be provided with any information about other witnesses in the case or the allegations made against the dental professional. This ensures that your evidence is not influenced by anything anyone else has said and that the proceedings are fair. It is very important that you do not talk to anyone else about your evidence.

Once the hearing has concluded and the committee has made their decision, you will be given a copy of the findings.

You may not need to attend the hearing, for example, when all allegations are admitted by the dental professional. You will be contacted as soon as possible if you do not need to attend. This notice can sometimes be unavoidably late, if the hearing is adjourned for health reasons, the dental professional admits the charges at the start of the hearing, or the dental professional does not attend (the committee will decide on whether to proceed in their absence).

In some cases it is decided that there is not enough evidence to go ahead with the case against the dental professional, and not hold a hearing. You will be contacted if this happens.

Witness availability during the hearing

Hearings typically take place over the course of four to five days. You may be needed at any time while the hearing is taking place.

You will be asked to make yourself available for the duration of the hearing, unless otherwise informed. Where possible, you will be told on the first day when you can expect to be called (e.g. day-two of a five-day hearing). If you're having problems taking time off from work to attend the hearing, please let us know as we may be able to help. We can write to your employer to confirm the dates of the hearing and explain why you are needed as a witness or send you a formal summons.

Having someone with you during the hearing

If you're attending a hearing in-person you can bring someone with you, but they will be asked to remain in the waiting area until you are called. This is to avoid them telling you about the proceedings, and inappropriately influencing you before you give your evidence.

Expenses for companions are not covered, unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. you need support from a carer). Your point of contact or the Witness Support Officer will discuss this with you if relevant.

If you're attending a remote hearing and would like to have someone supporting you, you will need to inform your point of contact or the Witness Support Officer in advance. They will confirm whether this is acceptable.

Where and how are hearings held?

Our in-person hearings are held in London, or you may be asked to take part in a remote hearing, using a video link or online meeting platform. Some hearings are a hybrid of the two. You will be told in advance about the format of the hearing (in-person, remote or hybrid) and when you need to attend.

You can find directions to our building and information about nearby train stations and bus stops on our [Contact Us](#) page.

Hearing date, travel and accommodation

You will be informed of the hearing date as soon as it is available. We aim to have cases heard within nine months of a decision to make allegations and refer to a hearing. This is not always possible, normally because more time is needed to complete an investigation.

You will be asked about your availability before the hearing date is set. You will be sent a calendar to record any dates that you're not available. We will try to arrange the hearing for when you are available, but this may not always be possible. If the date of the hearing needs to be changed for any reason, you will be informed, and the reasons explained.

We do our best to avoid changing hearing dates. You can help us with the scheduling of hearings by:

- Remaining available on the dates you provided.
- Not planning events or travel during hearing dates.
- Contacting us about any unavoidable changes to your availability.

You will be asked to make your own arrangement for travel and accommodation (find more about refunds for expenses below). If you have specific travel or accommodation needs (e.g. a disability) please get in touch with your point of contact, or the Witness Support Officer so appropriate arrangements can be put in place.

No longer able to attend or travel due to ill health

Please get in touch with your point of contact or Witness Support Officer at the earliest opportunity if you're not able to attend a hearing due to ill health.

You will be asked about when you are likely to be well enough to attend. You will also be asked to send in a medical certificate or a note from your doctor to confirm your condition.

Please also get in contact if you are going to have difficulty travelling due to ill health. In these circumstances:

- we may ask for more details, so assistance can be arranged
- apply to move the hearing date, or
- arrange for you to give evidence in another way.

Adjustments for disabled or vulnerable witnesses

We understand that it may be difficult for people with a disability to take part in a hearing unless reasonable adjustments are made.

Others might find it difficult to give evidence in-person or travel to London, for different reasons, for example because they:

- have caring responsibilities
- social anxiety or feel intimidated speaking in front of others, or
- are the alleged victim in a case, particularly in the case of sexual assault, harassment and violence.

Speak with your point of contact or the Witness Support Officer if you think an adjustment needs to be made for a disability or vulnerability. They will consider your circumstances and relevant rules for proceedings, and then let you know whether adjustments or 'special measures' can be requested.

An application may need to be made to the committee, which will include notifying the dental professional concerned and their lawyer. If they oppose the application, the committee will decide whether reasonable adjustments can be made for the hearing.

