

The Advocacy Charter

CLARITY OF PURPOSE Advocacy providers should ensure that the people they advocate on behalf of, health and social care services and funding agencies have information on the scope and limitations of the advocacy provider's role. Their governing document should set out their aims, objectives and planned activities and be able to demonstrate how it meets the principles contained in this Charter.

INDEPENDENCE The advocacy provider will be structurally independent from statutory organisations. They will be as free from conflict of interest as possible, both in design and operation of advocacy services, and seek actively to reduce conflicting interests, in particular where the organisation provides additional services such as housing provision.

PERSON CENTRED APPROACH The advocacy provider will ensure that the wishes and interests of the people it advocates on behalf of direct its work. Advocates should be non-judgmental and respectful of people's needs, views, culture and experiences.

EMPOWERMENT The advocacy provider will support self-advocacy and empowerment through its work. Should they wish to, people who access the service should have a say in the level of involvement and style of advocacy support they want. Where clients lack the ability or capacity to influence the service, the advocacy provider should enable those with an interest in the welfare of the person to be involved. People's influence and involvement should be enabled in the wider activities of the organisation up to and including Board level.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY The organisation will have a written equal opportunities policy that recognises the need to be pro-active in tackling all forms of inequality, discrimination and social exclusion. The advocacy provider will have systems in place for the fair and equitable allocation of advocates' time.

ACCESSIBILITY Advocacy will be provided free of charge to eligible people. Where clients need or want to purchase advocacy or where someone has an appointed deputy/attorney in place who wishes to instruct an advocate on the person's behalf, suitable processes should be in place to safeguard the person and ensure they are not open to financial abuse. The advocacy provider will aim to ensure that its premises (where appropriate), policies, procedures and publicity materials promote access for the population that it serves.

SUPPORTING ADVOCATES The advocacy provider will ensure advocates are suitably prepared, trained and supported in their role and provided with opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and experience.

ACCOUNTABILITY The advocacy provider will have systems in place for the effective monitoring and evaluation of its work, including identification of outcomes for people supported. All those who access the service will have a named advocate and a means of contacting them.

CONFIDENTIALITY The advocacy provider will have a written policy on confidentiality that is in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. It should outline how information about a person accessing the service may be shared as well as the circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached. Advocates must also be aware of situations that would require making a child or adult safeguarding alert.

COMPLAINTS The advocacy provider will have a written policy describing how individuals, including relevant stakeholders, can make complaints or give feedback about the service or about individual advocates. Where necessary, the organisation will enable people who use its services to access external independent support to make or pursue a complaint.

SAFEGUARDING Clear policies and procedures will be in place to ensure safeguarding issues are identified and acted upon. Advocates will be supported to understand the different forms of abuse, neglect, issues relating to confidentiality and what to do if they suspect a client is at risk.

Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need.

Advocates and advocacy providers work in partnership with the people they support and take their side.

Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.

