



**FREE INFORMATION &
ADVICE SERVICE FOR
NHS CONTINUING
HEALTHCARE (CHC)**



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Beacon is a social enterprise with decades of experience in Continuing Healthcare support. We are the chosen supplier for the NHS England-funded Free Information & Advice Service which we have been working with NHSE to deliver since 2014, and through which we provide support to over a thousand individuals every month. Since we began Beacon has have advised over 100,000 individuals.

The Information & Advice Service is a free national facility for individuals and their loved ones in need of advice or support with Continuing Healthcare (CHC) in England. The service enables members of the public to access independent information and guidance to help them to understand the eligibility criteria; navigate the assessment process; familiarise themselves with the Decision Support Tool; understand a decision; request a review of an eligibility decision and more. Advice sessions often take the form of a telephone consultation, but can be delivered via videocall using Microsoft Teams. Each individual is entitled to unlimited Tier 1 information and upto 90 minutes of free Tier 2 advice with one of our specialist advisers. Beacon also provides free and comprehensive written guidance in the form of our Navigational Toolkit – a resource written by our team of expert advisers and available via our website.

At Beacon we are proud of our affiliation with NHS England, but we are also committed to the independence of our organisation for the sake of impartiality. We seek to uphold and protect this independence to ensure the highest possible standards of advice and support for those who come to us for guidance.

The Free Information & Advice Service for CHC is supported by a consortia of leading voluntary sector organisations including Age UK, Parkinson's UK and the Spinal Injuries Association.

AIMS OF THE SERVICE

The Free Information & Advice Service aims to:

- Provide those who feel they may be eligible for NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) with the information they need to understand the key principles of the National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare, the eligibility criteria, and to equip them to contribute fully to their assessment.
- Raise awareness so that individuals who may be entitled to an assessment understand how to request a referral at the appropriate time and what to expect at each stage of the process..
- Help individuals to understand how their needs have been assessed against the criteria so that they are able to make informed choices about whether and how to request a review of their eligibility decision.
- Help individuals engage effectively with local resolution procedures and, if necessary, come to Resolution Meetings / Review Panels prepared with the most relevant information.
- Provide ICBs, Local Authorities and other health and social care professionals and stakeholders with a free and trusted source of specialist information and advice to which they are able to refer clients and service users.
- Support individuals who are eligible to engage fully with the care planning process in a way that maximises control and ensures their preferences are reflected in the way their assessed needs are met.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How does the Information & Advice Service work?

The service provides individuals with information and advice in three specific areas:

- Two-tiered remote advice surgeries: time-limited specialist advice delivered via telephone, Microsoft Teams and/or email
- Written guidance in the form of our Navigational Toolkit provided via digital download or as a hard copy
- Online resources in the form of reference guides, FAQs and visual assets available via our website

Individuals are entitled to receive a copy of Beacon's Navigational Toolkit in the format they find most accessible, and up to 90 minutes of Tier 2 verbal advice. There is a small charge for hard copy toolkits to cover the cost of postage and administration.

Tier 1 advisers provide unlimited information and guidance on matters such as how to request an assessment or review. For those who require more comprehensive advice Tier 2 advisers provide up to 90 minutes of in-depth advice specific to the individual's situation. Individuals should book Tier 2 consultations in advance, and may split their 90 minutes across multiple sessions if required. The service operates 9am – 5pm Monday - Friday, excluding bank holidays (out of hours call-backs may be provided where needed).

"The information I received about CHC from Beacon, including the Navigational Toolkit, is the most useful thing anyone has pointed me towards in five years as a social worker. I have recommended the toolkit to many of my colleagues, and I have also given Beacon's details to family members of people whose relatives are having DSTs."

2. Who is entitled to access the service?

The service is open to individuals and their representatives in England at any stage of their NHS Continuing Healthcare journey, from initial pre-Checklist enquiries through to the latter stages of the resolution and care delivery processes.

