



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Getting the best from independent Advocacy Services

A good practice guide

in partnership with



July 2003

About this leaflet

This leaflet gives information about independent advocacy. Its aim is to explain what independent advocates do and what their relationship is to their partner and to paid staff and carers.

Words and what they mean

Advocacy An ordinary activity . . . part of everyday life. Many of us will at some point in our lives look to someone we trust to help us to speak up for ourselves.

The purpose of advocacy is to:

- safeguard people who are in situations where they are vulnerable
- speak up for and with people who are not being heard, helping them to express their views and make their own decisions and contributions

Advocate A person – paid or unpaid – who helps someone else to speak out.

Partner A person who has asked for the help of an advocate.

Staff Generally someone who is paid to provide services to the partner.

Carer Usually a member of the partner's family or a friend.

Why do we need independent advocates?

Because:

- Some people in our society are more likely than others to be treated badly, either because of other people's prejudices, or their own vulnerability, or both.
- Some people have no connections to family and friends or the wider community who could support them.
- For some people family and friends are part of the problem.
- Some people may only have professional paid workers involved in their lives. No matter how good the relationship may be, or how well supported they may feel, situations can arise when the person's wishes are not what the paid worker feels is the right way forward.
- A paid professional may have limits set by their employer on what they can do or say.

*(from 'Independent Advocacy – A Guide for Commissioners',
Scottish Executive, January 2001)*



What is the role of an independent advocate?

An independent advocate helps vulnerable people to express their views. This involves listening and supporting people to get information and to make decisions. It is not the advocate's job to express their own views, give advice, make judgements or solve problems. Advocates should not impose their own views on their partner.

As one advocate said:

Good advocacy is about stepping into your partner's shoes, speaking as one voice, doing as one person would. Sometimes staff spend a lot of time trying to influence me in order to persuade my partner to change their mind. I cannot do this.



Joe's story

Joe is due to be discharged from hospital. He usually lives in his own flat and he wants to go home. Staff and members of his family disagree about what he should do. Joe feels that he is not being listened to and he wants support to make his views known.

It is not the advocate's job to sort out the differences between staff and/or family members, to act as a referee at meetings or to try to influence Joe to take a particular course of action.

It is the advocate's job to listen to Joe, to make sure he gets the information he needs to make an informed decision about what to do and that he understands the consequences of that decision.

How can an advocate support Joe?

- Listen to Joe's story.
- Help him to explore exactly how he feels and what he needs to know, so he can put his case forward.
- If necessary, help him to write down what he wants to say.
- Attend meetings if asked to do so by Joe.
- Speak on Joe's behalf only if asked to do so by Joe.

On the rare occasions when it is not possible to find out the person's views, their advocate may offer an opinion. In this situation the advocate is acting as an independent person who has no specific interest in any particular outcome or decision. The opinion they put forward should be backed up by evidence. The advocate should also know what rights the person has and what services he or she may be entitled to.

What should staff expect from the advocacy service?

The advocacy service should:

- Provide information about the service, including how to refer people, the role of the advocate and the complaints procedure.
- Tell staff that an advocate is involved with a person unless the person has asked that this is kept confidential.
- Tell staff that an advocate is attending a meeting unless the advocacy partner wants this to be confidential.
- Make sure advocates know that they need to tell staff when they enter and leave a residential or day care service, for fire, safety and security reasons.
- Ensure that, as far as possible, independent advocates maintain a constructive working relationship with staff.



What should an independent advocate expect from staff?

Staff should:

- Support the need for independent advocacy as a way of helping vulnerable people to speak out.
- Tell the people they work with about advocacy.
- Help people to contact the advocacy service if asked to do so.
- Don't ask for a 'quick word in private'. Only give written or verbal information to the advocate when asked to do so by the person using the advocacy service.
- Understand that the discussion between the advocate and the person they are supporting is private and will not be shared without permission. The advocacy service will have a policy setting out when advocates will share information without permission.
- Make sure that the advocate knows about relevant meetings.
- Give reasonable notice of meetings so that the advocate and their partner can work together to prepare.
- Agree a policy to make sure that the issues raised by advocacy work are listened to and acted upon.
- Nominate an 'advocacy link worker' in residential and day care services, to take responsibility for keeping information about advocacy up to date and to sort out any problems between independent advocates and the service.
- Provide somewhere private for advocates to meet with people who ask for their support.
- Where possible, help people in day and residential services to get to and from meetings organised by the advocacy service.
- Make sure that advocates are aware of any risk posed by meeting a person on their own. This should include advice about health or medical issues.

