

Delivering a compassionate complaint response



It is designed to strengthen knowledge of the complaint's framework, the role of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman [PHSO], the reasons people complain, and the skills needed to carry out fair, timely and compassionate investigations that lead to learning and improvement. It also reflects a Patient Safety Incident Response Framework [PSIRF] aligned approach by emphasising compassionate engagement, meaningful involvement of patients and families, and a culture that focuses on understanding, learning and improvement rather than defensiveness or blame.

This training day proposal will be reviewed following pre-work with colleagues involved in the complaints and patient experience processes to ensure the session has due consideration of their experience, needs and any gaps identified.

Learning outcomes

- **Explain** the statutory and policy framework for NHS complaints handling in England.
- **Describe** the role of local resolution, advocacy, regulators and the PHSO in the complaint's pathway.
- **Recognise** common reasons why patients, families and carers complain and how this relates to experience, harm, trust and compassionate engagement.
- **Apply** a PSIRF aligned approach to complaint handling by prioritising listening, involvement, openness and learning.
- **Use** practical strategies to support people who are distressed, angry or overwhelmed and manage difficult conversations while maintaining empathy, professionalism and clear boundaries.
- **Apply** core investigation skills including planning, evidence review, chronology building, interviewing and report writing.
- **Draft** responses that are clear, empathetic, evidence-based and focused on learning and improvement.
- **Identify** themes, trends and actions that improve services and reduce repeat complaints.

Follow up coaching

A series of 4 coaching sessions following the training, 2-3 weeks apart, to support embedding of changes needed following the training, troubleshooting, and building confidence in using new approaches.