



Standard Letters for use by **Complaints Officers**

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GENERAL INFORMATION

All correspondence should be typed on HSE headed paper using the following font:

Font name: Times New Roman

Font size: 12

Please note that the following standard letters should be tailored and personalised to suit the type & nature of the complaint.

Remember:

- Identify what questions the complainant wants answered
- Address each item of concern clearly
- Make recommendations
- In your response delete any standard fields not required - in particular please ensure that you delete the sections that do not apply to your complainant e.g.
 - Double check title – Miss, Mrs, Mr.
 - Use the Office of the Ombudsman or Office of the Ombudsman for Children as appropriate.

SUMMARY LETTER TEMPLATE (TO BE USED WHEN ALL ISSUES WITHIN A COMPLAINT ARE RESOLVED INFORMALLY E.G. OVER TELEPHONE OR THROUGH FACE TO FACE MEETING).

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name)*,

Thank you for your *(letter/email)* dated, *(insert date)*, which was received on *(insert date)*. As per our *(telephone conversation/ meeting this morning/yesterday etc)* I would like to again offer my sincerest apologies over the *(insert detail on issue/s)*. I can appreciate your frustration and I can assure you that this is not the level of service we would wish for our service users to experience.

(Insert summary of explanation that was discussed over phone/at meeting). Again I sincerely apologise for *(insert specifics)*. As I outlined to you in our conversation *(detail of steps taken to prevent issues reoccurring)*. You agreed that you were satisfied that *(this element/these elements)* of your complaint have been addressed, however if you change your mind and require further investigation around *(this issue/these issues)* then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer

LETTER SEEKING FURTHER INFORMATION

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name),*

I refer to your letter of complaint dated, *(insert date),*, which was received on *(insert date),*.

I would be grateful if you could contact me either by telephone or in writing to clarify the following *(Insert details of where clarification is needed e.g. exact location, date of incident, etc.)* so that I can fully investigate your complaint. I would be most obliged if you could please forward these details to me within 10 working days of receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

**LETTER FOLLOWING LACK OF RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION**

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name),*

I refer to my letter(s) dated *(insert date of initial and reminder letter that have previously issued)* seeking further information in relation to *(insert detail)* and I have not yet received a response from you. (*Please note that I have also attempted to contact you unsuccessfully on the number you have provided*). *(insert where appropriate)*.

If I do not hear from you by *(insert date: 10 working days from today's date)* I will be unable to conduct an investigation due to insufficient information being provided and I will have to consider the matter closed.

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

**LETTER NOTIFYING COMPLAINANT OF COMPLAINT BEING SENT FOR
INVESTIGATION UNDER AN ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY**

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name)*,

I refer to your letter of complaint dated (insert date), and received (insert date),.
Please note that as the issue within your complaint is relation to (insert as appropriate
ie. clinical issue/HR issue etc) I have forwarded it on to (insert contact details as
appropriate) who will be in contact with you directly about their investigation.

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

**NOTIFICATION LETTER TO BE SENT TO CLINICAL STAFF WHEN A COMPLAINT
CONTAINS BOTH YSYS & A CLINICAL ELEMENT**

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

Dear *(Insert Title & name)*,

Please find attached *(insert as appropriate a complaint letter or an extract from a complaints letter)* where a complaint involves a matter(s) of clinical judgment. As per YSYS Feedback Policy 2017 such matters involving clinical judgment must be sent to the appropriate QPS/Clinical lead for investigation and response.

Please find attached report template which may be of assistance to you in your investigation. Please note that I am investigating other non-clinical issues and hope to have my response completed by *(insert as appropriate)*.

I will be attaching your final report in my overall response therefore if you anticipate any delays or would like to arrange a meeting with the complainant please let me know and I will endeavour to facilitate same.

I would be most obliged if you could have your report to me by *(insert date)*, and if you wish to discuss anything please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

REPORT TEMPLATE FOR CLINIC JUDGMENT ISSUES

Summary of Issue(s):

Investigative Process:

Findings & Recommendations

Title / Name

**STANDARD ACKNOWLEDGEMENT LETTER (NO CLINICAL ELEMENTS/ ISSUES
RESOLVED INFORMALLY)**

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name)*,

Thank you for your *(letter/email)* dated, *(insert date)*,, which was received on *(insert date)*, regarding your concerns arising from *(insert detail)*.

I will be undertaking a full investigation of the issues listed hereunder and hope to have a response to you by *(insert date 30 working days from date of acknowledgment)*.