3. What type of information and advice do you provide?

Information and advice is provided on any area within the scope of the National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care (revised July 2022) and any future editions, related guidance, and on the topics covered by Beacon's Navigational Toolkit. This includes the eligibility criteria, key principles, assessments, reviews, care planning, joint packages of care and resolution.

Where it has been identified that individuals may benefit from information and advice about matters related to their NHS Continuing Healthcare query (e.g. accessing benefits or carer support), they will be signposted to partner organisations as appropriate.

4. How do I refer my clients/service users to the service?

Formal referrals are not necessary. Individuals simply need to contact Beacon on 0345 548 0300 or alternatively submit a 'Talk to Us' request through our website, www.beaconchc.co.uk. Either access points will enable individuals to speak with a Tier 1 adviser or to schedule a Tier 2 advice surgery. Beacon's website also contains a wealth of information about NHS Continuing Healthcare and can be accessed at any time of the day.

5. What is the best way for me to inform my clients/service users about the service?

Beacon and NHS England request that any individual who feels they may benefit from independent guidance and support around NHS Continuing Healthcare be informed of the Information & Advice Service. ICBs, Local Authorities and voluntary sector organisations are key to raising awareness of this service.

ICBs may choose to inform individuals when their assessors first come into contact with a new service user, or alternatively reference the service in any written correspondence as a free source of independent advice. Other stakeholders (for example voluntary sector organisations) may wish to inform individuals who contact them with a continuing healthcare enquiry.

We have a selection of promotional material which introduces and explains the service in more detail. These may be downloaded from our website and distributed as appropriate. Please search 'resources' on our website to download.

6. Do you also provide information and resources for professionals?

Beacon is continuing to develop and collate a series of resources for health & social care professionals who work within the field of NHS Continuing Healthcare. These resources will be accessible via our website. For further information or to input into the development of these resources please email enquiries@beaconchc.co.uk.

7. Who are Beacon?

Beacon was established in 2013 for the purpose of providing independent and high-quality support to individuals and their families in England who need help navigating the NHS Continuing Healthcare assessment, resolution and care planning / commissioning processes. Beacon evolved from a service offered by Age UK Oxfordshire, and now operates as a national registered social enterprise,

with a core set of ethical social objectives and values through which all of our work is delivered. Beacon itself is not a charity, but any profits are donated to charity for the furtherance of our social objectives.

At Beacon we provide two separate services – we are the chosen supplier for the NHS England-funded Free Information & Advice Service for CHC, and we deliver chargeable representation and casework services in CHC across England. For over a decade, our team of specialist advisers and advocates have supported thousands of individuals to understand their assessments and the CHC decision making processes; make informed decisions about their care and prepare clear, structured and evidence-based cases for local resolution processes and Independent Review Panels.

For over 20 years our team has been commissioned by Local Authorities, Strategic Health Authorities, and NHS trusts to provide trusted independent advice, casework and advocacy, and to support the NHS with training. Our aim is to ensure that every individual who may be entitled to NHS Continuing Healthcare receives fair, in-depth and independent advice about every aspect of the NHS Continuing Healthcare process and criteria. We firmly believe that understanding the system empowers people to make informed choices that are in their best interests.

"The helpline was invaluable to me in explaining what the process was and what evidence I would need to collect, which is what has enabled this [successful] outcome. Myself and the family are very grateful for the support of our adviser who was so sensitive and spotted things we hadn't."

8. How can I be certain of the quality and impartiality of Beacon's advice?

The Beacon team has a long history of supporting

the NHS with advice, training and independent scrutiny of NHS Continuing Healthcare procedures. We have worked closely with NHS England on the development of the NHS Continuing Healthcare E-Learning programme and supported NHS trusts, Local Authorities and the voluntary sector with multiple training initiatives over the past 20 years. These include supporting IRP panel recruitment and training, scrutiny of national and local CHC policies, delivery of research projects and focus groups for NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care, PUPOC training for CCGs, remote assessment training for NHS England and participation in numerous operational improvement initiatives.

