



South London

Community Support Network South London (CSN)
Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) Service

What is IMHA?

IMHA is a specialised form of advocacy **solely** for those who are detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 as amended 2007 (hereafter referred to as the Act). This means you are eligible for an IMHA service if you are on a Section of the Act (such as Section 2, 3, 37 etc); but **not** if you are on an emergency section (such as Sections 135, 136, 4, 5(2) or 5(4)).

You are also eligible for IMHA if you are on Section 17 leave, on a Community Treatment Order (CTO) (also known as Supervised Community Treatment (SCT)), conditionally discharged (from Section 37/41) or under Guardianship (Section 7).

If you are an informal (non-sectioned) patient, you can also have the support of an IMHA, but only if certain special treatments are being considered under Section 57 of the Act (eg neurosurgery and the surgical implantation of hormones).

When working as IMHAs, our advocates operate by CSN's confidentiality and other policies and procedures, including our Code of Practice for Advocacy. Our advocates are completely independent from all other service providers in Lambeth.

What does an IMHA do?

An IMHA will assist you in very specific areas. This includes: explaining to you your rights under the Act, assisting you to appeal, should you wish, and helping you to be involved in decisions regarding your care and treatment. (This includes finding out information about proposed medication and other treatment options being recommended for you. It may also include attending ward review and CPA meetings with you. Under the amended Act, treatment covers a lot more than just medication, including nursing and psychological input, for example.

IMHAs receive specialist training to enable them to fulfil their role.

What rights do IMHAs have?

An IMHA has the right to visit and interview you in private, to interview anyone professionally concerned with your care and treatment, and to access your records **with your consent**. (In the case of patients lacking capacity, an IMHA's role is extended in a similar way to that of an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA)).

Referrals to IMHA

An IMHA **must** respond to referrals from responsible clinicians (rc), approved mental health professionals (AMHP), and nearest relatives (NR). You have the right to say you do not want the IMHA to be involved at any point. IMHAs will also respond to referrals from others, including you the patient, so you can always ask one of the nurses to contact the IMHA service on your behalf.

Information about the IMHA Service

It is the duty of the Managers of the Hospital, your rc and your local Social Services Authority (which employs the AMHPs) to inform you both verbally and in writing about the IMHA service. Your NR should also be given information about the IMHA service unless you object to this.

Links to Other forms of Mental Health Advocacy

As you may or may not be aware, CSN also provides a 'generic' mental health advocacy service in Lambeth. However, due to funding and resource constraints, we will give priority to provision of the IMHA service, although the same staff will also provide the generic service for each ward and community area. This means that you don't have to see another advocate because you have a need that falls outside of the IMHA brief, but you may have to wait to get assistance with that need due to the need to prioritise the IMHA service.

Complaints, comments and feedbacks about our Service

CSN is a user led organisation, and is very keen to ensure that our service is the best it can be within the resources we have. As such, we are keen to hear your views as to how we can improve upon the service we provide. If you wish to give us some feedback, please call, write, fax or email as follows:

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