

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

Impact & Performance Report

July – September 2023 (Q2)

Supporting residents of West Sussex with their NHS Complaints – providing advocacy in the form of listening to the needs of the client and providing a voice for the individual to be heard.

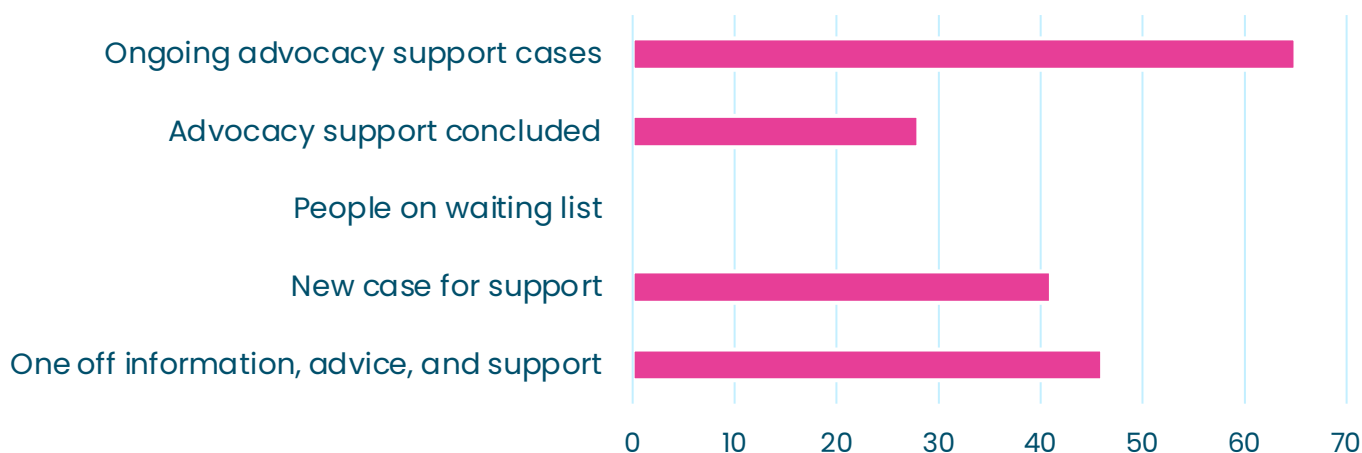


Our service

In recent months, IHCAS has seen a higher demand on the service with new complaints and requests for support. The service is still seeing increasing delays in getting complaint response letters and resolution meetings from the local acute hospital trusts in West Sussex but also experiencing delays from providers outside of our area.

IHCAS has seen a rise in complex complaints that require additional time and empathy, especially when supporting clients when their complaint involves the death of a loved one.

We have also seen a rise in complaints about delays for procedures. Such complaints are difficult to manage as the outcome is ultimately for the procedure to go ahead, but this can be something outside the provider's control.



Last quarter comparison

	Key performance metrics for current and previous quarter	
	Q1	Q2
One off information and advice	40	46
New cases for support	35	42
People on waiting list	0	0
Advocacy support concluded	36	28
Ongoing advocacy support cases	53	66



Feedback from people we have supported

A West Sussex resident requested advocacy support following the birth of her baby:

“I would like to thank you for all your help on the matter and also for being so patient with us on this stressful journey.”

Following completion of a complaint that was submitted to the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), the IHCAS client provided feedback:

“Thank you so much for all your support without your support this result would not have been possible.”

After attending a Local resolution meeting with an advocacy client, one of our advocates received the following feedback:

“I could not have done that meeting without your support, well the whole process actually, I wouldn't have known what to do.”

Impact

Between July and September 2023, our advocates have supported West Sussex residents in the following ways:

- We are supporting a client following the death of her husband. With 4 providers involved in the complaint process and following receipt of the complaint response letters, support is being provided including helping with further letters to the providers and attending meetings.
- Back in 2019, a client requested support to make a complaint about the misdiagnosis of her skin cancer. The GP had failed to follow the NICE guidance (7-point checklist) and her local acute hospital had stopped her skin checks. Following a local resolution meeting with the GP Practice they confirmed the practice would now follow the NICE guidance and the acute hospital would re-instate the skin cancer checks. At the end of the complaints local process and with our support, the client submitted her complaint to PHSO and finally in 2023 her complaint was partially upheld.
- Two clients have recently received their complaint response letters and were disappointed with their replies. Having discussed their options with their advocate, one client requested a local resolution meeting which was accepted by the Trust and then later withdrawn. Still wanting to have their voice heard, the advocate and client submitted a further letter to the Trust and are currently awaiting a response. The other client decided having a local resolution meeting was not in their best interest and with support sent in a second letter. Both clients felt their complaints have not been fully addressed.
- One of our advocates has supported a client to make two complaints about cancer delays and missed diagnosis. These are ongoing and the advocate will continue to support them throughout the whole process.
- After receiving a response letter regarding incorrect and inadequate communication from a Local Hospital Trust that a client was unhappy with, one of our advocates supported this client to submit an application to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) for further investigation.
- One of our advocates has made a complaint to the PHSO about the standard of service the advocate and their client has received, after the investigator repeatedly failed to communicate in a timely manner.

Case Study

Back in August 2021, 'S' (client name initialled for anonymity) became aware of comments written in her medical notes by staff at her local acute hospital that she was very concerned about. Having requested advocacy support from her local Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS) and having already submitted a formal complaint, an advocate made contact and confirmed support would be provided once the complaint response letter was received. S also had another complaint logged with the same Trust about her care and treatment from when she was an inpatient.

