



**North East NHS
Independent
Complaints
Advocacy**

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Introduction

Philip Kerr

Operations Manager

**North East NHS Independent
Complaints Advocacy
(ICA)**



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Stockton contract

- Independent NHS complaints advocacy is a statutory service commissioned by the Local Authority.
- Contract started 1st October 2024
- Available to all residents in Stockton postcode area **regardless** of where NHS funded care is delivered
- NE ICA is a contract delivered by the Carers Federation Ltd who have over 20 years experience in this field
- The service itself has been awarded the Quality Performance mark for its advocacy services – the industry standard
- All advocates hold the national independent complaints advocacy qualification(City and Guilds).



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ICA provides free, confidential and independent advocacy support to people wishing to raise a complaint about their NHS funded treatment or care.



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Our Service

The Staff Team

- Operations Manager
- Senior Advocate
- Advocates (including a Deaf Advocate BSL supported)

Other Resources

- Admin Base in Gateshead
- Freephone helpline
- Website
- Email address
- Text phone number
- Signposting resource to independent medical advice
- Access to interpreters



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How we can help

- Signposting
- Listen and understand the problem
- Explain outcomes
- Explain options, time limits etc
- Identify where the complaint needs to go
- Help with letter writing
- Aid communication, e.g. interpretation, various formats
- Empower
- Attend meetings
- Provide information
- Chase up with the NHS
- Liaise with the PHSO



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We Don't:

- Advise clients what to do
- Deal with private healthcare
- Deal with clinical negligence claims
- Investigate
- Take sides



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Working in Partnership

- Provide information for Healthwatch(anonymised data)
- Liaise with Hospital complaints teams/Practice managers to explain service and what clients want from the complaints process
- Represent the patients voice at the Experience of Care Committee of local Hospital Trust
- Signpost clients to other services – Patient Experience: IMHA/IMCA; other Advocacy services, Ombudsman, Clinical Negligence Solicitors.
- Member of National Advocacy leader's forum
- Promote service through the voluntary sector e.g. Well Being centre
- Liaise with Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman



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The Process

- No waiting lists
- Referral either self or via an Organisation- phone, email, writing or even what's app video
- Self Help Information Pack provided
- First contact with Advocate within 5 working days
- Consent
- Complaint letter
- Response
- Local Resolution Meeting – face to face or virtual
- Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman



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Who we support

- Anybody who has a complaint about NHS treatment or care
- Some people may need more support, e.g.
 - People with mental health problems
 - People who don't speak English
 - People who have suffered a bereavement
 - Carers
 - People with a learning disability
 - Deaf Clients



Complaints standards framework

- Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman(PHSO) has developed over the last 24 months. NE NHS ICA member of the National working group and co authored Advocacy guidance
- What is it about?
- Making the NHS Complaints system more user friendly for both the NHS and anyone wishing to raise a concern
- Framework in the North East.
- More details can be accessed at:

<https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/complaint-standards>



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Stockton year 1 performance

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Qtr.	Enquiries	New cases	Closed	Reopened	Active	Hours
1	48**	33***	11		21	157*
2	12	12	5	-	28	115
3	10	10	16	-	22	132
4	22	22	10	3	37	168
	92	77	42	3	n/a	569

* Admin transfer hours included – 45

** included enquiries before commencement of contract (23 prospective transfers)

*** includes 10 actual transferred cases from previous provider

Expect to have an active caseload equal to 16.9 per 100k population



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Usage and Access

- **Who uses the service in Stockton (new cases)**
- 78% identify as female
- 17% from other ethnicities
- 58% are below age 55
- 20% over age 66
- 63% have declared a disability
- 57% are in the unemployed/ retired category
- **How is the service accessed**
- 75% telephone or email
- 25% external referral from a professional



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Complaints referrals

- **Who signposts or refers residents for advocacy support**
- 42% NHS
- 35% Statutory/ Voluntary sector inc Healthwatch
- 13% Current/ previous user/word of mouth
- 10% Internet/ media



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Themes and locations

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- **Main NHS services Stockton residents complain against.**
- Hospital Trust 50% (North Tees)
- Out of area 23% (majority Hospital Trust – South Tees)
- GP Practices 22% (11 out of 21 active Practices)
- Mental Health Trust 5%
- **Common Themes- complaint enquiries**
- 30 themes recorded in the first year of the contract. The top 2 account for 37% of all complaint enquiries
- **Top 10**
- Multiple aspects of clinical treatment
- Attitude of staff
- Misdiagnosis
- Appointment delays and cancellations
- Cancer treatment
- Practice/ Surgery Management
- Failure to diagnose
- Medication related issues
- Level of Nursing Care
- Maternity



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Outcomes

- NHS Complaints process: Explanations/ Apology/ service improvements and redress
- 7% reopened for further explanations
- 10% Ombudsman rulings not upheld as all local work sufficient
- 5% satisfactory Local Resolution meetings
- 28% satisfactory apologies and explanations in writing
- 50% decided not to progress through whole process as received verbal assurances/ discussions with health provider or reconsidered position after advocacy support for best course of action i.e. legal route



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Contact Details

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**Textphone: Video messaging (inc BSL):
07738 994040**

Website: www.nenhscomplaintsadvocacy.co.uk



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