



**Ombwdsmon  
Ombudsman**  
Cymru • Wales

# Dentists, Opticians and Pharmacists

## Introduction

We can look at complaints about Independent Community Health Providers, which can include community dentists, opticians or pharmacists who are giving you a service under contract to the Local Health Board. You should note that we can only look at complaints about care funded by the NHS; we cannot look at community treatment given 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:

- look at complaints about the standard of clinical care given to you, your child, or someone you represent;
- look at complaints about administration going wrong, or other poor service given on behalf of the NHS;
- look at complaints about how 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 practicing – although if the investigation does suggest that there are serious concerns about professional competence, we may tell the relevant regulatory body;
- intervene in your current treatment, get 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 allowed 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 for why treatment is being refused. Treatment should not normally be refused because you have made a complaint.

When looking at complaints about the standard of clinical care you have had from a dentist, optician or pharmacist, we will assess whether the care given 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 give 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](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/ourservices/directory).

## Contact us

If you are not sure whether we would be able to look into your complaint, please [contact us](#) on 0300 790 0203 or [ask@ombudsman.wales](mailto:ask@ombudsman.wales)

Also available in Welsh.

## Easy Read

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