



# Patient Advocacy Service

INFORMATION | SUPPORT | EMPOWERMENT

## Annual Report 2023





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## Foreword by Chairperson



Welcome to the 2023 Annual Report for the Patient Advocacy Service. We are delighted to present this overview of our work, achievements, and the positive impact advocacy has on people's lives and in protecting their human rights.

After three years of an unprecedented global health crisis, 2023 marked the official end of the COVID 19 pandemic. The issues associated with the pandemic, its restrictions and its disruptions to health and social services across the country disproportionately impacted people that access both our services. Some of the residual effects of the pandemic are still being felt by many of those living in residential and healthcare settings in 2023. Consequently, previous issues such as ongoing transfer delays and complaints regarding access to appropriate healthcare and housing persist.

2023 also marked another busy year for the Patient Advocacy Service. We were also pleased to welcome new board members Helen Brown, Elaine Bardon, Melissa Byrne, Jacqueline Grogan, Tadhg Quill Manley, and Keiron Brennan.

In April 2023, The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 commenced. The Act aims to achieve key reforms including the abolition of the wards of court system for adults. A core principle of the Act is the presumption that everyone has capacity until proven otherwise. Equally, a person should be fully supported to make their own decisions as far as is possible, emphasising that a person's will and preferences must be considered at all times. Such principles underpin the work of Independent Advocates.

The National Framework for Open Disclosure was launched in October 2023 and will embed a culture of Open Disclosure throughout all health and social care services. The Framework will strengthen patients' rights ensuring that patients and their families have access to comprehensive and timely information, including an apology where appropriate, in relation to serious patient safety incidents. The Patient Advocacy Service is available to support patients/service users and their support persons who

## Foreword by Chairperson

have been affected by patient safety incidents and adverse events in acute public hospital settings and nursing homes, and this framework ensures that this support will be available to patients and nursing home residents.

The Patient Advocacy Service expanded its remit to include Private Nursing Homes, meaning that all nursing home residents now have access to complaints advocacy. This expansion is reflected in the growing number of enquiries and case work the Service has dealt with in relation to nursing home complaints.

The Patient Advocacy Service has seen an increase in enquiries and cases. The Patient Advocacy Service provided support to 2,012 people in 2023, covering 5,617 separate complaint issues. This represents a 8.2% increase on 2022 when PAS received 1,859 complaint enquiries. The Patient Advocacy Service provided support to 197 people who wanted to make a complaint about their care in a nursing home. This represents an increase of almost 150% on 2022.

This Annual Report highlights key data around the number of enquiries received by our services, the number of cases worked on by our Advocates and the complexity of the cases we worked on. This document illustrates the wide range of people that we work with and the types of issues they face. Crucially, it provides an insight into how our services Advocates work with people through several case examples.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Department of Health for their ongoing guidance and support in relation to the Patient Advocacy Service. In addition, I would like to express the Board's gratitude to all the staff of NAS and the Patient Advocacy Service for their dedication and commitment to providing professional advocacy services throughout 2023.




Rosemary Smyth  
**Chairperson of PAS Board**

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**In 2023, the Patient Advocacy Service provided support to 2,012 people in 2023, covering 5,617 separate complaint issues.**

# Patient Advocacy Service Highlights 2023

 **9%**  
increase

The Patient Advocacy Service provided support to **2,012** people in 2023, covering **5,617** separate complaint issues. This represents a **8.2%** increase on 2022 when we received **1,859** complaint enquiries.



**1,839 of the enquiries** were short-term, such as providing people with information, advice, assistance, and signposting or referring to other support services.



**173** of the enquiries were given full 1-1 advocate support, including supporting people with understanding of processes, written correspondence, preparation for and attending meetings with them.



The Patient Advocacy Service provided support to **1,249** people who wanted to complain about their care in public acute hospitals.

 **150%**  
increase

The Patient Advocacy Service provided support to **197** people who wanted to make a complaint about their care in a nursing home. This represents an increase of almost **150% on 2022**.

**HSE Nursing Homes**



Support provided to **46** people who wanted to complain about their care was in relation to **HSE-operated nursing homes**.

**Private Nursing Homes**



Support provided to **151** people who wanted to complain about their care was in relation to **private nursing homes**.



The Patient Advocacy Service **website** was visited by **16,612** new users in 2023.



Some of the biggest **complaint issues** for people in public acute hospitals and nursing homes worked on by the Patient Advocacy Service's advocates were Anxieties Acknowledged not Addressed, Staff not Communicating Care Plans, Unable to Access Specialist Care, Phone Calls not Returned, Difficulty Phoning Health Care Unit and Patient Monitoring Delayed.