Independent Advocacy Services in Nottinghamshire

Age Concern Advocacy Services

Provides services to people aged 60 years and over in hospital, at home and in local care homes. Contact Age Concern for leaflets about their services or look on their website.

write: Age Concern Nottingham & Nottinghamshire
Bradbury House
12 Shakespeare Street
Nottingham NG1 4FQ

tel: (0115) 844 0011

email: info@ageconcernnotts.org.uk

website: www.ageconcernnotts.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society Advocacy Project

Provides advocacy services to:

- people caring for a relative or friend who is confused, disorientated or suffering from memory loss
- people with dementia who live in the City of Nottingham and the districts of Rushcliffe, Broxtowe, Gedling and Mansfield.

write: Advocacy Project
Alzheimer's Society
1st Floor
15 Broad Street
Nottingham NG1 3AJ

tel: (0115) 840 3830
(0115) 840 3833
(01623) 429 419 – Mansfield office

email: branch_alzheimersnottingham@ntlworld.com

HFT Advocacy Project

Provides an advocacy service to adults with a learning disability in the City of Nottingham, Broxtowe, Hucknall, Gedling and Rushcliffe districts.

write: HFT Advocacy Project
DBH House
Carlton Square
Nottingham NG4 3BP

tel: (0115) 940 8591

email: advocacy@hft.org.uk

website: www.hft.org.uk

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Advocacy Alliance (NNAA)

Provides a service mainly in Ashfield, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood and Bassetlaw to adults with learning disabilities and adults with mental health problems. Advocacy services for other vulnerable adults can be commissioned.

write: NNAA
The Brooks Unit
Kings Mill Centre
Mansfield Road
Sutton in Ashfield
Nottinghamshire NG17 4NA

tel: (01623) 662664

email: hello@nnaa.org.uk

website: www.nnaa.org.uk

Nottingham Advocacy Group (NAG)

Provides a service to adults with mental health problems mainly in Nottingham City and the districts of Broxtowe, Rushcliffe and Gedling.

write: Nottingham Advocacy Group (NAG)
848A Woodborough Road
Mapperley
Nottingham NG3 5QQ

tel: (0115) 910 7300

email: nag@nottinghamadvocacy.org.uk

Nottingham Young Disabled People (NYDP)

Provides services for and by physically disabled people and people with sensory impairment aged from 16 to 65 years. Covers Nottingham City, Rushcliffe, Broxtowe and Gedling. NYDP does group work and offers one to one support from the development worker and trained disabled volunteer advocates. Workers also provide information by phone, email and through some formal training.

write: NYDP
Base 51
51 Glasshouse Street
Nottingham NG1 3LP

tel: (0115) 952 0040

email: nottsydp@tiscali.co.uk

Other useful information

There are other sources of support available to people who might need help to speak up. For example:

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Provides a confidential listening and support service for patients and their relatives. Available to anyone using health services. For information about services:

tel: (01636) 670604 – Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark
(0115) 912 3336 – Broxtowe, Gedling, Hucknall, Rushcliffe

Independent Complaints Advisory Service (ICAS)

A new service which will replace the Community Health Councils in supporting people who want to make a complaint about health services. For more information ring the PALS number (above).

Nottinghamshire County Council Welfare Rights Service

Provides help with social security and other welfare benefits, including representation at tribunals and appeals to the Social Security Commissioners.

tel: (0115) 977 4018

The Legal Services Commission

Provides details of all advice services, including solicitors, via a telephone helpline and website.

tel: 0845 608 1122 (minicom: 0845 609 6677)

website: www.justask.org.uk

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Contact us if you would like further copies of this publication, or you need the information in a different language or format:



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