

# Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

## Impact & Performance Report

April – June 2025 (Q1)

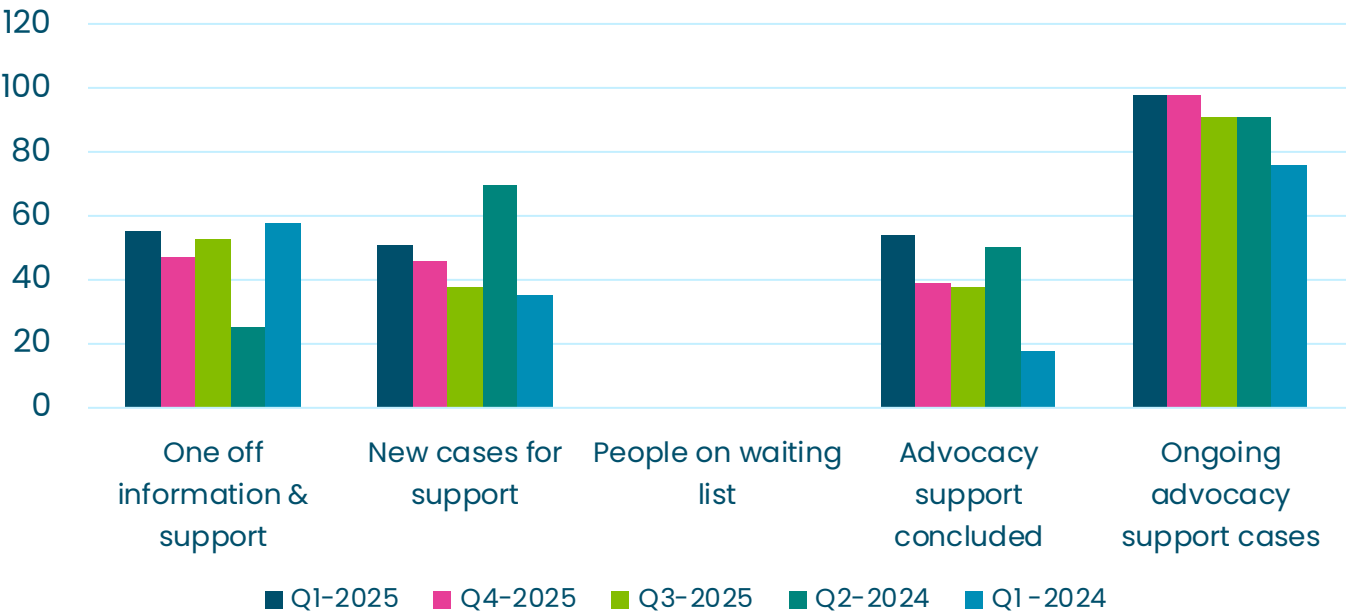
Supporting residents of West Sussex with their NHS Complaints – providing advocacy in the form of listening to the needs of the client and providing a voice for the individual to be heard.



# Our service

Quarter 1 2025 data shows that we continue to maintain a high level of ongoing advocacy support. There has been a significant rise in the time it takes a complaint to be opened until it has been concluded. Complex cases can take years to be resolved. As an example, a case that was opened in April 2021, is still with the ombudsman awaiting a final decision. The IHCAS team conducted a successful case audit this quarter and proactively streamlined the caseload by closing inactive cases. We re-open a case if a client makes contact again.

## Advocacy – one year comparison



## Last quarter comparison

	Key performance metrics for current and previous quarter	
	Q4	Q1
One off information and advice (Tier 1 Support)	47	55
New cases for support	46	51
People on waiting list	0	0
Advocacy support concluded	39	54
Ongoing advocacy support cases	98	95

## Impact and support for residents this quarter

### Examples of Supporting without Needing to Raise a Formal Complaint

- A resident of West Sussex moved GP Practice and found that some of their medical information did not transfer. They contacted the IHCAS team for support and the advocate contacted both GP Practices. With good communication with both practice managers, the issue was resolved quickly, providing a quick resolution for the client.
- An advocate assisted a client getting a call back from the Cardiology department at their local acute hospital which really helped put their mind at rest.