We cannot guarantee that special measures will be arranged. They are normally only available to disabled or vulnerable witnesses in exceptional circumstances.

Examples of special measures that can be taken:

- screens can be placed around you so the dental professional and members of the public can't see you when giving your evidence
- giving evidence remotely.

Will the dental professional attend the hearing?

The dental professional will usually be at the hearing, but there may be times when they decide not to attend. They may be represented by a lawyer or non-legal representative, or they may represent themselves.

Covering expenses or lost earnings

You will be refunded reasonable travel and food expenses if you are asked to attend a hearing in-person. And if you don't live within reasonable travelling distance from central London, you will be asked to book accommodation.

You will be asked to pay for travel, food, and accommodation costs upfront. Your expenses will be refunded on receipt of a completed expense form with all relevant receipts attached. If you are not able to pay upfront, please get in touch your point of contact or the Witness Support Officer as soon as possible, who will then arrange payment for your travel and accommodation.

You will be sent a copy of our expenses policy in advance.

We work to keep our costs down and reduce our environmental impact where we can. So please use public transport whenever possible. We will only cover the cost of using your own car or a taxi in exceptional circumstances, for instance if you have a disability or mobility issue. Get in touch with your point of contact or the Witness Support Officer before the hearing if you would like a refund for use of your car or a taxi.

We do not compensate for loss of earnings.

Not sure about being a witness?

Witnesses play a vital role in investigations and hearings about the conduct, practice and health of dental professionals. For this reason, witnesses can be summoned to appear at a hearing.

The system of dental regulation exists to protect the public and maintain public confidence. It would not operate effectively without witnesses coming forward to tell us about their experiences.

Can I talk to someone about being a witness?

Being a witness can be a rewarding experience, but it can be stressful for some people. If you feel that you would like support, you might want to speak to the Witness Support Officer, who is responsible for making sure that witnesses are properly informed and supported throughout the process. Support from the Witness Support Officer is free and independent.

Our Witness Support Officer can:

- help you to understand what happens during an investigation into a complaint about a dental professional
- arrange for you to visit the hearing room on the day of the hearing, before you are due to give evidence
- support you over the phone, or on the day of the hearing, and be in the hearing room while you give evidence, if you want them to be there
- help you fill in your expense forms
- tell you about other organisations which can provide further support.

The Witness Support Officer is not allowed to discuss the evidence with you.

You can contact the Witness Support Officer at witnesssupport@dentalhearings.org

Attending a hearing in-person

Arrive early and report to reception

If you are asked to attend a hearing in-person, you will be told the date and time that you need to arrive at the venue in advance. Please allow for travel delays and aim to arrive at least half an hour early.

You can find directions to our building and information about nearby train stations and bus stops on our [Contact Us](#) page.

Arriving early will give you a chance to speak to the case presenter (the person presenting the case on behalf of the General Dental Council), and see the hearing room before you give your evidence.

When you arrive, please report to the reception desk. A member of staff will direct you to a witness waiting room.

Waiting to give evidence

Witnesses are asked to wait in the witness waiting room until they're called to give evidence. Witnesses (except for expert witnesses) are not allowed to sit in the hearing before giving their evidence.

Where possible, we will inform you at the start of the day the likely running order and will let you know when you're likely to be called. You may have to wait a long time, so we recommend that you bring something to read.

An 'in camera' sign on the hearing room door means you're not allowed to enter the room because the committee is considering a matter in private.

Not discussing your evidence

While waiting, you should not discuss the case or your evidence with anyone, including any other witnesses waiting with you.

This important rule is to make sure that evidence given by each witness is their own account of what happened. If you discuss the case with another witness, this might affect the proceedings.

Supporting those with a disability or other needs

If you have a disability, communication difficulties or other specific needs, please inform your point of contact (legal team) or the Witness Support Officer before the hearing so the necessary arrangements can be made, such as providing an interpreter or information in braille. Our venue has wheelchair access and induction loops for those with hearing aids. If you have a medical condition which means you need more frequent comfort breaks, please let us know in advance, so we can make arrangements for additional breaks so you do not have to say so in a public hearing.

Facilities at the venue and nearby

We provide tea, coffee, water and biscuits. We do not provide any other food or drinks for witnesses. There are no restaurant facilities at our hearing venue so you will be required to purchase your own food and refreshments.

We can provide information about local shops and cafés on the day.

There is free WiFi at the venue.