The Patient Advocacy Service closed **1,919 contacts** in 2023. **32** of these were carried forward from 2022, the rest were opened in 2023 and closed in 2023.



The Patient Advocacy Service carried out **299 promotions** in 2023, including events, presentations and offers of leaflets and posters.



## 2. Patient Advocacy Service Remit

**The Patient Advocacy Service is commissioned and funded by the National Patient Safety Office in the Department of Health (DoH). The Patient Advocacy Service is fully independent of the HSE.**

The Patient Advocacy Service is provided under the auspices of the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS). NAS, which is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board (CIB), provides an independent, confidential and free, issues-based representative advocacy service to people with disabilities.

The Patient Advocacy Service provides free, independent and confidential empowerment advocacy to people who want to make a formal complaint through the relevant complaints process in relation to the care they have experienced in a HSE or HSE funded public acute hospital, or in a HSE or HSE funded nursing home or private nursing home. The Patient Advocacy Service also support people in the aftermath of a patient safety incident. For HSE and HSE funded public acute hospitals and nursing homes, people can make complaints through the HSE's Your Service Your Say complaints process, and for private nursing homes, people can make complaints through each nursing home's own complaints process.

The Patient Advocacy Service empowers people by supporting them to assert their views and seek answers and outcomes through the relevant complaints process. The Advocates do not take sides on an issue, but rather seek to ensure that a process is fair, and that the individual's views, concerns, and decisions are addressed. The Patient Advocacy Service also aims to work with hospital and nursing home teams to improve complaints systems and patient safety.

2023 was another year of growth for the Patient Advocacy Service. Following the announcement of the amendments to the Care and Welfare Regulations for Long-Term Residential Care Facilities for Older People in late 2022, the Patient Advocacy Service expanded its remit to include Private Nursing Homes. These regulatory changes came into effect on March 1st, 2023. The amendments facilitated the phased rollout of the Patient Advocacy Service into private nursing homes and have led to an increase in nursing home residents and their families contacting the Service. The Patient Advocacy Service have spent much of 2023 visiting nursing homes, providing presentations to staff and meeting residents, explaining the service to them and their rights when making a complaint.

**The Patient Advocacy Service provides free, independent and confidential empowerment advocacy to people who want to make a formal complaint**



## Case study:

# Donal's Story

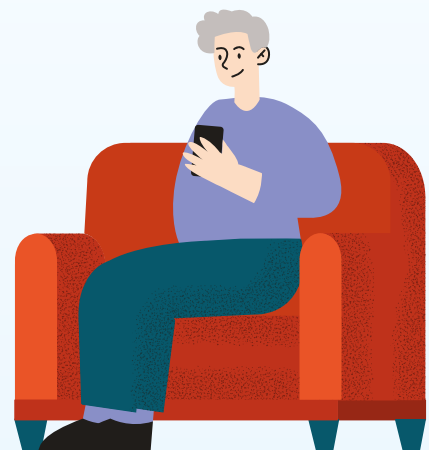
### Issue's Regarding Hospital Care

**My name is Donal and I am in my 70's. I live at home with my family. I had to go to my local hospital for a procedure, one for which I had to have an anaesthetic. I fully recovered from the procedure; however, I was very unhappy with how staff treated me at the hospital when I was a patient there.**

I went to the hospital and staff helped me to get ready for the procedure. When it was finished, I was moved to the Day Ward, where I was left to rest for a few hours. While I was on the Day Ward, I felt staff did not listen to me and were rude towards me. When it was time for me to go home, a nurse told me that I could get dressed but they never asked me how I was feeling and if I felt ready to leave. I was feeling sore after the procedure and the anaesthetic had left me feeling a bit dizzy. I hoped that a nurse or care assistant might help me to get dressed but nobody came back to me. While I was getting dressed, I fell and hurt my head and my back. I made a verbal complaint to the staff about what had happened, but I felt they did not take my concerns seriously. When I went home, I spoke to my family about what happened, and we decided to contact the Patient Advocacy Service.

I spoke with an Advocate from the Patient Advocacy Service about my experience. The Advocate listened to my story with empathy and went through my options with me. I decided to make a formal complaint to the hospital. The Advocate helped me to write my complaint letter and when I was happy with it, I sent it to the hospital. The Advocate stayed in contact with me while I waited to get a response to my complaint.

The hospital issued a response to my complaint, which I was very happy with. The hospital sincerely apologised for the poor communication and any distress caused when I had my fall. The hospital acknowledged that some changes should be made regarding their falls management policy, and because of the complaint, the hospital have put new procedures in place, so this does not happen to anyone else. I was very happy with the support of my Advocate.