### Working with NHS Trusts to Improve Accessibility and Communication

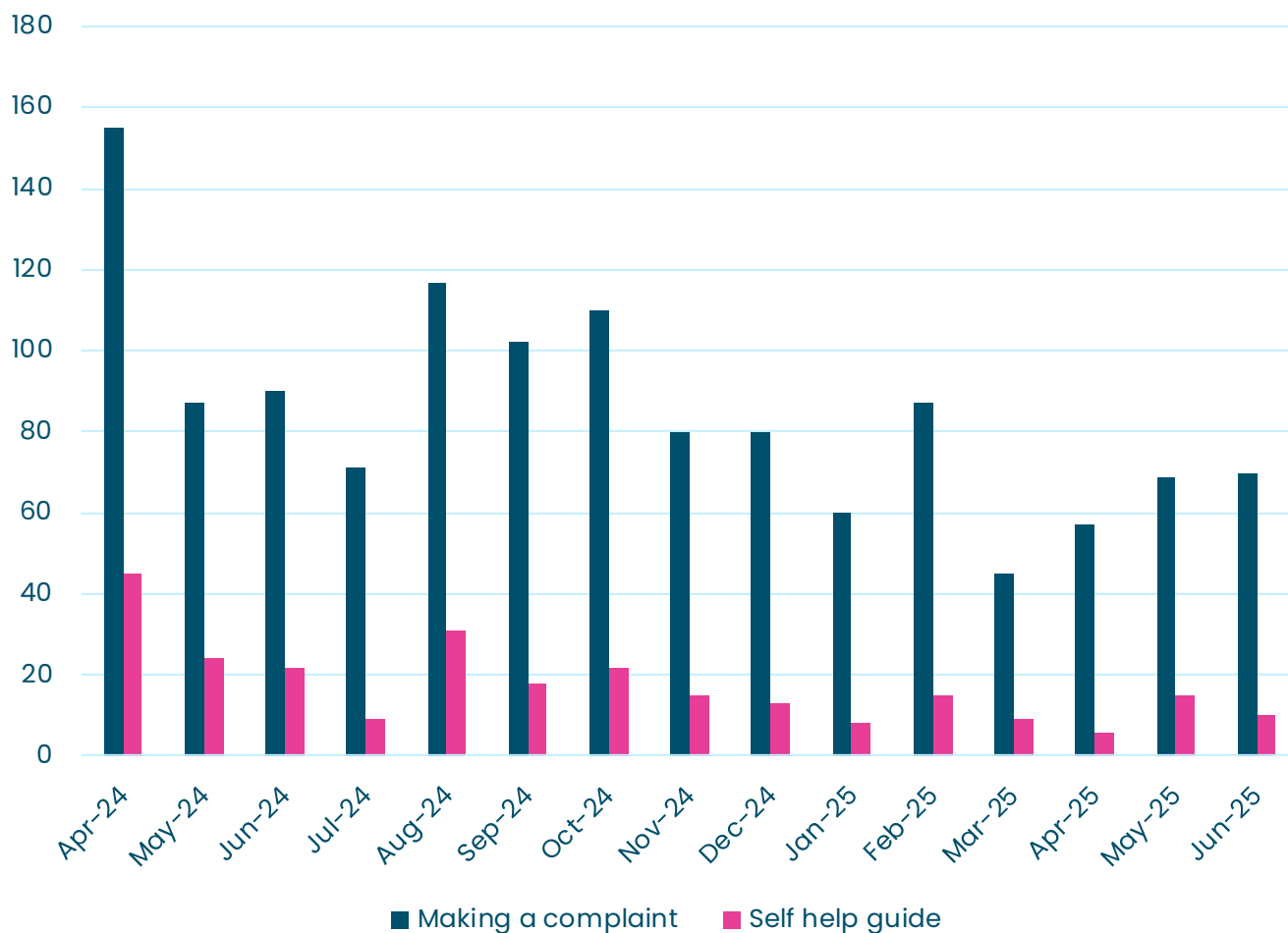
- A meeting took place with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to highlight concerns about their new online system for requesting medical records (subject access request) following feedback from an IHCAS client, a request has been made for the Trust to create a PDF file.
- An advocate attended a local resolution meeting at an acute hospital trust about a misdiagnosed hip fracture. This highlighted several communication issues between the Orthopaedic department and MSK.

### Helping to Request Healthcare Information

- Following the tragic loss of her son, a client contacted Healthwatch West Sussex for support in reaching her GP after a report was requested by the NHS Business Authority. With the help of an advocate, the report was successfully received.



## Website views in the past year & case study follow up



The above data shows the number of people seeking help with making a complaint and although this is variable, the continued access demonstrates the importance of having good quality information available to West Sussex residents.

