

How advocacy can help with a health service complaint

The Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service is a free, independent service that supports people who wish to make a complaint about NHS-commissioned or NHS-provided healthcare in England.

We will provide a service tailored to your individual needs and requirements. This may include:

- One-to-one support throughout the complaints process
- Help with writing letters
- Providing information and guidance on the complaints process
- Assistance preparing and accompanying you to meetings
- Support with understanding responses from the NHS and deciding on next steps

We are funded and commissioned by the Local Authority.

We are available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Calls will first be answered by our Contact and Support Team, who will then transfer the call through to your Advocate.

We will try to 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 for you.



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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.

What your Independent Health Complaints Advocate CANNOT do

- **Provide personal opinions** – We cannot advise on whether a complaint is valid. If you choose to proceed, we will support you throughout the process.
- **Investigate complaints** – Our role is purely supportive; we do not carry out investigations.
- **Assist with complaints about private medical care** – Our service is limited to NHS complaints only.
- **Attend other meetings** – We can only support you in meetings specifically related to discussing your complaint.
- **Give medical or legal advice** – Professional advice should be sought for medical or legal matters.
- **Assist with claims for clinical negligence** – The NHS Complaints Procedure does not cover this. Legal advice is required if you wish to pursue a claim.



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