

Dentists, Opticians and Pharmacists

Factsheet

Introduction

This Fact sheet is about Independent Community Health Providers providing services funded by the NHS. It should be read together with our '[How to Complain](#)' webpage, available on the 'Making A Complaint' tab.

Independent Community Health Providers can include community dentists, opticians or pharmacists who are providing you with a service under contract to the Local Health Board. You should note that we can only consider complaints about care funded by the NHS; we cannot look at community treatment provided on a private basis.

Independent Community Health Providers may work as sole practitioners, with other practitioners as part of a practice, or as part of a larger company. Practice staff, such as receptionists or nurses, are generally employed by the practice (or company), which will be responsible for their actions.

What we can do

We can:

- Consider complaints about the standard of clinical care provided to you, your child, or someone you represent;
- Consider complaints about administrative failure , or other poor service provided on behalf of the NHS;
- Consider complaints that you have been refused NHS dental treatment without being given a proper reason.

What we cannot do

We cannot:

- Stop a dentist or optician or pharmacist from practising – although if the investigation does suggest that there are serious concerns about professional competence, we may notify the relevant regulatory body;
- Intervene in your current treatment, obtain a second opinion for you, or arrange for you to be given an alternative treatment if the current type of treatment being offered is reasonable;
- Insist that you are seen at a particular dental practice or optician.

Issues to bear in mind

You have no entitlement to be seen by a particular Independent Community Practitioner, though in practice people are often seen by the same dentist or optician. There are also a number of instances where dentists are entitled to refuse to treat NHS patients whose treatment they have already started; for example, when the practitioner feels that the professional relationship between the dentist and the patient has broken down. In such cases, you should be given reasons as to why treatment is being refused. Treatment should not normally be refused because you have made a complaint.

When considering complaints about the standard of clinical care received from a dentist, optician or pharmacist, we will assess whether the care provided was of an appropriate standard (Available on the '[Clinical Standards](#)' page, under the 'For Service Provider' tab) in the circumstances present at the time.

Further information

Llais can provide free help and support to you in making a complaint about an NHS service. You can contact them via their helpline on **02920 235 558**.

Your **Local Health Board** may also be able to help you. Contact details for the various Health Boards in Wales can be found at www.wales.nhs.uk/ourservices/directory.

Examples of cases that we have looked at can be found on our website, under the 'Publications' tab on the '[Our Findings](#)' page.

Contact us

If you are unsure whether we would be able to look into your complaint, please [contact us](#) on 0300 790 0203 or ask@ombudsman.wales

Also available in Welsh.

This document is available in Welsh and English. You can write to us in Welsh and we will reply in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding.

ask@ombudsman.wales

0300 790 0203 Our phone line is open 10am-12:30pm and 1:30pm-4pm Monday – Friday