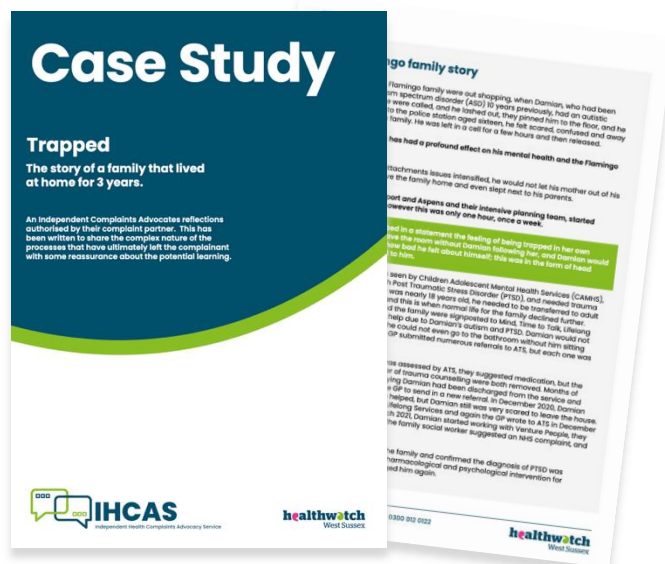
### View for IHCAS case study: Trapped

Website:  
30 views

Facebook:  
Views 369  
Reach 218  
Interactions 10  
Link clicks 14

Instagram:  
Views 34  
Accounts reached 21  
Likes 4

LinkedIn:  
Impressions 21  
Engagements 6  
Reactions 5



## Challenges faced during the NHS Complaints Process

### Delays in the Parliamentary Health Ombudsman Service (PHSO)

- On 1st April, the PHSO confirmed that there was no Ombudsman in post, which resulted in delays to some complaints. [Paula Sussex](#) has since been appointed, and the PHSO has now resumed normal operations. Two complaints we submitted on behalf of West Sussex residents were affected by this delay.
- The PHSO still have a wait time of about seven months – one of the advocates has seven cases that are waiting to be allocated to a case worker.
- One case currently with PHSO was opened in April 2021 and is still under investigation with PHSO.
- Another case opened in April 2021 has been with PHSO since September 2023 and was resolved in June 2025. The trust involved has three months to take the actions that have been instructed by PHSO.

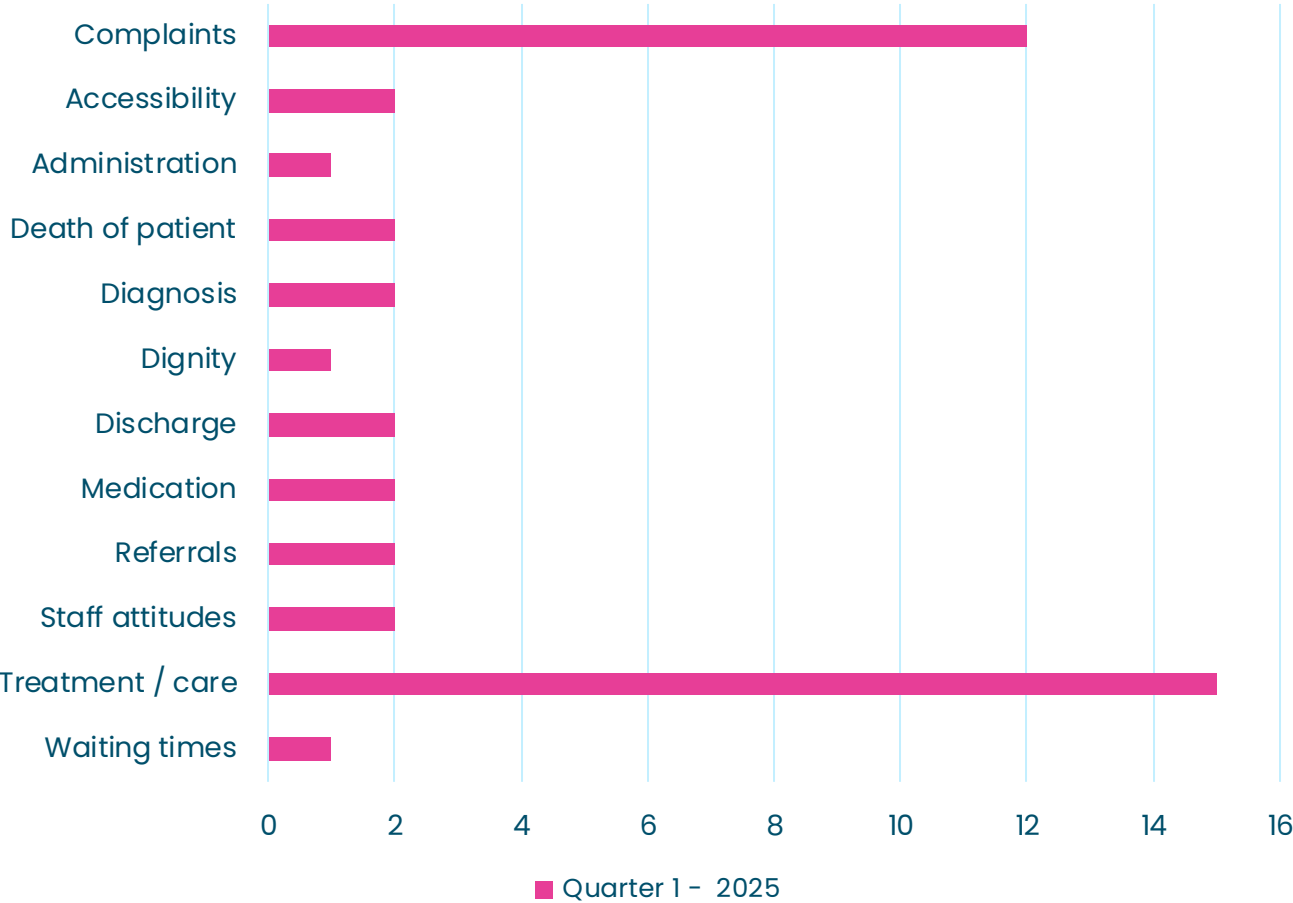
## Training with West Sussex County Council – Working with people that self-neglect