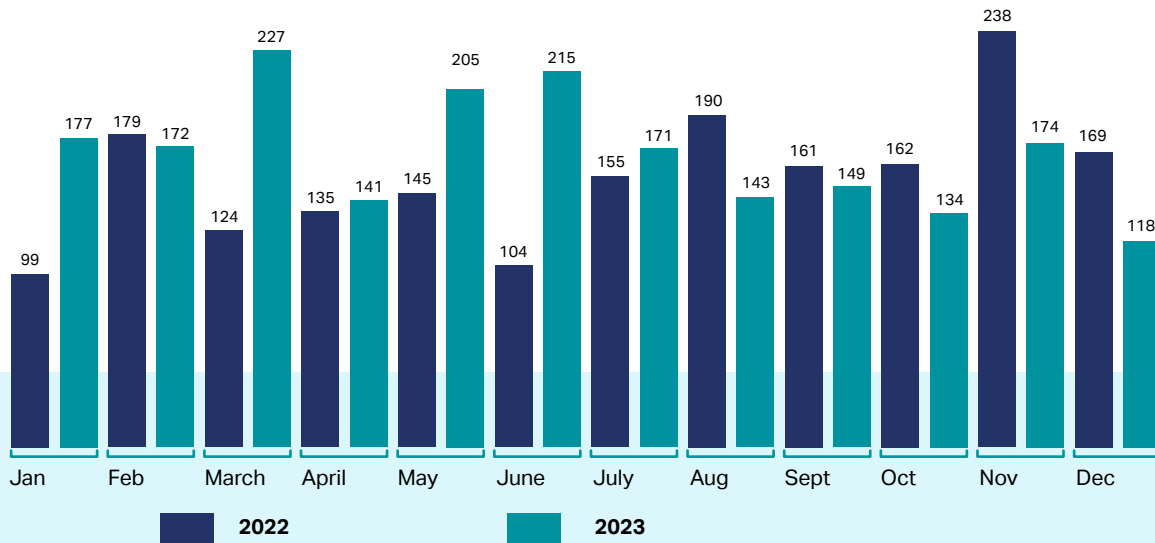
### 3. Our Service

#### 3.1 Our Work in 2023

**“Thank you for all your help with everything when I was considering making a complaint. You were very helpful and I greatly appreciate your advice and support.”**

Craig, who was supported by the Patient Advocacy Service in 2023

Numbers of new contacts by month in 2023 & 2022



The Patient Advocacy Service works to ensure a high-quality advocacy service is provided to people who need our support, with professionally trained advocates focused on continuous development. The Patient Advocacy Service is fully aligned with an Organisation Code of Practice and suite of policies. The Service’s goal is to continue to improve. To achieve this, advocates take part in weekly team meetings, practice development, and ongoing case review and monitoring.

2023 was the fourth full year of service delivery for the Patient Advocacy Service. The Service received 2,012 new complaint enquiries, which identified 5,617 separate complaint issues. This was an increase on 2022 when we received 1,859 complaint enquiries. The table above shows the numbers of new contacts by month in 2023, compared with 2022.

There were two national advertising campaigns to raise awareness of the Service. The first campaign took place in April/May and targeted national radio stations. The second campaign ran for six weeks in November/December and targeted regional radio stations. As well as these radio advertising campaigns, there was also a monthly social media advertising campaign. The Service also engaged in promotional work throughout the year, visiting hospitals and nursing homes, as well as attending events. These campaigns and promotional work contributed to an increase in new contacts to the Service.

Of the new contacts received by the Service, 1,839 were short term advocacy enquiries, including one-off representations, such as sending a person a template letter, providing information by phone, and signposting and referrals to other support services.

