

Listening

The quick guide to
customer care

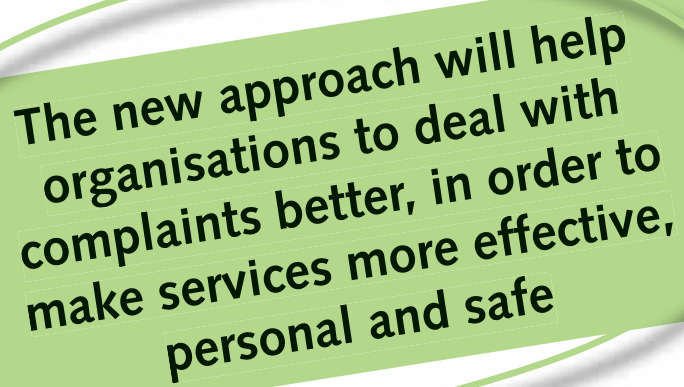
Responding

Improving

APPROACHING COMPLAINTS DIFFERENTLY – AND MORE EFFECTIVELY

Health and social care staff strive to get things right, but with busy services, mistakes can happen. When they do, it is important to put things right quickly and to use the experience to improve services and prevent future problems.

With this in mind, from April 2009, there will be a new, single approach to dealing with complaints about NHS and adult social care services. It will help organisations to deal with complaints better, in order to make services more effective, personal and safe.



The new approach will help organisations to deal with complaints better, in order to make services more effective, personal and safe

HOW THE NEW APPROACH WORKS

The new complaints approach is structured around three main principles: listening, responding and improving. In other words, helping organisations to:

take a more active approach to asking for people's views

deal with complaints more effectively

use the information received to learn and improve

To achieve this, it is essential that people who use services understand that you want to know what they think, and that you will listen to, act on and learn from their feedback.

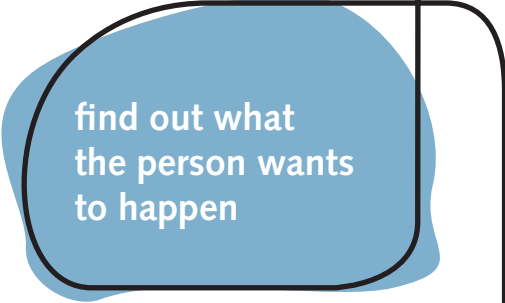
MORE ABOUT THE THREE PRINCIPLES

LISTENING


The initial contact with someone who has concerns or wishes to complain about your service is key. It is important to:

- make sure that you really understand the issues
- find out what they want to happen as a result
- obtain the right information to assess the seriousness of a complaint
- agree a plan and timescale at the outset
- maintain regular communication
- act quickly if you can.

If you do this, people will feel more valued, they will have more confidence in your organisation, and you will be able to manage their expectations, so that the outcome is more likely to be to the satisfaction of everyone involved.



find out what
the person wants
to happen



agree a clear
plan of action



work in partnership

RESPONDING

By correctly assessing the seriousness of a complaint, deciding on the most appropriate response then becomes more straightforward. The new approach focuses on ensuring that your organisation is equipped to:

- clearly gauge the impact of the complaint on all the parties involved
- establish a clear, appropriate plan of action, and
- provide the person making the complaint with relevant support and advice.

IMPROVING

Finally, complaints provide a vital source of insights about people's experiences of health and social care services, and how those services can improve.

The people who provide services are committed, enthusiastic and caring – and deserve to work in a service that does all it can to meet the needs of the service users.

By working in partnership with all those who provide, support and use a service, you can:

- enhance your own professional development
- make improvements to the service you work in, and
- know that service users feel confident in you as an individual and the service as a whole.

A NEW GUIDE TO TELL YOU MORE

We have developed a guide to provide more detailed information about the new complaints approach. It is designed to help complaints professionals to work with their colleagues to be better at listening, responding and learning from people's views. It includes information about the principles of good complaint handling, as well as tips and ideas for handling complaints more effectively, that organisations can start implementing immediately.

Additional advice sheets have been produced for complaints professionals, covering a range of specific issues.

We hope you find the guide, and the new approach, helpful. We are planning to produce further advice sheets on specific issues. If you have a suggestion for a new advice sheet, please email: makingexperiencescount@dh.gsi.gov.uk

TO GET THE GUIDE

Visit: www.dh.gov.uk/mec

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Email: dh@prolog.uk.com

Please quote 292319/Listening, Responding, Improving – A guide to better customer care

detailed guide
available

advice sheets
for complaints
professionals

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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