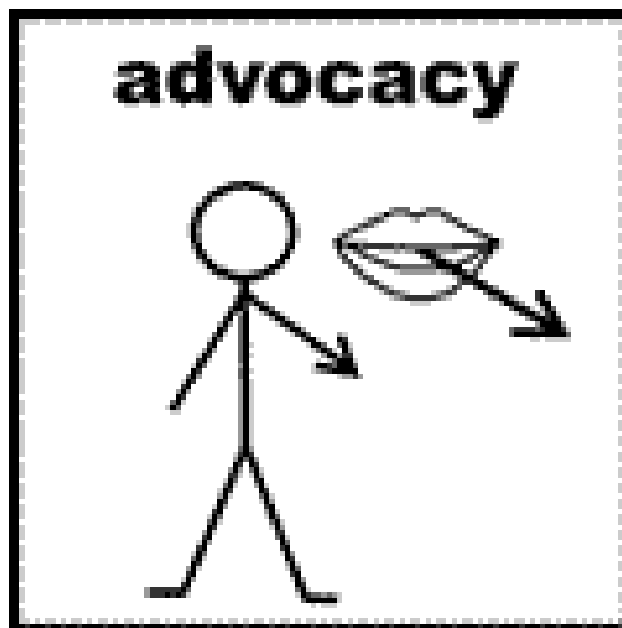


Advocacy

Helping you have your say - a
guide to advocacy



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

What is Advocacy?

You may want other people to speak to Social 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.

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 only speak for you.

The advocate will listen to you without judging you

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Advocacy can help service users by:

- Clarifying their own 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.

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.