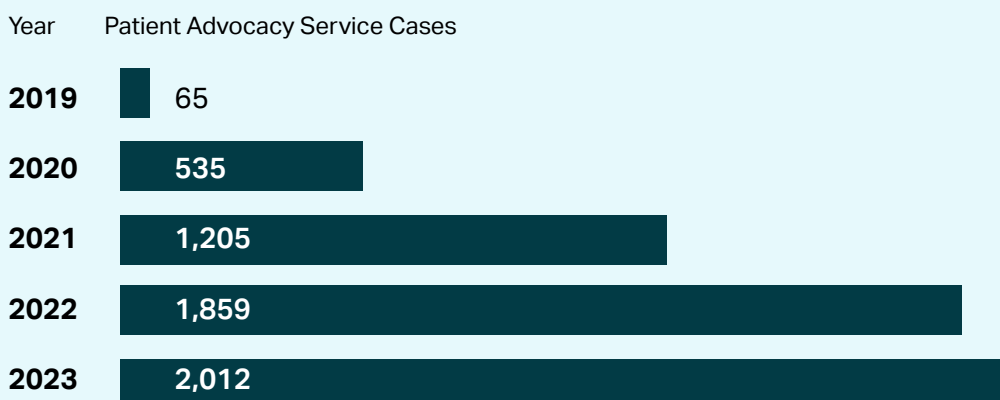
173 new contacts were given full 1-1 advocacy support. This work involved supporting people to understand the complaints or patient safety incidents processes, write and understand correspondence, preparing for and attending meetings with the person in a supportive capacity, and supporting them to raise their concerns and have their lived experience and voice heard.

The Patient Advocacy Service provided support to 1,249 people who wanted to make complaints about their care in public acute hospitals. The Service also provided support to 46 people who wanted to make complaints about their care in HSE or HSE funded nursing homes and 151 people who wanted to make a complaint about their care in private nursing homes.

37 of the people supported by the Patient Advocacy Service in 2023 had issues impacted by Covid-19. This was significantly lower than in 2022 when 219 people had issues impact by Covid-19.



# Patient Advocacy Service Work



## 3.2 Delivery of the 2nd Edition of the Annual Casebook

### The Patient Advocacy Service and the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) Casebook becomes an Annual Publication.

Following the success of our first Casebook in 2022, it was decided that the Casebook would become an annual publication from NAS and the Patient Advocacy Service. The Casebook contains a selection of the many advocacy cases worked on by both of our Services in 2023 and is a valuable source of information for anyone who wants to find out more about our work and its impact.



The Casebook provides an insight into how independent, professional advocacy can positively impact on people's lives and protect their human rights. It illustrates the diverse range of people who access advocacy services in Ireland and the many issues covered by both NAS and the Patient Advocacy Service.

The case examples in the publication demonstrate how our Services help breach gaps in systems, ensure best practice across public services and promote positive systemic changes. They show how our advocacy work has a positive impact both for individuals and in communities across Ireland.

You can read the Casebook via this link:

<https://www.patientadvocacyservice.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Patient-Advocacy-Service-Casebook-2023.pdf>

### 3.3 Complexity of Work by Our Service

**5,617**

complaint issues for the advocacy contacts in 2023

**913**

contacts with between 1 and 5 complaint issues

**53**

contacts with between 11 and 15 complaint issues

**29**

contacts with 16-28 complaint issues.

The Patient Advocacy Service uses the Healthcare Complaints Analysis Tool (HCAT), developed by the London School of Economics and Political Science, to categorise all the complaints issues that are presented. The HCAT was developed as a framework to gather information on healthcare complaints so this information can be used to improve service delivery.

The Patient Advocacy Service used HCAT to record 5,617 complaint issues for the advocacy contacts in 2023. Of these contacts, 508 were outside the remit of the Service.

There were 913 contacts with between 1 and 5 complaint issues, 284 contacts between 6 and 10, and 53 contacts with between 11 and 15 complaint issues. There were also a further 29 contacts with 16-28 complaint issues.




These complaint issues included people's Anxieties Acknowledged not Addressed, Staff not Communicating Care Plans, Unable to Access Specialist Care, Phone Calls not Returned, Difficulty Phoning Health Care Unit and Patient Monitoring Delayed. These figures show the range of issues that people in hospitals and nursing homes had in 2023 and how serious and complex some of their complaint issues were. Some contacts involved several different complaints at several different levels of severity.

### 3.4 Key Issues for Our Service

As outlined earlier, the Patient Advocacy Service identifies issues within individual contacts in line with the London School of Economics and Political Science’s Health Complaints Analysis Tool (HCAT). The Chart below shows the top issues identified by severity rating:

Within the HCAT, the complaint issues are broken down into three severity levels: level 1 (low severity), level 2 (medium severity) and level 3 (high severity). The HCAT also lists the specific types of issues people had with their care in relation to quality and safety, management issues (including environment and institutional processes) and relationship issues (including listening, communication and respect, and patient’s rights.)

The complaint issues received by the Patient Advocacy Service in 2023 are broken down as follows.