Remote attendance at a hearing

If you are attending a remote hearing, the GDC's legal team will tell you what time you need to be ready to start giving your evidence.

We will invite you to take part in a Microsoft Teams test call a few days before you are due to give your evidence. The test call will be carried out by a member of our staff. We carry out these test calls to assist all participants involved in a hearing.

Bringing children to the hearing venue

Please do not bring children to the hearing if you can avoid doing so. If you really have no other option, you should bring some toys or other entertainment for children, as there are no suitable facilities at the venue. Please contact the Witness Support Officer if you think you need to bring children with you, so we can discuss and consider alternative options.

If you bring children, they will need to be with an adult at all times. This means bringing another adult with you to look after the children while you're giving evidence. You will only be able to claim the additional adult's reasonable expenses in exceptional circumstances (e.g. if you need to bring your baby with you because you're breastfeeding).

Our staff cannot take responsibility for children, even for short periods of time.

Key things to remember before the hearing

Please check off the following before the date of the hearing:

- Make sure you know exactly where the venue is, the start time (aim to arrive early) and the format of the hearing (in-person, remote or hybrid).
- If you are attending a remote hearing, we will test the technology with you in advance. Tell us if you experience any problems, so we can try to resolve them.
- If you are attending a remote hearing, please let us know if you are experiencing any technical difficulties. It is important we are made aware of this, so we can try and resolve the difficulties.
- Read your witness statement before the hearing to refresh your memory and bring it with you so you can review it while you're waiting to give your evidence.
- Do not discuss the case with anyone before you give evidence.
- Have your reading glasses with you if you wear them.
- Turn your mobile phone off while you are in the hearing room or joining the hearing remotely.
- Speak to your point of contact or the Witness Support Officer if you have any concerns or questions about the hearing.

Giving evidence at a dental hearing

Running order and support for witnesses

All cases are dealt with as quickly as possible, but sometimes hearings run over time. Witnesses may need to wait some time before giving their evidence. If you can't give your evidence on the day scheduled, you will be asked to come back on another day.

The independent committee hearing the case will be informed of the order that witnesses will be called to give evidence by the General Dental Council's (GDC's) case presenter. The order may change if any unexpected issues arise during the hearing.

The GDC's case presenter will tell witnesses about the order and keep you updated during the day. If it is the dental professional or their lawyer who has invited you to give evidence, they'll keep you updated.

If you're attending an in person, the Hearings Support Officer will come and collect you when it is time for you to give evidence. The Hearings Support Officer and/or Witness Support Officer is there to help you if you have any concerns or need any help during the day.

Hearing room and attendees

The dental hearing room layout is similar to a court room, but it is less formal. You can see the typical layout of the hearing room below, including where the other participants will be seated during the hearing.

Taking an oath or affirmation to tell the truth

Before you give your evidence, you will be asked to take an oath to tell the truth. If you do not want to take a religious oath, you can read out an 'affirmation' to confirm the evidence you are about to give will be truthful.

If you are religious, you can take an oath on a holy book of your choosing. The following texts are available:

- Jewish (on the Old Testament).
- Christian (on the New Testament).
- Muslim (on the Quran).
- Hindu (on a Gita).
- Sikh (on the Gutka).

If you are of a different faith and would like a different holy book, please let the Witness Support Officer know before the hearing so the appropriate text can be made available.

If you are giving evidence remotely and wish to take an oath, you will need to have the relevant holy book with you.

The Hearings Support Officer can help you if you have any difficulties reading the oath or affirmation.

Introductions and confirming who you are

The Chair of the committee will introduce themselves and the rest of the committee to you and the legal representatives. You may be asked to confirm your name and details to the committee, but we normally protect the identity of patients and other non-professional witnesses.

You will be told how this will be done by the chair, the GDC's case presenter or dental professional's lawyer (if asked to attend by them). You may be asked to look at a witness schedule to confirm who you are, and you might be called, for example 'Patient A' or 'Witness 1', or something similar. These details will not be made public.

When giving evidence and answering questions, you may be asked to not refer to others by their name. In these cases, you should use the pseudonym provided e.g. 'Patient A', as detailed in the witness schedule. Hearings are digitally recorded and retained. Recordings may be used to create a transcript of the hearing at a later date.

Giving evidence and answering questions during the hearing

When answering questions, please:

- take your time
- speak clearly and slowly so everyone can hear your evidence and a recording can be made.
- ask for a break if you need one.

