

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

Impact & Performance Report

October - December 2025 (Q3)

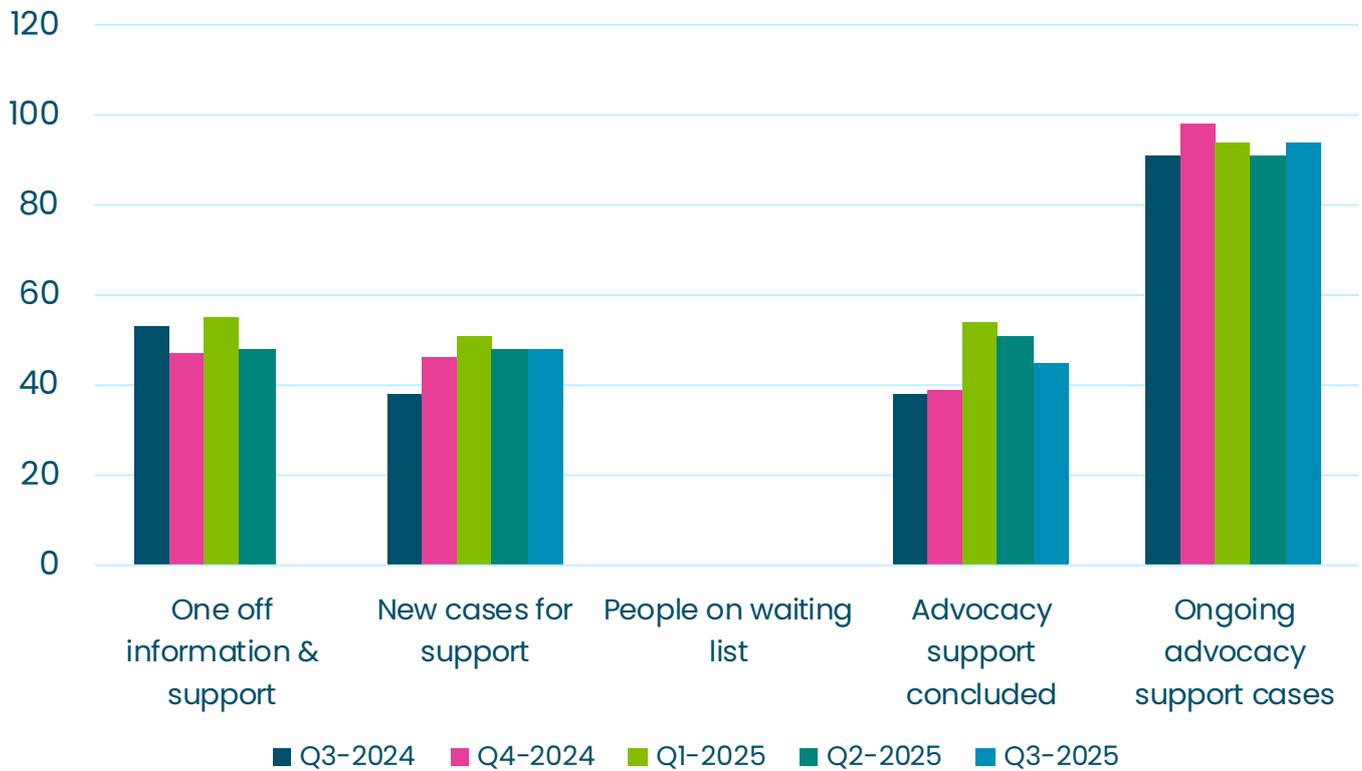
Supporting residents of West Sussex with their NHS Complaints – providing advocacy in the form of listening to the needs of the client and providing a voice for the individual to be heard.



Our service

Quarter 3 2025 data shows that we continue to maintain a high level of ongoing advocacy support. Complaint resolution continues to take an extended period of time due to the pressure the NHS and complaints departments continue to be under.