Severity	Number	Types of Complaints
<b>Severity 1</b> 	<b>1,117</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff spoke in condescending manner</li> <li>• Question acknowledged not responded to</li> <li>• Staff ignored question</li> <li>• Phone calls not returned</li> <li>• Difficulty phoning healthcare unit</li> <li>• Patient monitoring delayed</li> </ul>
<b>Severity 2</b> 	<b>3,185</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff did not communicate care plan</li> <li>• Rude behaviour</li> <li>• Patient not monitored properly</li> <li>• Complaint not responded to</li> <li>• Chasing departments for appointments</li> <li>• Aspects of care plan overlooked</li> <li>• Anxieties acknowledged, not addressed</li> </ul>
<b>Severity 3</b> 	<b>1,315</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to access specialist care</li> <li>• Staff ignored severe distress</li> <li>• Discharge w/o sufficient examination</li> <li>• Critical patient-provided info-dismissed</li> <li>• Acute medical procedures delayed</li> <li>• Unexpected death</li> <li>• Pain acknowledged-no follow through</li> </ul>

The top **5 complaint issues** in 2023 were:

1. **Anxieties Acknowledged not Addressed**

2. **Patient not monitored properly**

3. **Aspect of care plan overlooked**

4. **Chasing departments for an appointment**

5. **Staff did not communicate care plan**



## Case study:

# Bridget's' Story

### Complaint Regarding Accommodation in Nursing Home

**My name is Bridget and I am a resident in a nursing home. I contacted the Patient Advocacy Service as I was concerned about the fees that I was being charged by the nursing home. The amount I was paying seemed higher than what I had been told they would be. I had spoken to the nursing home but I was still worried that I was being overcharged by the nursing home.**

I spoke with an Advocate from the Patient Advocacy Service and explained my concerns to them. They listened to me and suggested that I could make a formal complaint to the nursing home, outlining my concerns. The Advocate explained the nursing homes complaints policy to me and supported me to write a formal complaint letter.

After I submitted my complaint to the nursing home, I was offered a meeting to discuss the issues I had raised. I went to the meeting with my Advocate. The nursing home told me that the fees I was paying had been agreed under Fair Deal and that they were correct. Following the meeting, I asked my Advocate if they could help me to read over my bank statements with me. When I reviewed the statements with my Advocate, I noticed that I was still paying more fees than what I thought I should be.



My Advocate contacted the nursing home with my consent and asked if we could have a second meeting. The nursing home manager arranged a meeting, which I went to with my Advocate. I asked again about the fees that I was being charged and said that they were higher than what I was told they would be. The nursing home manager again confirmed that the fees I was paying had been agreed under Fair Deal and they agreed that they were higher than what I was told they would be. The nursing home recognised their error and apologised for the miscommunication surrounding the fees. They explained the fees in detail and helped me to understand what I was paying. I was satisfied that the amount I was paying was correct and I accepted the nursing home's apology.

In the meeting with my Advocate, I felt I was listened to and heard. The meeting helped me understand the fees that I was paying, and I understood that I was paying the correct amount. It was great to have my Advocate help me with my complaint and to go to the meetings with me. I was happy to have the support of an Advocate.





## 4. Our Standards Work

**“It’s fantastic to have this service for private nursing homes. Has been really needed”**

Caroline, who used the Patient Advocacy Service in 2023

### 4.1 Ongoing Development of the Patient Advocacy Service

In 2023, the Patient Advocacy Service continued to build its capacity and effectiveness.

#### Expansion of Remit to Private Nursing Homes

The Patient Advocacy Service continued its expansion into the nursing home sector in 2023. In November 2022, the Patient Advocacy Service announced that it would be broadening its remit in 2023 to provide advocacy support to residents of private nursing homes. This announcement was made in conjunction with the publication of amendments to the Care and Welfare Regulations for Long-Term Residential Care Facilities for Older People. On March 1st, 2023, these amendments came into effect, which facilitated the phased rollout of the Patient Advocacy Service into private nursing homes. The Patient Advocacy Service now offer independent advocacy support regarding complaints in relation to care to all nursing home residents in Ireland. The amendments ensure that every nursing home resident in Ireland has the right to access and information regarding independent advocacy support. The updated regulations have.

**Increased residents' access to independent advocacy services by way of presentations / in-person awareness campaigns and through meetings and support.**

**Standardised complaints processes in long-term residential care facilities for older people.**

**Ensured that key personnel are suitably trained to deal with complaints and reviews and that all personnel have an awareness of the complaint procedure.**

**Specified that complaints / review officers should be nominated to deal with complaints and reviews.**

**Encouraged registered providers to offer practical assistance to residents in making complaints.**

**Provided timeframes for complaint and review procedures.**

A postal campaign was undertaken by the Patient Advocacy Service in February 2023 in preparation for this expansion into private nursing homes. 500 nursing homes around the country were sent an introductory letter along with updated leaflets and posters. This was followed by a telephone campaign offering and organising in-house presentations on a phased basis.

