# Sample letter 2: Events more than 12 months old, impractical to investigate

Use this sample letter if you need to decline to look at a complaint where:

* the events took place more than 12 months ago
* you decide there is a good reason for the delay
* you have decided that it would not now be practical to investigate the complaint because of the time elapsed.

Dear [insert name]

Thank you for your complaint about [insert details of complaint].

As I explained when we spoke, there is a time limit for bringing complaints to us and unfortunately your complaint fell outside that time limit.

When we spoke, you explained that [include explanation (and any evidence) given by service user for the delay in complaining]. I understand and accept this explanation and believe this is a very good reason that you did not complain to us sooner.

I have carefully considered whether it would be possible [X months/years] later to investigate your complaint and provide you with the answers and outcome you seek [include details of the outcome sought if applicable].

Unfortunately, I have decided that this would not be possible, and we would be very unlikely to deliver the outcome you are seeking. This is because [give explanation of how you have considered what would be involved in investigating the complaint and why you feel that it would not be practical to investigate and reach a satisfactory conclusion].

I hope you can see that we have considered this carefully. If you are unhappy with our decision not to look into your complaint and would like to take the matter further, you can contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman makes final decisions on complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS, government departments and some other public organisations. Their service is free for everyone.

There is also a time limit for making your complaint to the Ombudsman, so you should do this as soon as possible. To take a complaint to the Ombudsman, or to find out more about the service, go to [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk) or call 0345 015 4033.

Yours sincerely