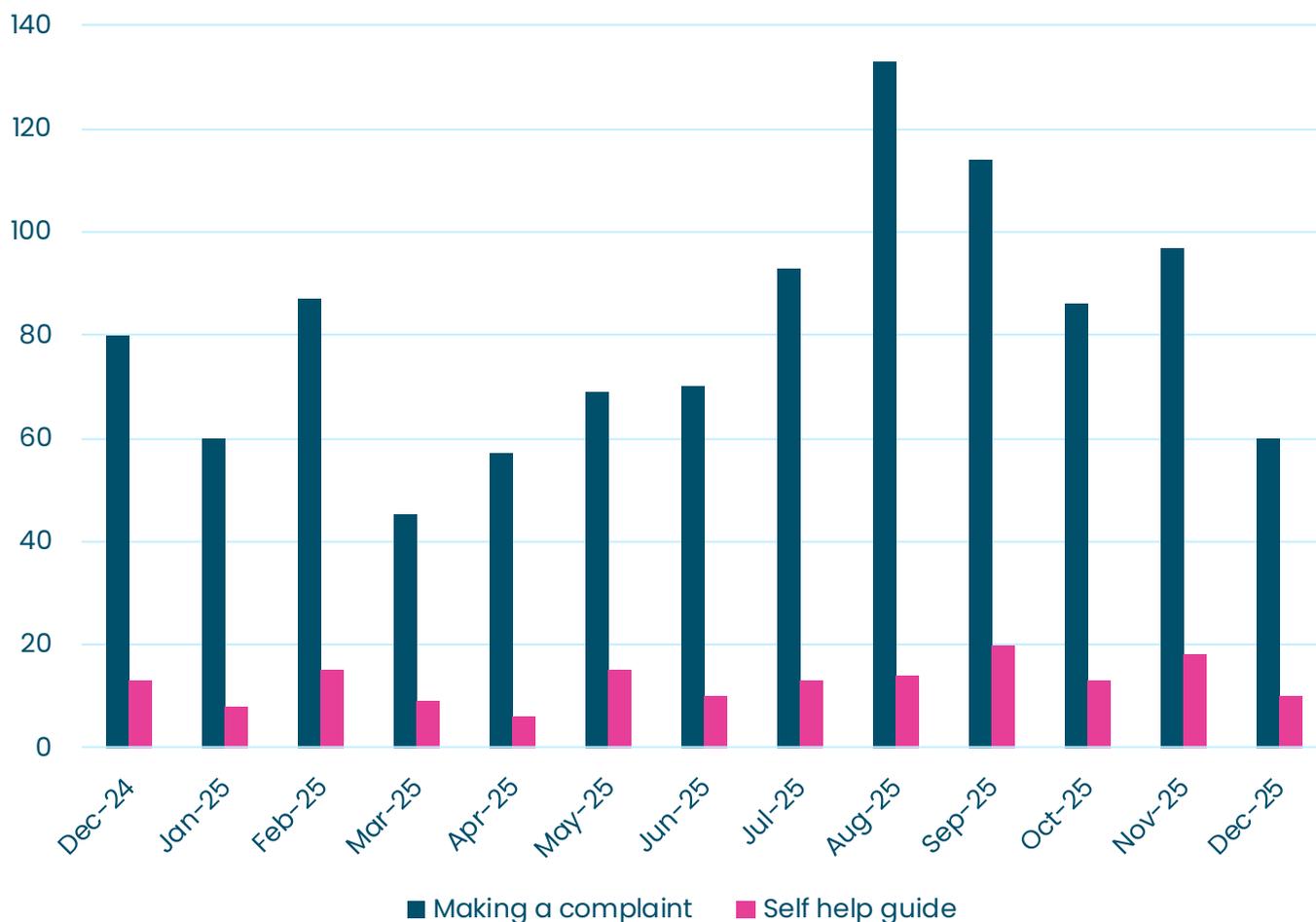
Advocacy – one year comparison



Last quarter comparison

	Key performance metrics for current and previous quarter	
	Q2	Q3
One off information and advice (Tier 1 Support)	62	65
New cases for support	48	48
People on waiting list	0	0
Advocacy support concluded	51	45
Ongoing advocacy support cases	91	94

Website views in the past year



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

In August 2025, there was 133 views on our webpage for people looking for information on how to make an NHS Complaint – this is the highest number of views in comparison to the last year.

You can then see when we come to December there is always a decline in the number of people looking to make complaints.

We also notice we had a reduced number of calls to our help desk and then the enquires pick up again in January.