It is fundamental to what we do that the information and advice provided by Beacon's team is independent and accurately reflects both the letter and spirit of national policy and guidance. Beacon has committed to working with NHS England to ensure that ICBs, Local Authorities and other stakeholders can have confidence in the quality of the information and advice we provide. To do this we have established a quality assurance programme which includes the following:

- Working closely with key stakeholders such as NHS England to quality-check our advice through the scrutiny of literature and case studies
- Regular reporting meetings with NHS England and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
- Regular monitoring of advice surgeries
- Structured onboarding, comprehensive initial and ongoing training for advisers
- Gathering feedback from service users and referrers
- Regular engagement with third sector stakeholders to assess feedback they are receiving about Beacon's service
- Scrutiny and governance of all Beacon's operations by a primarily-unpaid Board of

Directors with a broad range of expertise across health, social care, third sector and financial sectors.

Over the course of the pilot Beacon conducted telephone surveys to find out how individuals who contacted Beacon rated the quality of the information and advice they had received. In our most recent survey 93% of respondents said they would recommend Beacon to other people who needed independent information and advice about NHS Continuing Healthcare.

"I have nothing but praise for the team running this much-needed service. Their in-depth knowledge of CHC funding is exceptional. The advice given to me by the team was crucial when I challenged the outcome of the CHC assessment of a relative. I am doubtful that, without their input, the claim would have been successful. I wholeheartedly recommend this service to anyone seeking support with a CHC assessment."

9. Is there a conflict between the Free Information & Advice Service and Beacon's chargeable services?

Having realised the need for ethical and honestly-priced national representation, Beacon was set up to meet the needs of individuals who require specialist advocacy and casework at a reasonable cost in those areas where there is currently no specialist free advocacy available. The advocacy services we provide are modelled on the same services originally commissioned for a decade by Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts in the South region.

As a social enterprise we are committed to providing honestly-priced casework and representation services. We are realistic with our clients about their cases; we are upfront about our fees at every stage; and we donate any profits made to supporting charitable objectives that are in line with our aims. We also guarantee that our clients will never be tied into a long-term contract, and we

will never ask for payment upfront. They can ask us to stop work on their case at any time. We publish our prices as we believe in full transparency with our clients, from the start.

It is of vital importance that the Free Information & Advice Service is kept separate to our chargeable advocacy services so that individuals are clear about what is free and what is not. In order to maintain these boundaries, we apply the following principles:

- Free information and advice enquiries are separated from advocacy enquiries at source and handled by a separate team. Individuals do not come into contact with the chargeable services team unless they specifically request to be transferred.
- In all online and physical literature where we talk about the Information & Advice Service we make it clear that this service is funded by NHS England and is separate to our private advocacy services.
- Advisers strictly must not refer to Beacon's chargeable services unless asked specifically by the individual about other help or support that may be available to them. In that scenario the adviser should also inform the individual about alternative advocacy services.

10. How do you work with other NHS Continuing Healthcare stakeholders?

We are proud to work in partnership with a number of major voluntary sector organisations including Age UK, Parkinson's UK, and the Spinal Injury Association. In addition to these partnerships Beacon is also a member of the Society of Later Life Advisers, Social Enterprise UK, the Institute of Paralegals and the NHS Continuing Healthcare Alliance.

We recognise the importance of working closely with partner and affiliate organisations who share our values and may have specialisms outside of Beacon's area of expertise. We commit to working alongside these organisations to ensure that the individuals we come into contact with have the opportunity to access specialist advice and support through referral to partner organisations where appropriate.

11. How can I find out more about the service and provide feedback?

We very much welcome and encourage feedback that will enable us to continue to develop and improve the Information & Advice Service. For more information or to provide feedback please use the following contact details:

Telephone: 0345 548 0300

Email: feedback@beaconhc.co.uk

working in partnership with



CONTACT

For further independent information, advice and advocacy regarding NHS Continuing Healthcare, contact Beacon at:

10 Napier Court
Barton Lane
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 3YT

0345 548 0300
www.beaconchc.co.uk

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