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Advocacy Guidance

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is about helping you to speak up for yourself, to make sure that your views and opinions are heard and understood. If you find it hard, or you are unable to speak for yourself then you may find an 'Advocate' who can help you.

An advocate should be free from conflicts of interest with those providing services to the person they are working with and should represent the other person's interests as if they were the Advocate's own.

Do you have something to say? Would you like help to say it?

There are five main ways you can do so. You can:

- Talk for yourself. (Self advocacy).
- Ask a volunteer to talk for you.
- Ask a legal expert, such as a solicitor, barrister or legal advice worker. They can also speak for you at a tribunal or in court. (Legal advocacy).
- Join a group. The group can work together to support and speak up for you and other people who have similar concerns. A group can express your point of view in places such as committees, forums and meetings.
- Ask a person who has had a similar experience to you to talk for you. (Peer advocacy).

Types of advocacy

Citizen advocacy

This is a one-to-one ongoing partnership between a volunteer Advocate and a person. This person may not know their rights, be vulnerable and may be at risk of being mistreated or excluded.

Self-advocacy

This means "speaking up for yourself". Self-advocacy is about expressing your own needs and concerns and giving your own views.

Peer advocacy.

Peer advocacy is when one person talks for another who has experienced or is experiencing similar difficulties or has similar life experiences (e.g. service users in a residential facility).

Professional advocacy

This is when people are paid to provide an advocacy service. It is issue led, focusing on particular issues.

Legal advocacy

This is when a solicitor works on your behalf.

An Advocate can help you by:-

- Going to a meeting with you.
- Making a phone call for you.
- Helping you to write a letter or writing a letter with you.
- Helping you to send or write email.
- Speaking for you.
- Listening to you so they can understand your concerns.
- Speaking for you about your worries or about a particular problem.

What are the benefits of advocacy?

- It will help your voice to be heard.
- It will give you information, support, and a service to help you make choices.
- It will help you to get people to understand your point of view.
- It can make it easier for you get information in a way that you can understand.
- It will help you to see what other services are available.
- It will help you choose what you want to do.
- It is a free and confidential service.

Advocacy can help people to:-

- Make their own views and wishes clear.
- Help with expressing their views effectively.
- Represent their views faithfully and effectively.
- Get independent and accurate information.
- Help different view points to be heard.

Advocacy is NOT:

- Being a friend or counsellor.
- Persuading the person to agree with others.
- The Advocate deciding what is in the person's best interests.

- Complaining - Advocacy is not an alternative complaints procedure but may involve the Advocate in supporting the person in making a complaint effectively.
- Campaigning - although it may highlight problems and gaps in particular services.
- Providing social support - for example managing someone's financial affairs or organising transport or shopping.
- Interpreting for a person whose first language is not English.
- A mediation service.
- A long term service (except for Citizen Advocacy – see types of advocacy above).

After an advocate has worked with you on your particular worry, you should feel that your views have been heard.

Relevant legislation

Health and Social Care Act 2001 (Section 12) - places a duty on the Secretary of State to arrange for the provision of independent advocacy services, which should be '... independent of any person who is the subject of a relevant complaint or who is involved or who is investigating such a complaint...' It also provides for the Secretary of State to make payments to set up such arrangements.

Human Rights Act 1998 - enables individuals to pursue an action under the European Convention on Human Rights. Advocacy can support a person through this process.

Children Act 1989 (Section 26A and amended in 2004) - imposes on local authorities the duty to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy services for children and young people making or intending to make representations (including complaints).

As set out in **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995** - the Disability Rights Commission will assist individuals to uphold their rights as set out in the Act.

How to find an Advocate

North East Lincs Advocacy Service

Room 102 Freeman Street
41-43 Kent Street
Grimsby
North East Lincolnshire

Tel: 01472 311303

Fax: 01472 311304

Adult Social Care Services,

Brumby Resource Centre,
East Common Lane,
Scunthorpe,
North Lincolnshire

DN16 1QQ

Tel: 01724 297979

Tel: 01724 298056