



Eastern and Coastal Kent

Brook House
John Wilson Business Park
Reeves Way
Chestfield
Whitstable CT5 3DD
Tel: 01227 795050
Fax: 01227 795025
Direct Dial: 01227 791165

31 March 2009

Mr P Wickenden
Overview, Scrutiny & Localism Manager
Democratic Services & Local Leadership
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

Dear Paul

I refer to your letter of 26 January 2009 and would like to respond with particular reference to your request regarding further information regarding patient advocacy service provision.

Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)

Section 12 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 places a duty on the Secretary of State for health to make arrangements to provide Independent Advocacy Services to assist individuals making complaints against the NHS. The Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) supports patients and their carers wishing to pursue a complaint about their NHS treatment or care. This statutory service was launched on 1 September 2003 and provides a national service delivered to agreed quality standards.

For the South East area the service is provided by South East Advocacy Projects (SEAP). Complainants who contact the Customer Services Team at the PCT are provided with information about ICAS. Those who may have a communication difficulty are always actively urged to make use of the ICAS whose services are outlined in the attached leaflet.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

PALS has been in place nationally since 2002. It is their remit to help and support people and to empower them to take actions and decisions based on options suggested.

Each health trust has its own PALS which is primarily telephone based, although in East Kent, PALS for NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent is established in a readily accessible health shop in Canterbury. In the acute hospitals there are signs, posters and volunteers to help or alternatively to signpost to people more qualified to answer specific queries. PALS may also be contacted via email, letter or fax.

- page 2 -

31 March 2009

Recently the Patient Advice and Liaison Service in the East Kent Hospitals Trust merged with their Complaints Department to become the Patient Experience Team. A similar merger took place within NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent. The two services are now known collectively as Customer Services but PALS retains its individual branding. Every NHS professional should know about and be able to signpost to PALS. Leaflets are available in GP surgeries, pharmacies, dental practices, libraries etc. Contact details are available in Health News, Yellow Pages and the local NHS website.

I trust this provides the information you are looking for but please contact me should this not be the case.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



Glynis Alexander
Deputy Director of Communications

cc Ann Sutton
Tristan Godfrey