Two advocates attended a self-neglect training course delivered by West Sussex County Council. The course was highly valuable, offering clear guidance on the distinction between self-neglect and safeguarding.

As part of the training, various scenarios were explored, requiring participants to assess each situation and determine the most appropriate course of action. While some individuals may require an urgent safeguarding referral, others who are choosing to self-neglect may be better supported through signposting to relevant services.

This training is especially useful for the IHCAS team, who often support clients in crisis. Gaining a clearer understanding of when urgent action is required empowers the team to respond with greater precision and effectiveness.

# Q1 Complaint Themes



Once again this quarter, the majority of complaints we received were related to treatment and care. However, for the first time, we are also seeing an increase in complaints specifically about how complaints are being handled.

This includes individuals seeking support to have their complaints acknowledged – despite the NHS guideline that complaints should be acknowledged within three working days, we are seeing a growing number of cases where this is not occurring.

Additionally, people are reaching out for help when they do not receive a response to their complaint within the agreed timeframe. In such cases, the advocacy service often intervenes to contact the relevant organisation for an update on when the response letter will be issued.

These delays in the complaints process can cause unnecessary stress for those who have already taken the difficult step of raising a concern.

## Case Study – Don't put it off!

*Lucy\* has kindly agreed to share her story in the hope that others won't have to experience the same sense of helplessness she felt when trying to support a parent in need.*

Lucy's mum Anna, was an independent woman who lived alone and was receiving regular wound care from the local district nursing team following a fall. As Anna's health began to deteriorate, Lucy found herself increasingly concerned—but without her mother's formal consent, she was unable to speak with the GP or get involved in her care. This left her feeling powerless. After another fall, Anna was admitted to her local hospital, where she sadly passed away.

Lucy wants to urge others not to delay when it comes to getting consent to speak on behalf of a parent or loved one. If you're concerned, trust your instincts. Don't assume everything is under control—sometimes pride, fear, or confusion may prevent a loved one from asking for help. If something doesn't feel right, step in. Acting early could make all the difference.

**[Read Lucy's full story visit our website](#)**

### Feedback from Lucy

Dear Advocate

It would not have been possible for me to find my way through the maze without you. Your work is so important, and I appreciate everything you do.

Thank you so much for your support kindness and wisdom.



\*Please note names have been changed due to confidentiality.





THANK  
YOU



## Feedback from people we have supported

- Many thanks for your help over the years, it's much appreciated.
- A very big thank you for raising my case during the meeting as well and making sure my request got processed. Just another excellent example of how lucky I am to have you as my advocate :) and thank you again for being amazing!
- Thank you so much for your time in putting this information together for my client. I have gone over this with him, and he has found it helpful and will be looking into some of what you have shared with me. I really appreciate the time you have given for this.
- You have worked so hard for me and my family, we really do appreciate everything you have done for us.
- Thank you for all your hard work in sorting out my medical records. The majority of them have been restored. This is great news. I am so pleased you managed to make mountains move in this area, as there was no response from anyone. Without your service I would probably be banging my head against the wall. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me.





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Healthwatch West Sussex  
works with [Help & Care](https://www.helpandcare.org.uk) to  
provide its statutory activities