

Written responses to complaints



MPS



Putting members **first**

Advice correct as of November 2014

At some stage during the course of dealing with a complaint, it is likely that you will need to send a written response, either in reply to a letter of complaint or following a meeting with the complainant.

The following advice is intended to assist you in composing your letter:

- Identify the concerns that have been raised and respond to the complaint. It is often helpful to set out an account of what took place, even if this is background information, but do not lose sight of the issues.
- The purpose of your response is to try and resolve the complaint, not to perpetuate correspondence. Be courteous, objective and professional.
- Establish the facts before attempting to provide a full response to a complaint. Take time to present a measured, considered and considerate response, bearing in mind the timescales. In particular, if relevant medical records are no longer with the practice, obtain them from the institution retaining the records before you draft your letter. Likewise, if you will be making reference to any other individual whose comments are required, obtain those comments wherever possible.
- Be aware of patient confidentiality. Not all complaints are made by the patient personally. Where a complaint is made about the service provided to a patient who has the capacity to give a valid consent, that patient's confidence must be respected.
- Try to be sympathetic and understanding. Offer condolences if these are due. Do not be afraid of apologising if an error has been made.
- Avoid blaming or judging others.
- Avoid jargon.
- Your response should be typed, so that it is clearly legible.
- Include information on what the complainant should do if he or she is not satisfied with the response you have given.

**For medicolegal advice please call our:
24-hour helpline on +44 113 243 6436
or email us at: medical.wi@mps.org.uk**

This factsheet provides only a general overview of the topic and should not be relied upon as definitive guidance. If you are an MPS member, and you are facing an ethical or legal dilemma, call and ask to speak to a medicolegal adviser, who will give you specific advice.

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