The complaint response letters were received in October 2021. Following a review of the letters, and still not being satisfied with the Trust's response and the comments still being on her medical records, a local resolution meeting (LRM) was requested. S requested a healthcare passport to ensure all her complex needs are met when she is admitted to their hospital.

There was a delay in arranging the LRM as staff members were not available. However, the Trust sent over the amended medical notes. S was still very unhappy with her updated medical notes as the comments had been crossed out but were still visible, with no reference that the statements were incorrect. Advice was obtained from the Information Commissioner's office about S's medical notes. Finally, the LRM took place in March 2022. The consultant attended the meeting and with agreement from S, crossed out the comments that had been made by his staff in S's records and clearly wrote "factually incorrect" and signed the records. It was also agreed that there was a need to create a Healthcare Passport for S giving staff clear instructions on her admission to hospital. This would include names of the consultants that she was under and clear guidance on medication and a ward admission.

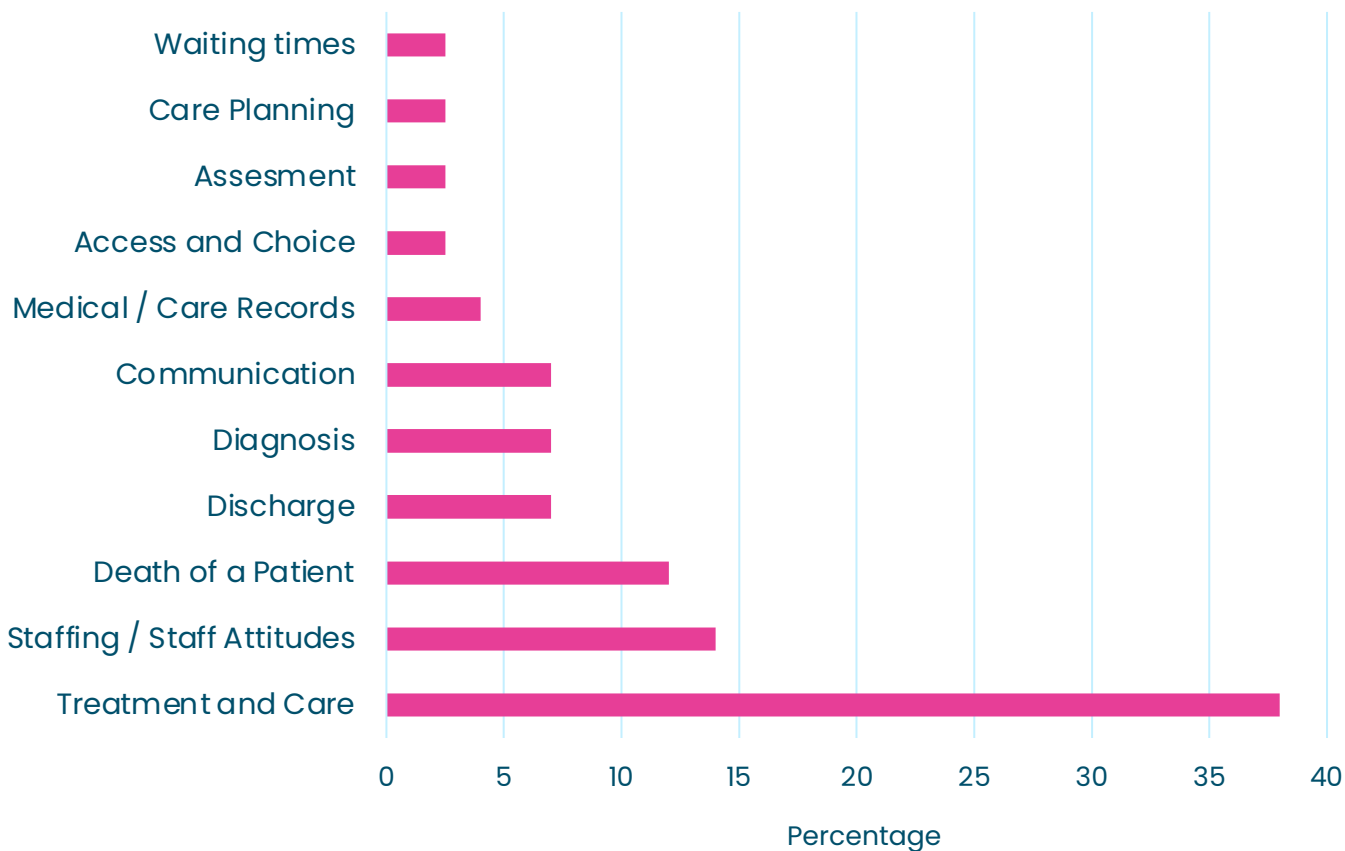
Over the following months there was a lot of communication about what was going to be put in the passport and with the Trust moving to electronic records there was a delay. In August 2023, the Healthcare Passport was complete and active on their system at the hospital and a copy supplied to S for her to use.

Feedback from S:

"Having a Healthwatch Advocate support me preparing for my complaint is greatly appreciated. She was able to advise in what I needed to do and support me at my LRM when it took place. I now have the Healthcare Passport in place but until I need to be admitted we won't know if this is of benefit.

I strongly believe I wouldn't have got the same outcome without my Healthwatch Advocate being there. I very much recommend Healthwatch to other people."

Q2 Complaint Themes



Treatment and Care is the most complained about subject area in quarter 2, followed by staff/staffing attitudes and death of a patient.

healthwatch
West Sussex

w: healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

t: 0300 012 0122

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