

What if I only need information?

Not everyone needs the support of an Advocate to make their complaint. For example, some people just want to know how the complaint system works or know who they should send a letter of complaint to.

Everyone who contacts ICAS for help with an NHS complaint is entitled to receive a free Self Help Information Pack.

The Self Help Information Pack includes:

- a detailed booklet on how the complaints system works
- information on how to access your medical records
- guidance on how to put together your complaint letter
- a leaflet containing useful addresses (including the General Medical Council and the Health Service Ombudsman)

This may be enough to make a complaint yourself.

Anybody who starts a complaint by themselves is entitled to contact ICAS at any stage in the process for more information or to request the support of an Advocate.

Can I complain on behalf of somebody else like a child, friend or relative?

You can complain on behalf of a child less than 18 years if they are unable to make the complaint themselves.

The organisation you are complaining to must be confident the child cannot complain themselves before they consider the complaint.

You can also make a complaint on behalf of a friend or relative but they will need to agree to this in writing.

If you want to complain on behalf of someone who lacks mental capacity then it is usual that the organisation you are complaining to will check the patient's mental capacity before responding.

Meeting your needs

ICAS can adapt the way we communicate with you depending upon your needs.

This might include any of the following:

- using an interpreter or translator
- using alternative formats for written correspondence including larger prints, audio or braille
- using British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters
- We can also supply our current information in 20 languages.

If you have particular needs, please let us know what these are and we will do our best to meet them.

What next?

You can get in touch:

- if you want more information
- if you want a Self Help Information Pack to help you make a complaint, or
- if you want an Advocate to help you make an NHS complaint

We are open Mon-Thur 9-7pm and Fri 9-5pm.

The details of how to contact your local ICAS are below.

Newton Aycliffe:
Evans Incubation Centre
Durham Way South
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 6XP
T: 0808 802 3000
E: aycliffeicas@carexfederation.co.uk

icas
Independent Complaints
Advocacy Service

**Do you have
a complaint
about the NHS?**



The Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) is provided in the East Midlands, North East, North West and Yorkshire & Humberside by Care Federation Limited.

Care Federation Limited is registered in England as a company limited by guarantee.
Registered number: 3123142. Registered charity number: 1050779.
Registered office: 1 Beech Avenue, Sierwood Rise, Nottingham NG7 7LJ.

ICAS helps people to make their NHS complaints

ICAS stands for the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service. We can help if you feel you have not had the service you expect from the National Health Service (NHS) and want to complain.

When your health care is provided by the NHS you are allowed to make a complaint using the NHS complaints process.

An NHS complaint might include something that happened during care or treatment at:

- the hospital
- your General Practitioner (GP)
- the dentist
- the pharmacist
- the optician
- an NHS funded care home

What is ICAS?

ICAS is the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service.

ICAS provides practical support and information to people who want to make an NHS complaint.

This might mean giving information so you can pursue a complaint by yourself or giving you the support of an experienced worker who can help you to make your complaint.

ICAS is free.

ICAS is independent of the NHS.

ICAS is confidential.

In this area **ICAS** is provided by the Carers Federation. We have directly supported over 27,000 people to make an NHS complaint in the last 5 years.

How does advocacy work?

ICAS uses advocacy to help people make their complaint.

Advocacy is a system that uses experienced workers to help people speak up for themselves and represent their own thoughts and feelings when things are difficult.

Our specially trained and experienced staff are known as Advocates.

Because advocacy is about helping people to speak up for themselves, an **ICAS** Advocate will not tell you what to do or act on the wishes of others.

Our Advocates are qualified and have many years of experience working within the NHS complaints process.

What does an ICAS Advocate do to help?

ICAS Advocates work with you so that you feel confident to make a complaint.

ICAS Advocates will help you explore your options at every stage of your complaint and can give you information that can help you to decide what to do.

Throughout the complaints process an Advocate might also do some or all of the following:

- help you to compile all the issues you wish to raise in your complaint
- help you to write letters to the right people
- prepare you for meetings and go to these with you
- answer questions to help you make decisions
- give you the opportunity to speak confidentially to someone who is independent of the NHS
- where possible we will meet you face-to-face to discuss your complaint
- provide you with information about how the NHS complaints process works
- help you to monitor the progress of your complaint with the organisation or individual responsible
- help you to understand what you can expect to achieve from the NHS complaints process
- put you in touch with other people or services that might be able to help you