

## Introduction

Healthwatch West Sussex Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS) seeks to provide a quality service to those in need of NHS complaints advocacy support on an equitable basis.

The Equal Opportunities Policy details our commitment to equality of access and ensuring no person is treated less favourably than others on any grounds.

In offering IHCAS, which is free at the point of access, Healthwatch West Sussex needs to ensure limited resources are allocated appropriately to ensure fair provision of service.

## Protocol

The following must be met in order for any referral to be accepted:

- 1) Service specific access criteria
- 2) Clear need for advocacy identified
- 3) Referral pathway followed, from Helpdesk through to allocation and advocacy support
- 4) Individual receiving services commits to IHCAS terms of engagement, and consents to the sharing of information, as set out in the Service Agreement.

The service aims to provide people with a level of advocacy support which is agreed with them. Advocates are required to take every opportunity to promote self-management and empowerment.

Once agreed the advocacy support has been offered and if accepted the service has been delivered, the referral is closed. As complaints can be a multi-tiered process, people can re-refer themselves to the service.

## Re-referrals

Healthwatch West Sussex IHCAS can accept re-referrals, as individuals may present with continuing NHS complaints advocacy needs.

IHCAS *may* decide not to accept a re-referral in the following circumstances:

- IHCAS has previously support two or more complaints for this individual, within the last 5 years
- Individual previously supported for 50 casework hours
- Another organisation is able to offer appropriate support
- Individual is able to self-advocate regarding this issues
- Serious risks have emerged and cannot be overcome, despite risk planning

- All rights to appeal and other options have been exhausted, e.g. the complaint in questions has been reviewed by the Ombudsman
- Progress impossible or highly unlikely
- Specific advocacy services has terminated/funding unavailable for this work
- Unresolvable conflict of interest
- Specific request cannot be met.

In the instance that a re-referral is not accepted, the following will occur:

- Decision taken by Service Manager
- Full explanation provided to individual and/or referrer
- Signposting to other organisations offered

Healthwatch West Sussex also reviews existing casework on a regular basis. Alongside other factors and outcomes, the above can also be used as a guide whilst exploring case closure.

v0.1

*For Board Approval May 2017*