Case Study – Learning from a complaint

Annie first sought advocacy support in April 2021 after struggling to access ongoing mental health treatment. Despite multiple referrals from 2021 to 2022, her requests for support were repeatedly rejected, and a GP referral in June 2022 was later found to have been mishandled by the Trust.

After a mental health crisis in November 2022, Annie and her advocate attended a local resolution meeting in early 2023, where clinicians finally recognised her need for treatment. She received EMDR therapy but was told further treatment wasn't available on the NHS, leading her to pay privately for Schema Therapy.

With her advocate's help, Annie escalated her complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). In June 2025, the PHSO partially upheld her complaint, identifying failures in referral processes, siloed working, poor record-keeping, and lack of monitoring. Annie received an apology and compensation in October 2025.

The Trust committed to improvements, including standardised referral procedures, shared electronic records, and regular multi-agency meetings.

Annie praised her advocate for both practical guidance and compassionate emotional support, saying the advocacy helped her navigate a complex process, access treatment, and rebuild her belief that she deserved care.

"My advocate support was invaluable, not just in understanding the complaints procedure but also in giving me reassurance that helped combat negative thoughts about myself.

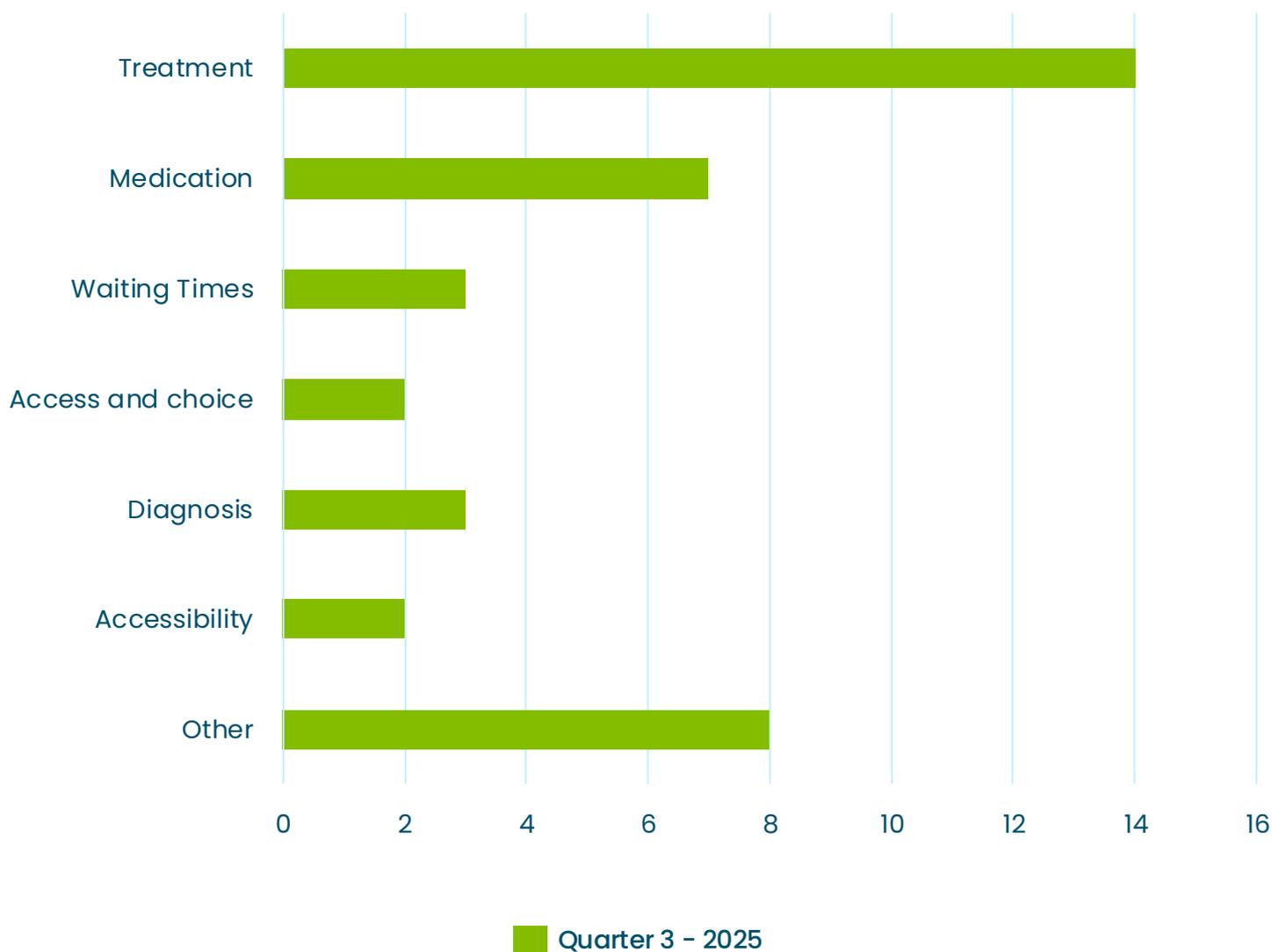
At the time we went through the complaints process, being denied access to treatment compounded my mental health issues and negative views of myself, and with advocacy support and encouragement it not only helped me to access treatment but also helped me believe I deserved treatment.