The Patient Advocacy Service provided presentations to 73 nursing homes in 2023, meeting with residents and staff and explaining their rights around making a complaint.

There were 179 nursing home enquiries in 2023, 46 were in relation to HSE Nursing Homes and 151 were in relation to Private Nursing Homes.

## 4.2 Assisted Decision-Making Act

April 2023 saw the commencement of the long-awaited Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 as amended. To mark the event, the Patient Advocacy Service had a social media campaign on Facebook, Twitter/X and LinkedIn.

The Act presents a hugely positive opportunity for all people in Ireland and the Patient Advocacy Service welcomes its commencement. The Act aims to achieve key reforms including the abolition of the wards of court system for adults. A core principle of the Act is the presumption that everyone has capacity until proven otherwise. Equally, a person should be fully supported to make their own decisions as far as is possible, emphasising that a person's will and preferences must be always considered. Such principles underpin the work of Independent Advocates. The Assisted Decision-Making Act means that there is presumed capacity for a person in making decisions about their own care & treatment. The Act marks a significant move forward for human rights in Irish society, empowering people to live with dignity and respect, and to progress their autonomy and their self-determination.

The Decision Support Service (DSS) has produced a Code of Practice for Independent Advocates which states:

"The role of advocacy is to support and enable people who have difficulty in exercising their rights, expressing their views, exploring options, and making informed choices. Your role is not to make decisions on the part of the relevant person."

The remit of the Patient Advocacy Service (PAS) is to provide empowerment advocacy to people who want to make a formal complaint about an experience they have had in a public acute hospital, or Nursing Home, and in the aftermath of a patient safety incident. Advocates with the Patient Advocacy Service empower patients and nursing home residents to express their will and preference when making a formal complaint or in the aftermath of a patient safety incident. The Service ensures that the people we support are fairly represented and their rights are upheld.

The Patient Advocacy Service will provide various levels of support as set out in the Act.

An Advocate may be working with a person who has a decision-making assistant in place, and they will work directly with the relevant person and may use existing procedures to allow the decision-making assistant to fulfil their role as a nominated person, supporting the relevant person, if covered by the agreement.

An Advocate may be working with a person who has a co-decision-making agreement in place. The co-decision-maker may be able to support the person to make and submit their complaint. The Advocate will work directly with the relevant person and may use existing procedures to allow the co-decision-maker to fulfil their role as a nominated person, supporting the relevant person, if covered by the agreement.

An Advocate may be working with a person who has a decision-making representative agreement in place. The decision-making representative will be able to submit a complaint on behalf of a person. In such situations, the Advocate can work directly with the decision-making representative if they require support from the service. It is important that a decision-making representative arrangement is in place.

An Advocate may be working with a person who has an enduring power of attorney in place. The attorney will be able to submit the complaint on behalf of a person. In such situations, the Advocate will work directly with the attorney. It is important that the Advocate confirms that there is enduring power of attorney in place.

### 4.3 The Patient Safety (Notifiable Incidents and Open Disclosure) Act 2023 and the National Open Disclosure Framework

**The Patient Safety (Notifiable Incidents and Open Disclosure) Act 2023 was signed into law in May 2023. The Act provides a legislative framework for mandatory Open Disclosure of a specified serious patient safety incident that must be disclosed to patients and/or their families. In October 2023 the National Open Disclosure Framework was launched. The new framework embeds a consistent approach by health and social care service providers to open communication with patients, nursing home residents, service users and any relevant support person following a patient safety incident or an adverse event.**

Open Disclosure is an opportunity for health care staff to communicate in an open, honest, timely and transparent way, improving the patient experience and continuing the patient trust and relationship with the health service. These developments strengthen patients' and residents' rights, ensuring that they, along with their families and relevant supports have access to comprehensive and timely information in relation to serious patient safety incidents. This includes an apology where appropriate. The Act and Framework reinforce a culture of quality, safety, transparency and accountability within the health & social care sectors and enhance the relationship and trust of the service and the patient experience.

The Patient Advocacy Service are committed to elevating the voice of patients and nursing home residents by supporting them through the complaints process and in the aftermath of a Patient Safety Incident, through the Open Disclosure Process and any subsequent investigations.