Please note: The microphones on the tables in the hearing room, do not amplify your voice, they just record what is being said.

Other important things to remember when giving evidence:

- Listen carefully to the questions and make sure you understand them before giving your answer
- If you don't understand the question, say 'I don't understand. Can you ask me that again in a different way?' If you still don't understand, it is okay to say 'I am sorry, but I still don't understand'
- If someone asks you two or three questions together, you can ask them to repeat the questions one at a time.
- Don't try to answer a question if you don't know the answer or you cannot remember.
- If you're asked the same question again, this does not mean your first answer was wrong. Just answer the question again.

The GDC's case presenter will be the first person to ask you questions. The questions will be based on your witness statement, and they may also ask you about other matters (this is called examination-in-chief).

The GDC's case presenter may also refer you to other documents which form part of the case. If you're attending in-person, these documents will be either handed to you, or placed on the table in front of you. If giving evidence remotely, you will be sent copies of all documents that you might be asked to look at during the hearing.

The dental professional (if representing themselves) or their lawyer will also ask you questions. Their questions are likely to focus on the parts of your evidence they want you to clarify, or that they do not accept (this is called cross-examination). If the dental professional is representing themselves, they may be prevented from questioning you in certain cases (e.g. if you are the alleged victim of a sexual assault).

Cross-examination is an essential part of a fair hearing. The dental professional and/or their lawyer will question you to ensure your evidence is accurate, or they may put an alternative version of events to you and ask for your comments. When they've finished questioning you, the GDC's case presenter will have an opportunity to ask you further questions.

The committee will ask you their set of questions. Their questions will be designed to clarify the issues and better understand the evidence you have given. Both parties will then have an opportunity to ask you any questions they may have arising from the committee's questioning.

If the dental professional or their lawyer has asked you to give evidence, the process will be the same, except for the order. The first person to ask you questions will be the dental professional or their lawyer.

The chair (assisted by the legal adviser) will make sure that the hearing is managed fairly, and the questioning is reasonable and amiable.

Nobody will be allowed to raise their voice at you while you are giving evidence, but some questions may come across as challenging. Nobody will be able to ask you questions that are unfair, offensive or distressing.

Committee need to consider matters in private

The committee may need to consider matters in private during the hearing. If this happens in an in-person hearing the Hearings Support Officer will take you to the witness waiting room or another separate room until the committee is ready for you to return. If the hearing is being held remotely, you will be asked to leave and rejoin when the committee is ready.

It is very important that you do not discuss your evidence or the case with anyone while you are waiting to go back and continue giving evidence.

Dental hearing adjournments

An adjournment is a break in the hearing. The hearing may have to adjourn from time to time (e.g. for lunch, or at the end of each day if the hearing is heard over more than one day).

The committee may also adjourn for longer periods:

- to gather extra evidence
- if anyone involved becomes ill, or
- because it has overrun the days set aside for it.

If you have not finished giving evidence by the date the hearing is scheduled to end, you will be asked to attend again on newly scheduled dates. Your availability will be checked before the dates are confirmed. You will not be asked to start giving your evidence, if the legal team thinks that you will not be able to finish in time.

It is important to not talk to anyone about the case or your evidence during any adjournment. This includes anyone involved with the case, as well as your friends or family. Please remember that not complying could seriously affect the outcome of the case. You will be able to talk about the case when the hearing has finished, and the committee has made their decision.

After the hearing

After you have given your evidence

The chair of the committee will confirm when you have finished and can be released from your duties as a witness, by thanking you for your attendance and your assistance with the case.

When you've finished you can either leave or stay to listen to the rest of the hearing, if the hearing is being held in public. If you're attending in-person you will be shown where to sit. If you choose to leave, the Hearings Support Officer will show you out. If you're taking part remotely, the Hearing Support Officer will tell you what you need to do to observe the hearing remotely.

We will not refund any extra expenses arising from your decision to stay and observe the rest of the hearing.

When the hearing has concluded

You will be informed of the outcome when the hearing has finished.

If the hearing doesn't conclude within the scheduled dates, you will be contacted and told when you might expect the outcome. Whatever the outcome, you will be sent a letter explaining the decision.

You may have to attend a hearing again (e.g. if there is adjournment or appeal). This rarely happens and the GDC legal team will let you know if you need to return to give evidence.