On a practical level my advocate helped me through a challenging complaints process that I never would have been able to navigate by myself and ensured that all procedure was followed to receive the outcome we did.

On a personal level, my advocate's kindness and compassion helped me to provide the information needed for the complaints process that involved reliving traumatic moments, ensuring I was always safe and had a plan, in case going through the complaints process had too much of an emotional toll. I'm so grateful for her support and the service Healthwatch provides."



Q3 Complaint Themes



Once again, this quarter, the majority of complaints we received were related to treatment and care.

Treatment & Care Complaints – examples

- 2 new complaints this quarter relate to poor maternity care
- Trying to access treatment via Child and Adolescent Mental Health services as there are significant delays
- New complaints about mental health services included – one client wanted to raise a complaint about the lack of mental health support & another raised a complaint about their lead practitioner
- A new client feels that their GP is not listening to them and they are not getting the right treatment and has requested IHCAS support to raise a complaint

Case Study – supporting a client with dyslexia

Lilly gave birth to her son in December 2023 and immediately experienced complications when the placenta did not fully detach. Despite attempts by midwives and senior staff, part of the placenta remained, and her birthing partner was distressed to see removed tissue placed on the floor for inspection.

A week later, Lilly became seriously unwell and was taken to hospital by ambulance, drifting in and out of consciousness. She required emergency surgery to remove retained placenta and a blood transfusion due to severe blood loss.

Ten days after that, she suffered further heavy bleeding and again needed urgent surgery, where more retained placenta was found. A later outpatient appointment showed a 2cm area suggestive of remaining placental tissue, but she was told no further treatment was possible at that time.

Still experiencing complications, Lilly sought help from her local IHCAS team to make an NHS complaint. With her advocate's support, a complaint was submitted to the ICB, followed by a local resolution meeting with the hospital trust. During this meeting, clinicians agreed she needed an MRI scan and further follow-up, due to conflicting pregnancy test results.

The consultant later confirmed the placenta was no longer in the endometrial cavity and that the positive test was likely caused by tissue detaching.

Lilly later shared heartfelt feedback, expressing deep gratitude for her advocate's patience, consistency, and compassion.

She said the advocacy support helped her navigate one of the hardest periods of her life, ensured her concerns were taken seriously, and ultimately led to the clinical issues being recognised. She credited her advocate with helping her feel heard, supported, and able to move forward.

Listen to the feedback from Lilly

[Thank you IHCAS for your support, a voice message from Lilly.](#)



THANK
YOU



Feedback from people we have supported

- Thank you very much again for all of your hard work today. You're the best 😊
- ... following an unsatisfactory resolution meeting ...at which you were an attendee ...we took the complaint to the ombudsman. It was partially upheld, and my daughter received a letter of apology and a small amount compensation.
- Thank you, for all you have done for me, you have been truly amazing, and I really appreciate everything
- Thank you for all your care and support over these last years. You are a star!
- Thank you so very much for all of your assistance and hard work with my case this year, I am consistently thankful that I was lucky enough to have you assigned to my case.
- Thanks again for all your support as I wouldn't manage to do it by myself
- Thank you so much. That really is spot on, and I can see how much more useful it would have been to have you involved from the beginning of all of this.

healthwatch
West Sussex

w: healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

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