

A guide to Advocacy

Factsheet 13 – 25 June 2007 (2 pages)

What is Advocacy? **Advocacy is when someone supports you to speak up, or speaks on your behalf to help you get what you are entitled to.**

You may want other people to speak to Adult & Community Services for you, this is known as **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 need an **Advocate** who will speak for you.

Do you have something to say to Adult & Community Services? If you have and you want to tell us about it, there are five main ways you can do so.

You can:

- Tell us yourself.
- Ask a volunteer to tell us what you think.
- 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
- 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 tell us what you think.

You, or anyone you have chosen to represent you, can phone, write to or email your local Adult & Community Services office. Contact **Care Direct** on **0845 1551 007** for details of our local offices. You may want to talk to the person you usually see from Adult & Community Services. Or, you can speak to a manager or our Customer Services Manager on **freephone 0800 212 783**.

Our Advocacy Policy

It is our policy to support, and work in partnership with advocacy services as defined here for people requiring or seeking to receive our services. We have a duty to make advocacy services available, if required, to any adult who is making or intending to make a complaint.

What are the benefits of Advocacy?

- It will enable you to speak for yourself.
- A person or group will speak for you about your concerns.
- It will provide you with access to information, professional support, complaint procedures and services.
- It will help you to see what other services are available, such as local community services, self-help groups and other support networks.
- It can make it easier for you get information in a way that you can understand.
- It will help you choose what you want to do.
- It will help you to get people to understand your point of view.
- The advocate will speak for you.
- The advocate will listen to you without judging you.

Advocacy – 25 June 2007 *continued*.

Advocacy can help service users by:

- Clarifying their views and wishes.
- Assisting with expressing their views effectively.
- Representing their views faithfully and effectively.
- Providing independent advice and accurate information.
- Enabling negotiation and resolution of conflict to take place.

Advocacy is NOT about:

- 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.

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.
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.

Making a compliment, comment or complaint to Adult & Community Services

Where we feel it is necessary for someone making a complaint to have their views properly represented we will ensure that a suitable an advocacy service is available to them. With your help, an advocate can fill out a **feedback form**, telephone **0800 212 783**, fax **01392 382 363** or email sscomp@devon.gov.uk and our Customer Services Manager will deal with your compliment, comment or complaint. We will acknowledge any of these within 2 working days of receiving the feedback.

Finding out more – see ***Finding an Advocate*** online at: www.devon.gov.uk/advocacy

You can contact one of the many independent voluntary advocacy organisations that best suit your needs. Details of these services can be found at: www.devonline.gov.uk/community - the Devon Community Directory for local health and social care services in Devon and Torbay.

See also:

Leaflet 3, ***Compliments, Comments and Complaints*** (includes feedback form)

Factsheet FS4, ***Seeing your records***

Further factsheets can be found online at: www.devon.gov.uk/factsheets

If you have any further questions please contact **Care Direct 0845 1551 007**

For a version of this factsheet in another format or language please contact:

Care Direct 0845 1551 007 or email: ssenquiries@devon.gov.uk

Factsheet 13 – 25 June 2007 (2 Pages)