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**Open Disclosure is an opportunity for healthcare staff to communicate in an open, honest, timely and transparent way, improving the patient experience and continuing the patient trust and relationship with the health service.**

The Patient Advocacy Service is available to support patients/service users and their support persons who have been affected by patient safety incidents and adverse events in acute public hospital settings and nursing homes. Health and social care service providers must give patients, nursing home residents and their support person information about independent advocacy supports that are available to them in the aftermath of a patient safety incident, including information on the Patient Advocacy Service. This information should be provided as soon as possible following the patient safety incident or adverse event to facilitate early contact and support for patients/service users and their support persons. An Advocate can support a person through the Open Disclosure process, explain what a person should expect to happen once an investigation has begun, empower them to have their voice heard during the process. An Advocate will support the person throughout the entire Open Disclosure and investigation process, until it has reached its completion.

The Patient Advocacy Service welcomes ongoing developments in Open Disclosure and Patient Safety.



## 5. Our Policy Work

### 5.1 Stakeholder engagement

#### **Engagement with external statutory bodies:**

The Patient Advocacy Service continued to contribute to social policy in 2023 through stakeholder engagements and policy submissions. In its policy work in 2023, the Patient Advocacy Service sought to ensure that advocacy is recognised as playing an important role in ensuring that people's rights are upheld and they receive the highest level of quality care.

Throughout 2023, the Patient Advocacy Service was an active participating member of the following groups and projects:

HSE Project Group on Patient Engagement Framework

National Care Experience Programme Steering Group

National Inpatient Experience Survey Programme Board

Department of Health Nursing Home Report Reference Group membership

Steering Committee on the Post-Partum Haemorrhage Quality Improvement Initiative (NPEC)

Steering Group on Severe Maternal Morbidity (NPEC)

HIQA Working Group on Support Tools for Advocacy

Working Group - Better Together: Health Service Patient Engagement Roadmap

HSE Expert Advisory group on National Guideline Development (Maternity & Gynaecology)

HSE Patient Safety Act Implementation Working Group

HSE National Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum

National Screening Service – Personal Cervical Screening Reviews

National Open Disclosure Programme: Performance Measurement and Quality Assurance Project Group

National Open Disclosure Programme: Patient Experience Workstream

Mater Hospital ADM Implementation Group

Ireland East Hospital Group Complaints Manager Forum

University Limerick Hospital Group Managers Complaints Forum

**“This is a great service, to have someone provide information independent of the hospital”**

Simon, who was supported by the Patient Advocacy Service in 2023

The Patient Advocacy Service continued its contribution to the learning & development of advocacy skills within social & health care settings. For a second year, the Service delivered “The role of the Advocate” module for the Patient Complaint Safety Advocacy Course offered by the Open Training College.

## 5.2 Public Consultations and Submissions

The Patient Advocacy Service responded to public consultations and policy submissions in areas related to its remit. These included:

HIQA E-Learning Module on Advocacy

Medical Council Workshop for Strategy Statement

NCEP Strategic Think Tank – to inform NCEP Strategic Statement

## Case study:

# Clodagh's Story

### Complaint Regarding Under 65 Placement in a Nursing Home

My name is Clodagh, I'm in my 50's and I live in a nursing home. I use a wheelchair; I communicate differently and I require full time support with my health and social needs. I lived in the community where I was supported by my family. However, due to a change in circumstances, I moved into a nursing home until more suitable accommodation could be arranged. I was not told how long I would be staying in the nursing home for.

I found it difficult adapting to the nursing home. I found that staff weren't always available when I needed support with personal care. There was always a delay with my daily medications. There weren't many options at mealtimes and the food was often cold. I also found staff could be rude and unhelpful. I tried to raise my concerns with staff, but I felt like no one was listening to me. I was offered an informal meeting with staff at the nursing home to discuss my ongoing issues, but this did not help to resolve things. I contacted the Patient Advocacy Service for support to make a formal complaint.

My Advocate established a communication plan with me so that they could best support me to raise my concerns. My Advocate explained the HSE'S Your Service Your Say Complaints policy to me and supported me to write a formal complaint. With my consent, the Advocate submitted my complaint to the nursing home on my behalf.

The nursing home upheld my complaint. The nursing home acknowledged the issues I was having and made some improvements. Mealtimes improved and I had more options as well as hot meals. My medication care plan was reviewed and I received my medication at the most appropriate times. The nursing home acknowledged that they did not have appropriate staff to support me with my day-to-day care and stated that they would help to find a more appropriate place to move to, one that I was happy to move to. Once a more appropriate nursing home was found, with specialist care assistants, I moved there. I am much happier in my new nursing home and feel much more supported. I am happy that I made the formal complaint and was thankful to have the support of an Advocate.