(List and number non-clinical issues identified within complaint)

I would be grateful if you could contact me within 5 days of receipt of this acknowledgement if you do not wish for your personal information held by the HSE to be accessed by me. Please note that in my investigation the only records I may need to access are only those that relate specifically to the issues identified within your complaint. If I do not hear from you within that timeframe I will proceed with my investigation on the basis that you do not object to me accessing your personal information.

Please note that you will be kept informed of any delays that may arise in dealing with your complaint.

If on conclusion of the investigation you are not satisfied with the outcome this process then you can appeal the decision by either seeking a review within the HSE or by contacting the Office of the Ombudsman directly. Contact details are below and will of course be again outlined within my final report.

Insert

Complaint Manager

Address

Tel:

Office of the Ombudsman

18 Lr. Leeson St., Dublin 2.

Tel: +353-1-639 5600

LoCall: 1-890-223030(from outside 01 area)

Fax: +353-1- 6395674

E-mail: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

May need to remove this paragraph in very serious cases

Thank you again for taking the time to bring your concerns to our attention. We welcome all feedback as this provides us with a valuable insight into our services from the service user perspective and can inform service improvement.

If you require further clarification on anything then please don't hesitate to contact me on the number below.

Please note that the details of your complaint will be recorded on the HSE's Complaints Management System (electronic system on which all HSE complaints are recorded).

Yours sincerely

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer

**COMPLEX ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER WHERE COMPLAINT CONTAINS BOTH
YSYS AND A CLINICAL ELEMENT**

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert Name)*,

Thank you for your letter dated *(insert date)*,, regarding your concerns arising from *(insert details)*.

1) To be used if any of the issues are resolved informally.

As per our *(insert as appropriate e.g. telephone conversation/meeting yesterday/ this morning/last week)* I would like to again offer my sincerest apologies over the *(insert the specific issue/s that were resolved informally)*. I can appreciate your frustration and I can assure you that this is not the level of service we would wish for our service users.

As I explained *(insert explanation of what went wrong and what has been agreed to be done to resolve issue)*. Again I sincerely apologise that *(insert details)*. As I outlined to you *(insert as appropriate this morning/yesterday/last week on the phone/at the meeting)*, *(insert action that has been taken)*. You agreed that you were satisfied that this element of your complaint has been addressed, however if you change your mind and require further investigation around this then please don't hesitate to contact me.

2) to be used when the complaint contains both YSYS and clinical elements

In relation to *(insert details of clinical issue/s)* outlined within your complaint please note that *this/these* are clinical issue/s have been referred to *(insert appropriate clinical person)* for investigation and response. I hope to include this response with my final report which will be sent to you outlining my findings and recommendations.

General Content of Acknowledgment Letter (please remove this heading from final letter).

I will be undertaking a full investigation of the issues listed hereunder and hope to have a response to you by *(insert date 30 working days from date of acknowledgment)*.

(List and number non-clinical issues identified within complaint)

I would be grateful if you could contact me within 5 days of receipt of this acknowledgement if you do not wish for your personal information held by the HSE to be accessed by me. Please note that in my investigation, the only records I may need to access are those that relate specifically to the issues identified within your complaint. If I do not hear from you within that timeframe I will proceed with my investigation on the basis that you do not object to me accessing your personal information.

Please note that you will be kept informed of any delays that may arise in dealing with your complaint.

If on conclusion of the investigation you are not satisfied with the outcome this process then you can appeal the decision by either seeking a review within the HSE or by contacting the Office of the Ombudsman directly. Contact details are below and will of course be again outlined within my final report.

Insert

Complaint Manager

Address

Tel:

Office of the Ombudsman

18 Lr. Leeson St., Dublin 2.

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E-mail: ombudsman@ombudsman.ie

May need to remove this paragraph in very serious cases

Thank you again for taking the time to bring your concerns to our attention. We welcome all feedback as this provides us with a valuable insight into our services from the service user perspective and can inform service improvement.

If you require further clarification on anything then please don't hesitate to contact me on the number below.

Please note that the details of your complaint will be recorded on the HSE's Complaints Management System (electronic system on which all HSE complaints are recorded).

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

**LETTER REQUESTING CONSENT TO INVESTIGATE A COMPLAINT WHERE THE
COMPLAINT IS MADE BY A THIRD PARTY**

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name)*,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your *(letter/email)* dated, *(insert date)*, which was received on *(insert date)*.

Before I can proceed with the investigation of your complaint on behalf of *(insert name of person)* I would be much obliged if you could forward their signed consent within 10 working days.

If you wish to discuss this matter please do not hesitate to contact me *(insert phone number/email)*.

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

LETTER NOTIFYING DELAY

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name)*,

I refer to your letter of complaint dated *(insert date)*, and acknowledged by me on *(insert date)*. I wish to apologise that there has been a delay in responding to your complaint by *(insert original response date)*. This delay is due to *(insert reason for delay)*. You can now expect a response by *(insert date)*.