Outcomes are published on our website within a few weeks of the decision being made by the committee.

Possible outcomes of a dental hearing

The committee can do any of the following:

1. **No impairment:** the committee may conclude that the dental professional's fitness to practise is not currently impaired, and impose no sanction, even when found to be guilty of:
 - misconduct
 - deficient professional performance
 - having a conviction or caution for a criminal offence, or
 - having a health issue that affected their practice.
2. **Reprimand:** the committee decides to give a reprimand (a statement of their disapproval), but the dental professional is fit to practise with no restrictions on their work. No other action needs to be taken.
3. **Conditions:** the committee decides that conditions should be applied to the dental professional's work for a set period of time, such as undertaking further training and providing evidence to support the steps they're taking to improve. Conditions are usually reviewed within a certain period of time.
4. **Suspension:** the committee suspends the dental professional's registration. That means the dental professional cannot perform dentistry for a set period of time. Suspensions are usually reviewed within a certain period of time.
5. **Erasure:** the most serious course of action a committee can take, as it removes the dental professional from the register, which means they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK. They can reapply to join the register after five years, but must prove that they are fit to practise.

Useful contacts for witnesses

Legal advice and support

[Advicenow](#)

A charity that provides accurate, practical information on rights and the law in England and Wales.

[Advocate](#)

Matches applicants with deserving cases with barristers who are willing to provide their services for free. They only assist those who are unable to obtain legal aid and cannot afford to pay.

[Citizens advice](#)

Citizens Advice provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.

[Information Commissioner's Office](#)

The Information Commissioner's Office is the UK's independent body for information rights. It can provide advice on accessing your personal dental records.

[Law Centres Network](#)

Services for people who cannot afford a lawyer.

[National Pro Bono Centre](#)

A hub for pro bono charities across the legal sector. It is not able to provide legal advice but may be able to point you in the direction of those who can.

[Royal Courts of Justice Citizens Advice Service](#)

Free legal advice for people with a court case in the civil or family courts in England and Wales.

[Scottish Information Commissioner](#) (Scotland only)

The independent public official responsible for promoting and enforcing Scotland's freedom of information law.

[Support through Court](#)

A charity providing emotional and practical support to individuals going through court proceedings.

[The Law Society](#)

Provides a free service for anyone looking for information about organisations or people providing legal services in England and Wales.

Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA)

AvMA is an independent charity providing free specialist advice on complaints about public and private healthcare.

Financial advice and practical support

Turn2us

Charity providing practical help to people who are struggling financially.

Gingerbread (single parents)

Charity working with single parent families providing expert advice, practical support, and campaigns for single parents.

Carers UK

Charity that provides advice, and support to carers in the UK.

Mental health support

Mind

Providing advice on advocacy for people with mental health issues.

Mental Health Services NHS (NHS employees only)

Access to NHS mental health services and where to get urgent help.

Rethink Mental Illness

Charity providing support to those who experience mental illness and those who care for them.

Sane

National out of hours mental health helpline, offering specialist emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness.

Samaritans

Charity providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress.

Shout

Support for those who're struggling to cope and need to talk.

Victim Support

Charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales.

Young Minds

Charity which provides support to young people experiencing difficulties with their mental health.

Public sector support

Community Health Councils in Wales

A statutory body responsible for ensuring that the local Community Health Councils are fulfilling their roles.

Northern Ireland Ombudsman

Independent public body providing an impartial and free examination of complaints about a range of public services.

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (England only)

The Ombudsman conducts independent investigations into complaints made about the NHS in England, and UK government departments and their agencies in England.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Ombudsman has legal powers to investigate complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is the final stage for complaints about most devolved public services in Scotland including the health service.

NHS Patient Advocacy

Voices Advocacy

National advocacy service that supporting people who want to make a complaint about NHS care or treatment.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) in England

PALS offers confidential advice, support and information on health related matters. You can contact them by phoning your local hospital, clinic, GP surgery or health centre.

Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) in Scotland

PASS provides independent advice and support for patients of the NHS in Scotland.

Other help

[The Clinic for Boundaries Studies](#)

UK wide organisation providing advice and support on all aspects of professional boundaries (limitations) and works to prevent people from breaking those boundaries.

[AbilityNet](#)

Supports those living with any disability or impairment to use technology to achieve their goals, at home, work or in education.