



Royal College
of Nursing

The RCN complaints procedure

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Your opinion is important to us

The RCN is committed to delivering the best possible services and support to you. To enable us to do this we need your assistance in letting us know what works well and what we can improve further.

We welcome your feedback and complaints because they are an important way for us to learn and to improve our services in the future.

Our feedback and complaints process is simple to access and we want you to know about it so you can use it to help us help you better.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you tell us that you are not happy with something the RCN has done or failed to do. This includes services supplied by people or organisations acting on behalf of the RCN and can be anything from a specific action taken by a person to the RCN failing to comply with its charters or mission.

Who can complain?

You, or someone acting with your written consent, can make a complaint about the actions or decisions of the RCN that affect you as a member. Complaints can also be made about the actions or decisions of someone acting on behalf of the RCN that affect you as a member, for example a solicitor or other contractor.

Can non-RCN members complain?

Yes, you can complain if you have used an RCN member service but are not yourself a member, for example as an attendee at an RCN event or conference or user of our facilities.

What is the time limit for making a complaint?

You should normally complain within three months of the event(s) concerned or within three months of becoming aware that you have something to complain about.

How do I make an initial complaint?

We encourage local resolution of complaints in the first instance. Experience tells us that when someone is unhappy with a service and wants to register it, this is best dealt with by those directly involved. This way, misunderstandings can be corrected and if actions need to be taken these can happen speedily and directly at the point of delivery.

Your complaint should therefore be made in the first instance to the member of staff providing the service or facility. A record of the complaint will be made to learn from it in the future.

You can complain verbally, either face-to-face or over the phone, in writing or via email. If you are unsure of the staff member's name or contact details please call RCN Direct for this information on 0345 772 6100.

What if my complaint can't be resolved locally?

If, despite our best endeavours, the matter cannot be resolved or you want to pursue a formal complaint, you can contact the relevant complaints/feedback administrator and we will apply the formal complaint policy. This enables us to assign an investigator and defines the timescales for a formal response.

A list of local complaints/feedback administrators can be found on our website, see www.rcn.org.uk/complaints for details. Or you can contact RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100 for

your local complaints/feedback administrator details.

What happens next?

Upon receiving your formal complaint (and agreeing its precise nature if it has been made verbally) the complaints/feedback administrator will commission an investigation.

You will be informed in writing of the name of the person undertaking the investigation and, depending on the complaint, may be invited to make a statement or clarify your concerns.

How long will it take to investigate my complaint?

Normally you will receive a written response from the head of the department or board responsible for the service or facility complained about within 25 working days.

If it is necessary to extend this deadline you will be given a written explanation of the reasons for the delay every five working days.

The written response to your complaint will be aimed at satisfying your concerns, offering an apology and explanation as appropriate, and setting out any action to ensure similar situations do not arise again.

Within 30 working days of your complaint the RCN will, where possible, implement any necessary actions identified in the investigation.

Will my complaint be dealt with in confidence?

The RCN acknowledges that information relating to complaints is sensitive and therefore needs to be handled carefully and circulated on a 'need to know' basis only.

The RCN is committed to respecting the confidentiality of its members and service



users and recognises their right to decide what information they choose to share with us. We also respect members' rights to know what information is held about them and the right to change this information if they believe it is inaccurate. For more information about the RCN's commitment to data protection visit www.rcn.org.uk/privacy

What happens if it is inappropriate for a local formal investigation?

If the RCN complaints manager considers your complaint inappropriate for a local investigation they will commission an investigation outside the department/board. The same timescales will apply.

If the complaint involves a head of department/board, the investigation report will be submitted to an RCN Executive Director who will be responsible for replying to your complaint within the same timescales.

How does the RCN monitor complaints?

The RCN complaints manager makes regular reports to the Director of Nursing and Service Delivery who also reports to the UK Executive Team and RCN Council. As well as statistical information and reports on compliance RCN Council also reviews the type and nature of complaints and the implementation of recommendations.

What if I want to complain about the level or standard of representation I have received in my legal/employment case?

The same principles and process apply. In the first instance this should be raised with the relevant complaint/feedback administrator and if possible we will try to resolve this locally. If you have received legal support from an RCN

agent (for example, legal representation in Scotland or Northern Ireland) the resolution processes for that organisation will apply. In most cases we hope the matter can be concluded satisfactorily. However if a formal complaint arises we will deal with this using the RCN's formal complaint process.

All concerns about legal and employment relations representation, the management and conduct of legal and employment relations cases, and case reviews, will be dealt with as formal complaints. By having one unified system we can ensure we deal with all such matters in the same fair, transparent and consistent manner and learn the appropriate lessons.

What if I am not happy with the outcome of my formal complaint?

A review can be requested into the handling of the complaint within three months of the date of the outcome letter. It is important to note that this is not a re-investigation of the original complaint; rather it is to review whether we dealt with the matter to the appropriate standard.

Requests for a review should be sent RCN Complaints Manager, RCN Direct, Copse Walk, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff, CF23 8XG.

If the review finds the investigation was not conducted to the standards we expect, recommendations can be made including that a fresh investigation takes place.



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Customer First:
committed to
delivering superior
customer service.

The RCN represents nurses and nursing,
promotes excellence in practice and shapes
health policies

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