

Help with your NHS Complaint – Sheet 7

Local Resolution Meetings

A Local Resolution Meeting (LRM) is often offered as part of the complaint process. It provides an opportunity for the NHS organisation to answer any questions or provide further discussions or explanations face to face. If you are not used to going to this type of meeting it can be difficult to know where to start. The points below are intended to give you a short guide for what to expect from your meeting, and some thoughts about how you can prepare.

An Agenda – help to structure your meeting

Most complaints teams will ask for an agenda or a list of points which you would like to discuss. This can seem like an enormous task, especially if your complaint is very complicated, or involves multiple clinicians or departments. However, your agenda doesn't need to be too big and there are some benefits to drafting an agenda:

- The complaints team can make sure the right people attend the meeting
- Detailed answers or explanations can be given, and medical records referred to as there has been time to prepare
- An agenda can be used to keep the meeting focused

We can help you to draft an agenda for any meetings which might be arranged. This help can include:

- Meeting with us in the weeks before an LRM to go through your file and the letters you have sent and received.
- Looking at the answers or explanations you already have, and identify the issues that you remain unhappy with.

If you can't produce a list of specific points or questions, you could simply list any topics or themes you want to discuss as well as any specific incidents.

Without an agenda or some idea of the issues you wish to discuss, any detailed questions or points may not be answered in the time available at the meeting. Quite some time may have passed since the care or treatment was provided, and as memories fade clinicians may need to consult the medical records. If you don't tell them in advance, they may not have all the information conveniently to hand when you meet.

Some agenda topics

Not all of these topics are relevant for every meeting - you should think about which ones best suit your situation:

- **Introductions**
 - make sure that if you're taking someone with you, you have said who they are and why they are there
 - it gives you a chance to understand who is there from the NHS organisation and what their roles are.

- **Your brief summary**
 - Aim to keep this short but to set the context - what is important to you.
 - Try to have 3 main points (no more than 5) about what happened - this will help to keep things focused on what is MOST IMPORTANT to you.
 - If your summary takes more than 3 or 4 minutes it's probably too long and too complicated. Remember, you will already have communicated in writing before the meeting so you don't need to include everything you have written.
- **Your questions**
 - Again we'd suggest aiming for 3 key questions (preferably no more than 5 if you can't reduce it to 3). This will help you to concentrate discussions on what you think are the most important issues.
 - Try to think about how these will help to get the resolution or outcome you want.
 - Useful words to start questions with are: Why? When? Who? What? Where? How?
 - Before you start with your questions, tell them how many questions you have and ask if they want to respond one at a time or wait until you have asked them all.
- **Your resolution ideas**
 - You will probably have clear ideas about how this can be resolved (e.g. an apology, a change in policy, an explanation of what they have changed to make sure it doesn't happen again). This is your opportunity to say this.
 - We suggest thinking about what is practical, proportionate and realistic.
 - Again, try to keep the list of ideas to a manageable size so you can focus on the most important suggestions. If they want more detail they can always ask you for it.
- **Their response**
 - It is important to give the NHS organisation(s) a chance to respond. This will help you to understand what they are able to change more easily and what may take more time or be more difficult to change.
 - You may have made some suggestions that the NHS organisation hasn't thought of. They may need to go away and think about your ideas.
 - If they can't give you a full response straight away you can discuss with them when and how they will give you a more detailed response.
- **Next steps**
 - If everything is resolved at the end of the meeting, this gives you a chance to thank them for listening and taking your complaint seriously.
 - If your complaint has not been fully resolved, this gives everyone a chance to talk about what happens next.
 - They may want to do some more investigation or ask you for more information.
 - It may be that you can't agree. If they say the complaint is closed and you are not happy, you can tell them that you're considering whether or not to take it to the Ombudsman.

What can I expect from the NHS body?

In most Local Resolution Meetings, a member of the complaints department will attend. Their role will vary depending on the way their organisation deals with complaints meetings - you should check what they will be doing when the meeting starts. They may:

- Take detailed minutes - although this is very rare, and it can take time for these to be typed into a transcript
- Take a summary of the complaint - this is more common and simply provides brief details of what was discussed and any action points agreed on
- The meeting may be recorded (on audio) - in this instance you might be provided with a copy of this (e.g. an audio CD)
- Someone from the NHS body should chair the meeting and ensure that it runs smoothly

Points to remember:

- We can help you to prepare for your LRM.
- We can sit with you in your LRM but will not take any notes or minutes or speak on your behalf. Our role is to act as a support for you and to help you to say what is most important to you.
- Please give the individuals from the NHS organisation time to answer. You want them to listen to everything you have to say - it's reasonable for them to expect you to listen to everything they have to say too.
- Try not to recap too much of the information you sent the trust in your complaint letter(s). It might be useful to go over the most important points quickly (as a summary) so that everyone in the room is clear about the key issues for you.
- If it's useful, decide on a spokesperson in your family who will raise your issues. It can be confusing if different people keep saying different things - if you want a clear resolution you need to paint a clear picture to start with.

Tel: 0161 622 5700

Email: NHSComplaints@healthwatcholdham.co.uk

Web: www.healthwatcholdham.co.uk

