ISCAS
INDEPENDENT SECTOR
COMPLAINTS ADJUDICATION SERVICE

ISCAS to become the Private Healthcare Ombudsman

The UK's independent complaints scheme for private healthcare has gained ombudsman status and will operate under its new name from 1 April 2027.

30 October 2026 – The Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service (ISCAS) will become the Private Healthcare Ombudsman on 1 April 2027, following approval of its application for Ombudsman Membership by the Ombudsman Association.

ISCAS has provided independent adjudication of patient complaints about private healthcare since 2001. Its nearly 300 subscribing providers, across all four nations of the UK, range from major hospital groups to independent clinics, doctors and NHS private patient units. The Private Healthcare Information Network (PHIN) notes that 97% of independent healthcare providers in England subscribe to the scheme.[1]

Ombudsman status recognises that the scheme meets the Association's criteria for independence, fairness, effectiveness, openness, transparency and accountability. The Association's Validation Committee said the application reflected "careful preparation, mature governance arrangements, and a clear commitment to meeting both the letter and spirit of the OA's membership criteria".

The Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR), an independent registered charity, has worked with ISCAS since 2015, initially hosting the service and then acquiring it in 2022. ISCAS now operates independently as part of the CEDR Group, giving the service a strong institutional base while preserving its impartial decision-making. This relationship will continue when ISCAS becomes the Private Healthcare Ombudsman.

Comment

Sally Taber, Director of ISCAS, said:

"For many years, ISCAS has provided an independent complaints service for patients and providers across the UK's independent healthcare sector. Recognition as an ombudsman builds on that established role and provides further reassurance that patients have access to an impartial and trusted service when concerns cannot be resolved directly with their healthcare provider.

This is an important development for the sector and one that strengthens its commitment to high standards of patient care and complaint handling. We will continue to work closely with our subscribing providers, representative bodies and regulators across all four nations of the UK as we make the transition to the Private Healthcare Ombudsman."

Tom Earley, CEDR Chief Adjudicator and Ombudsman*-designate, *said:

"Recognition as an ombudsman builds on ISCAS's established role in providing independent and impartial review of complaints. As the Private Healthcare Ombudsman, we will continue to make decisions based on what is fair and reasonable, while using the insight

[1] Source-https://www.phin.org.uk/help/making-a-complaint

gained from complaints to support learning and improvements in patient care across the independent healthcare sector."

John Munton, CEDR Managing Director, said:

"CEDR is delighted that the Ombudsman Association has recognised ISCAS as an ombudsman. This recognition reflects both the dedication of the ISCAS team over many years and the independent healthcare sector's long-standing commitment to patient care, including its willingness to learn from complaints and disputes."

Donal Galligan, Chief Executive of the Ombudsman Association, said:

"We are pleased to welcome the Private Healthcare Ombudsman as an Ombudsman member of the Association. Independent complaint handling matters as much in private healthcare as anywhere else, and patients will now have access to an ombudsman that meets the standards the public is entitled to expect. We look forward to working with the Ombudsman and its team over the coming years."

What this means

For patients, the route for making a complaint is unchanged. Complaints should first be raised with the provider and, if they remain unresolved, may be referred for independent review. The scheme considers complaints about care, service and clinicians' conduct, but it does not determine clinical negligence claims or award compensation for an unsatisfactory clinical outcome. From 1 April 2027, that review will be carried out by the Private Healthcare Ombudsman. The telephone number will remain the same, and existing web links will continue to work.

For subscribing providers, there is no change to the complaints process, timescales or subscription arrangements. ISCAS Limited will operate as the Private Healthcare Ombudsman from 1 April 2027, and existing agreements will continue unchanged. Subscribers will be contacted directly ahead of that date with guidance on updating their complaints policies and response letters.

Notes to editors

About the Private Healthcare Ombudsman. The Private Healthcare Ombudsman, formerly the Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service (ISCAS), provides independent review of patient complaints about subscribing private healthcare providers across the UK. The service began accepting complaints in 2001 and has nearly 300 subscribing providers. It is operated by ISCAS Limited, a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (company number 07474408) and part of the CEDR Group. Its Chair is Des Shiels and its Chief Ombudsman-designate is Tom Earley.

About CEDR. The Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation and registered charity (no. 1060369), founded in 1990. The CEDR Group provides commercial mediation and other dispute resolution services; designs and operates consumer redress, adjudication and complaint-handling schemes, including the Private Healthcare Ombudsman; and delivers training and consultancy in mediation, negotiation, conflict management and complaint handling. It also undertakes research, thought leadership, innovation and outreach to improve the way conflict is managed and resolved. The Group operates as a social enterprise, with its activities supporting CEDR's charitable

purpose of advancing effective dispute resolution and widening access to conflict management skills.

About the Ombudsman Association. The Ombudsman Association is the professional association for ombudsman schemes and complaint handlers. Ombudsman Membership is granted only to schemes that meet its validation criteria, assessed by its Validation Committee and approved by its Board. www.ombudsmanassociation.org

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