I again apologise for any inconvenience caused. If you have any queries in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me *(insert telephone/email)*.

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

**LETTER TO BE SENT TO COMPLAINANT WHO HAS WITHDRAWN THEIR
COMPLAINT**

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name),*

Further to your recent contact by [\(phone/email/letter\)](#) I note that you no longer wish to pursue your complaint. I now consider this complaint withdrawn and closed.

If I can be of any further assistance in the future please do not hesitate to contact me [\(insert phone number/email\)](#).

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.

COVER LETTER FOR FINAL REPORT

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(insert date),

(Insert name and complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name)*,

I wish to inform you that I have completed my investigation into your complaint dated *(insert date)*, which I received on the *(insert date)*. I now attach for your information a copy of my report outlining the investigation process and my findings and recommendations.

If you wish to have any matter or issue clarified please do not hesitate to contact me on *(insert contact number)* or e-mail me at *(insert e-mail)*.

Please note that each of the recommendations outlined within my report will be sent to the Accountable Officer, *(insert name & title)* who will within 30 working days of receiving this report, notify to you in writing, of the steps being taken to implement the recommendations made. If for any reason the Accountable Officer decides to amend/reject any of these recommendations, *he/she* must set out clearly in writing the reasons for doing so.

Again I would like to sincerely apologise for *(insert reason)*. I can assure you that this is not the level of service we would wish to provide.

Please note that you will also find a separate report in Appendix *(insert number)* from the *(insert Clinical person name & title)* in relation to *(her/his)* investigation around the clinical element of your complaint i.e. *(outline clinical issue(s))*. Any further queries around this element of your complaint should be directed to the *(insert clinical person's name)*.

If you are dissatisfied with my recommendation(s) you are entitled to seek a review of same by writing, within 30 working days, to either the HSE Complaints Manager (details below) who will assign a Reviewer to your case or to the Office of the

Ombudsman, setting out in writing the grounds for your dissatisfaction with my recommendations.

(Insert Complaints Manager's Name & Address)

Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.

Tel: +353-1-6395600 LoCall: 1890 22 30 30 (from outside 01 area)

Fax: +353-1-6395674

E-mail: ombudsman@ombudsman.ie

Office of the Ombudsman for Children, Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1.

Tel: +353-1-8656800 LoCall: 1890 654654 (from outside 01 area)

E-mail: oco@oco.ie

Yours sincerely,

(insert name)

Complaints Officer.

cc Accountable Officer

Enc Complaints Officer Report

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

**COMPLAINTS OFFICER
REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

REFERENCE NUMBER (INSERT NUMBER)

Table of contents

1. Summary of the complaint
2. Informally Resolved Matters *(Remove if appropriate)*
3. Clinical Issues *(Remove if appropriate)*
4. The investigative process
5. Findings & Recommendations
6. Learning
7. Recommendation summary
8. Appendices

1. Summary of the complaint

*In this section give a brief summary of the complaint (**Who** made the complaint?, **What** is the complaint about?, **Where** did the alleged incident happen?, **When** did it happen?) and the key issues to be examined: For Example:*

(Insert service user's name) wrote to the HSE on *(insert date)*, regarding *his/her* **complaint**. *The complaint was received by the HSE on the (insert date),.*

The key issues of concern outlined by the service user were:

(Insert detail as appropriate)

(Remove the following if no specific questions asked) The service user has raised specific questions in relation to these issues:

(Insert detail as appropriate)

The above issues have been summarised as follows for the rest of this report:

List and number the issues outlined within the complaint. They may come under headings such as:

Issue 1: Staff Behaviour and attitudes: insert detail

Issue 2: Environmental issues – insert detail

Issue 3: Service Issues – insert detail

Issue 4: Clinical Matters – insert detail

Issue 5: Communication – insert detail

2. Informally Resolved Matters *(Remove this heading if not appropriate)*

Issue number: *(Insert number)(insert detail)* : As outlined in the Acknowledgment letter, a *(phone call/meeting)* was made to service user on the *(insert date)*, where this issue was discussed and resolved informally. *(Insert any agreed action as a result of meeting/phone call, for example: Sincere apologies were issued to the service user and an _____ plan has been put in place to prevent such events occurring in the future).*

The service user has been informed in previous correspondence of their right to request a further investigation of these informally resolved matters if they so wish.

3. Clinical Issues *(Remove this heading if not appropriate)*

The Health Act 2004 defines clinical judgement as

‘a decision made or opinion formed in connection with the diagnosis, care or treatment of a patient’.

