

## Advocacy (England) Policy

### Policy Statement

This care service is based on person-centred values and principles, which emphasise that its users should express their views as clearly and candidly as they wish to get the kind and quality of service they expect. The service also recognises that some service users may not be able to communicate their feelings and views easily, so, we encourage and enable them to have access to advocates or an advocacy service, where this is appropriate, which will help them to express to us, their care service, their wishes and ideas about the services they need or any concerns and complaints.

The care service's approach to advocacy is consistent with all statutory requirements and guidance relating to the Health and Social Care Act (2008) (Regulated Activities) 2014, particularly concerning mental incapacity and deprivation of liberty and the safeguarding duties of local authorities under the under the Care Act 2014.

This policy aims to help service users to express their views to both the care service and to other bodies, and to feel that their views are understood and respected by using the help of an advocate or advocacy service, where this is considered appropriate and needed.

### Purposes of Advocacy

Advocacy:

- safeguards people who are vulnerable and discriminated against or who services find difficult to serve
- speaks up on behalf of individuals who are unable to do so for themselves
- empowers people who need a stronger voice by enabling them to express their own needs and make their own informed decisions
- enables people to get information, explore and understand their options, and to make their views, wishes and feelings known
- actively supports people to make informed choices.

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## When Advocacy Might Be Needed

The care service recognises that a person might need the representation provided by a personal advocate or advocacy service at different times in his or her involvement with a local authority and as a user of a care service, eg:

- during and to help with the initial needs assessment
- during any subsequent assessment and reviewing of needs
- in drawing up or reviewing the service user plan of care
- in making risk assessments relating to a service user's activities
- when their mental capacity to take their own decisions is being assessed, when best interests' decisions are being taken, or consideration is being given to depriving them of their liberty, as being in their best interests
- when helping a service user to represent his or her views to an outside organisation
- when a service user wishes to express a concern or complaint
- in instances where a service user may have been subject to abuse
- when a service user wishes to submit views on the services of the care service as part of a quality assurance programme
- in helping a service user to make an input to the drawing up or review of the care services' policies and procedures.

As a care provider, therefore, we are:

- committed to making available information about advocacy services, when appropriate or needed
- prepared to deal with an advocate who is representing a service user in communicating with the care service over any issue
- aim to facilitate the use of advocates who are representing our service users to other organisations.

## Defining Advocacy

As a care provider, we accept and work to the following definition of advocacy developed by Action for Advocacy (revised 2014).

“Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain service they need. Advocates and advocacy schemes work in

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partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.”

The care service recognises that advocacy can take several forms and will always attempt to find the right kind of service for any individual needing or requesting it. It recognises the value of self-advocacy, peer advocacy and the informal advocacy that can be provided by a person’s relatives and friends, as well as the input of trained advocates from formal advocacy services.

## The Qualities of Advocacy

We endorse the Advocacy Charter promoted by Action on Advocacy, which lists 10 essential qualities as follows.

1. Independence. Advocates should be independent from statutory and other service providing agencies.
2. Empowerment. People using advocacy should be able to participate in the running of the scheme.
3. Accountability. Every advocacy scheme should monitor and evaluate its work effectively.
4. Support for advocates. Advocates must be appropriately prepared, trained and supported.
5. Complaints. Advocacy schemes must have policies for dealing with complaints.
6. Clarity of purpose. Advocacy schemes must have clear objectives and must make these known.
7. Putting people first. Advocates must be non-judgmental and respectful of service users’ needs, views and experiences.
8. Equal opportunities. Advocacy schemes must have and observe a written equal opportunities policy.
9. Accessibility. Advocacy must be provided free of charge and in ways which make it widely accessible.
10. Confidentiality. Advocacy schemes must have a policy on confidentiality, which includes the circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached.

## Our Service Users’ Access to Advocacy

We will seek to make advocacy available to any service user who needs help in presenting their views by:

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- publicising information on local advocacy schemes that comply with the advocacy Code of Practice
- involving advocates where appropriate in the preparation and review of individual care plans
- using advocates to promote service user participation in the running of the care service
- helping service users to find and participate in advocacy schemes, eg by making leaflets available and including information on the service’s notice board
- seeking peer support for individual service users from people who share their disability, heritage or aspirations
- promoting a culture which enables service users to call on advocates to express their concerns and provide feedback on the way the care service is run
- respect the role of advocates in situations where service users wish to complain about services
- co-operate with any Independent Mental Capacity Advocate appointed to assist a service user.

## Local Advocacy Services Contact Details

VoiceAbility

Phone: +44(0)300 303 1660

Email: [helpline@voiceability.org](mailto:helpline@voiceability.org)

## Training

Staff are provided with training on the use of advocacy at all suitable stages of their employment from induction onwards.

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