## 6. Promoting Our Service

**“The advocate was very helpful with excellent advice with my complaint. Her professionalism was beyond what I expected”**

*Emily, who was supported by an advocate from the Patient Advocacy Service in 2023*

The Patient Advocacy Service continued to proactively promote its Services in 2023. We carried out a range of advertising and promotional activities during the year which played a significant role in further increasing awareness and understanding of the Service. As a result, new contacts to the Service increased from 1,859 in 2022 to 2,012 in 2023.

A key element of this work were two radio advertising campaigns, one national and one regional. Radio advertising has been successful for our Service in previous years, and we decided to continue with this medium.

Each campaign ran for six weeks at a time, the first taking place in April, through to May and the second advertisement ran from November through to December. The first campaign focused on Ireland’s biggest radio stations – Radio One, Today FM & Newstalk and the campaign ran for six weeks. Our second advertisement campaign focused on the Regional Radio Stations, targeting 20 local radio stations, which also ran over a six-week period.

Also key to the Service’s promotional activities were the promotional meetings senior staff from the Patient Advocacy Service had with senior management teams from public acute hospitals across Ireland. The Service’s staff raised awareness of the Service and discussed how the Patient Advocacy Service and hospitals can share learning, highlight systemic issues, and work together to improve the patient experience. Information about the Patient Advocacy Service has been included on hospital websites, e-zines and displays.

With the expansion of the Service’s remit into the private nursing homes there was an active awareness campaign to all nursing homes, utilising a postal and telephone campaign across 500 nursing homes. The Service co-presented with HIQA on the regulation changes and the role of Independent Advocacy. Presentations were given to staff, residents and families of 73 nursing homes, as well as to members of Nursing Homes Ireland and Céile Care. This awareness campaign is ongoing in 2024.

The Service also continued to increase its use of social media in 2023. In support of the advertising campaign, a social media marketing campaign was run on Facebook and Google Ads.



The Service's Facebook page, regarded as the key platform for engaging the public, increased by 10%, from around 2,818 followers at the start of 2023 to over 3,106 at the end of 2023.



As part of the Service's growing media presence, LinkedIn followers grew from 451 in January 2023 to 1,180 followers at the end of 2023, an increase of 160%.



The Service's X page (formerly known as Twitter) grew from 776 at the start of January 2023 to 923 at the end of 2023, an increase of 19%.



The use of a Google Ad to promote the Service continued to prove particularly effective. The Google Ad, which was run throughout the year, had over 35,000 impressions, was clicked on 8,639 times and led to 308 direct calls to the Service.

As a result of increased interaction and engagement across our social media platforms, visitors to the Patient Advocacy Service website increased significantly over the course of the year. The website had 24,837 users in 2023, of which 16,612 were new users. This was an increase on 2022, when the website had 22,119 users visit the website.

## Events and Conferences

There was an increase in events and conferences taking place in 2023. The end of the Covid 19 pandemic resulted in a move back to in-person events, which meant our staff had a greater opportunity this year to meet with key stakeholders and the wider public. The Patient Advocacy Service attended 32 events in 2023, including: The National Health Summit (January 2023), the Cork Summer Show (June 2023), Senior Times LIVE events (Cork in September & Limerick in November 2023), the Global Sepsis Summit (September 2023), the HSE Patient and Public Partnership Conference (October 2023), the Nursing Home Ireland Annual Conference & Exhibition (September 2023) and the Inaugural International Adult Safeguarding Conference (October 2023).

The Service also took part in several conferences and information sessions. We contributed to a discussion panel at the National Patient Safety Office Annual Conference, entitled 'Next Steps for Open Disclosure'. The Service had its official launch at the Conference in 2019 and it is a great achievement to now take part as a guest and panellist, sharing the lived experience of patients & nursing home residents from around the country. We also presented at the National Orthopaedic Nurses Conference and took part in two Open Disclosure Webinars – "The role of the Designated Person" and the "Patient involvement in the Incident Management and Review Process".

As part of World Patient Safety Day in September, some of our Team helped to mark the day with presentations to the Ireland East Hospital Group and Midlands Regional Hospital, Portlaoise. We were featured in the November edition of the HSE online newsletter, 'Quality & Patient Safety Matters', highlighting our efforts to mark the day.

In October we took part in Open Disclosure Week, where we produced two information videos on the role of Independent Advocacy in the Open Disclosure Process – "Leadership in Open Disclosure and Patient Safety" and "The Advocate's Role in Open Disclosure".

**"This is the first service where I have a listening voice. You have given me a voice; you have given me a path and have explained my rights and options. PAS should not underestimate how powerful that is"**

**Susie, who was supported by an advocate from the Patient Advocacy Service in 2023**



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