

How advocacy can help with a health service complaint

FACTSHEET #6

The Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service is a free and independent service for people who want to make a complaint about healthcare commissioned or provided by the NHS in England.

The Process

- We will tailor a service to meet your personal needs and requirements, This can involve:
 - Providing information
 - Discussing options
 - Drafting letters
 - Making relevant telephone calls
 - Accompanying to meetings
- We are funded and commissioned by the Local Authority.
- We are available Monday to Friday 09.00 hrs to 17.00hrs. Calls will first be answered by our Contact and Support Team who will then transfer the call through to your Advocate.
- We will try and be available to speak with you when you need us. If we are not available immediately, we will contact you as soon as we can.
- We offer a 24 hour, 7 days a week message facility so you can leave a message with us at any time and request a call-back at a time convenient to you.

What your Independent Health Complaints Advocate CAN do

- Discuss your complaint/issues/concerns in detail. We will discuss the complaints procedure with you and advise you of the best way to proceed.
- Discuss the outcomes you can achieve through making an NHS Complaint – We will make you aware of what you can and cannot achieve through the process. The achievable outcomes are usually:
 - An apology
 - An explanation
 - A service improvement
 - A change in procedure
- Discuss what advocacy support you require – We will tailor this to your needs.
- Draft a complaint letter with/for you – Using information provided by you regarding your complaint.
- Help with local resolution meetings. Local resolution meetings are often offered by NHS services for you to attend and discuss your complaint with the relevant people. We can explain what will happen at these meetings and can come with you if you would like us to.

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What your Independent Health Complaints Advocate CANNOT do

- Provide personal opinion – We cannot advise whether a complaint is valid or not. If you do decide that you wish to proceed with a complaint, we will support you through the process.
- Investigate complaints – We are there in a supporting role only and cannot get involved with an investigation.
- Assist with complaints about private medical care – We offer a service that supports NHS complaints only.
- Attend other meetings – Regrettably, we cannot support you during meetings that are not about discussing your complaint.
- Give medical or legal advice – The correct professional advice must be sought instead.
- Assist with claims for clinical negligence – This is not one of the outcomes that the NHS Complaints Procedure can provide. You would need to seek legal advice instead.



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