Issue number 5. Clinical Matters – (insert detail) This issue has been referred to the (insert name & title of clinical person) for investigation.

A separate response is included with this report See Appendix 2.

4. The investigative process

.

List complaint issues below (for example)

- Issue 1: Staff Behaviour and attitudes – give detail*
- Issue 2: Service Issues – give detail*
- Issue 3: Service Issue – give detail*
- Issue 4: Communication – give detail*

Insert a description of the investigation process

Issue 1: *(insert detail) – Investigation of this issue encompassed the following:*
(insert detail)

Issue 2 : *-(insert detail) Investigation of this issue encompassed the following:*
(insert detail)

Issue 3: *-(insert detail) Investigation of this issue encompassed the following:*
(insert detail)

Issue 4: *-(insert detail) Investigation of this issue encompassed the following:*
(insert detail)

5. Findings & Recommendations

- *Outline the findings of your investigation / give a summary of the outcome of the investigation. Where relevant answer the following questions:*
 - *How did the incident happen?*
 - *Why did it happen?*
- *State whether you acknowledge any fault on behalf of the HSE – apologise where the HSE is at fault.*

Issue 1: *(insert detail)* – *Investigation of this issue encompassed*
(insert detail)

Finding

Below is an example of wording that could be used in a situation where you are unable to uphold a complaint due to lack of evidence to support the complaint:

Example ‘I am unable to uphold your complaint in relation to this specific issue as I am unable to reach a determination one way or the other on the matter. I would like to emphasise however that this does not mean that I do not accept your version of events, merely that it is not possible to reach a conclusion on this issue.’

Finding: *This complaint is upheld/not upheld.*

Recommendation –

(insert recommendations)

Issue 2: *(insert detail)* – *Investigation of this issue encompassed*
(insert detail)

Finding: *(insert detail) Complaint Upheld/not Upheld*

Recommendation: *(insert detail)*

6. Learning *(insert detail on any learning identified as a result of complaint)*

For example:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for taking the time to contact us with your concerns. I want to assure you that the investigation and recommendations outlined above has resulted in important learning for the Centre and subsequently will lead to service improvement.

7. Recommendation Summary

List detail of all recommendations below:

Signed: _____
Complaints Officer

Date: _____

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 Clinical Report

LETTER TO ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER OUTLINING RECOMMENDATIONS MADE

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(Insert RE: Complainant Name)

(insert date),

(Insert name and Address of Accountable Officer)

Dear *(Insert Accountable Officer's name)*,

In line with YSYS Policy 2017 I recently undertook an investigation into a complaint made by the above named service user. As a result I have made a number of recommendations regarding your service area. The relevant portion of the investigation report, including recommendations made, is enclosed.

In accordance with Your Service Your Say Feedback Policy, you are required to notify both the service user and myself of your intention to accept or reject these recommendations. If you are accepting these recommendations you must complete the attached action plan template for each recommendation listed. If you reject any of the recommendations you must outline reasons for same.

The final report went to the complainant on *(insert date)*, therefore your Action Plan is due 30 working days from this date. Enclosed is the Action Plan template which should be completed.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me,

Yours Sincerely,

(Insert name)

Complaints Officer

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

<u>Action Plan Template</u>					
No.	Detail or Recommendation	Accountable Officer	Approved or Rejected	Date of Implementation	Outline Reason for Rejection
1					
2					
3					

RESPONSE TO CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED AFTER A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN CLOSED

(Insert complaints officer's address)

(Insert HSE reference number)

(Insert date)

(Insert complainant's address)

Dear *(Insert complainant's title and name)*,

Thank you for your *(letter/email)* dated, *(Insert date)*, which was received on *(Insert date)*. This complaint has already been investigated and a response was issued on *(insert date)*. I am, therefore, not in a position to carry out any further investigation of this matter.

If you are dissatisfied with my recommendation(s) you are entitled to seek a review of same by writing, within 30 working days, to either the HSE Complaints Manager (details below) who will assign a Reviewer to your case or to the Office of the Ombudsman, setting out in writing the grounds for your dissatisfaction with my recommendations.

(Insert Complaints Manager's Name & Address)

Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.

Tel: +353-1-6395600

LoCall: 1890 22 30 30 (from outside 01 area)

Fax: +353-1-6395674

E-mail: ombudsman@ombudsman.ie

Office of the Ombudsman for Children, Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1.

Tel: +353-1-8656800

LoCall: 1890 654654 (from outside 01 area)

E-mail: oco@oco.ie

(Please personalise as appropriate. Ombudsman for Children to be used in cases where complainant is under 18 or an adult wishes to make a complaint on behalf of a child under 18.)

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name),

Complaints Officer.