



Principles and standards in Independent Advocacy organisations and groups

Advocacy 2000
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Important notes

This document is divided into two main parts, A and B, and a short third part, part C. Both part A and part B are statements about principles and standards in Independent Advocacy. Part A describes the practice of an Independent Advocacy organisation. It gives details of the work that such organisations do in finding or providing support for individuals or groups. Part B describes the practice of Independent Collective and Self-advocacy groups. It also gives details of suitable ways that such groups can be supported.

It is essential that you are familiar with the guidance notes, which form part C. These provide important information on how to interpret and use this document. In particular, part C explains that **the lists of points we have described as indicators should not be seen as desirable features or standards** and that **it may take a new organisation some time to meet the minimum practice we have described.** By 'indicators' we mean things that, if you saw them in an organisation, would suggest that the organisation was working according to the principle they are connected with. By 'minimum practice' we mean things that should always be seen in an Independent Advocacy organisation.

Other advocacy activity

There are many organisations that use the terms 'advocate' and 'advocacy' to describe their activity, but which do not work in the way this document describes. Some of these may share some, or all, of the objectives that are described, but they achieve these through different activities. Others are involved in almost entirely unrelated activities. This document does not comment on the value or quality of their work. We hope that it gives clear descriptions of two types of organisation or activity. We describe the first as an Independent Advocacy organisation, and the second as an Independent Collective or Self-advocacy group, because these are the terms such organisations and groups use themselves (but see part C). This document should benefit those who are involved in different activities, as it will support them to show the differences in their work and the reasons for these.

Part A

Independent Advocacy organisations

Introduction

This part of the document explains how an Independent Advocacy organisation acts and what it hopes to achieve. The standard of practice of an Independent Advocacy organisation can be measured against the principles we have described. We have written this document to give guidance to people who are creating or funding an Independent Advocacy organisation, and to give organisations a written document that helps to describe the foundations of the work they do. It should be useful to people who are responsible for making sure that an organisation's activity is based on appropriate values.

The text is divided into sections on organisation foundations, organisation action, supporting the practice of advocates, and outcomes. Each principle is highlighted by a box - with text to explain it afterwards. Each principle is also followed by a list of indicators and some by a note of minimum practice. Part C of the document explains important information on how to use these.

Section 5 gives examples that should help to make the rest of the text easier to understand.

The rest of this introduction acts as a summary and index for the principles and outcomes described in sections 1 to 4.

Part C of this document provides detailed guidance and important information on how you should interpret and use the text. It explains what practice is covered by the text and what isn't, and how to interpret and use the indicators and minimum practice. It also explains why this document uses certain words rather than others. It is essential that you are familiar with this section.

What do Independent Advocacy organisations and advocates do?

Independent Advocacy organisations find or provide people who can support a person, or a group, as an advocate. Advocates fulfil some roles simply by being involved with a person or group, but they also act for them, pass on their wishes, views, hopes, ambitions or ideas to other people, and provide support for the person to express themselves.

Some of these organisations provide the person or group with an advocate direct. These advocates are paid staff or unpaid volunteers who act as an advocate for the person, and who also answer to the organisation. In other documents we use the terms 'Independent Professional Advocacy' and 'Volunteer Advocacy' to refer to this.

Another form of Independent Advocacy (known as a Citizen Advocacy organisation) tries to create a *personal* relationship between an individual and an independent person. Citizen Advocacy organisations expect that this relationship will benefit both, and hope that the individual will become more connected to the local community by being introduced to the independent person's friends, family or other contacts. They also expect that the independent person will actively advocate.

All these organisations may also act in the general interests of the group of people who they believe need support. This is always a secondary part of their practice and such action must not have a negative effect on their main role or prevent them from working to the principles described in this document (for example, '*organisation identity*'). *They are also clear that they are not acting as the representatives of the groups in whose interests they act* (it is important to avoid a situation where others consult with Independent Advocacy organisations instead of approaching people direct). Independent Advocacy organisations may also have relationships with collective or self-advocacy groups that can act as representatives.

The foundations of an organisation

Independent Advocacy organisations:

- are set up so they and their advocates are as free as possible from interests which conflict with those of the people they support;
- do not have further unnecessary restrictions on their action beyond the principles set out in this document;
- have strong community roots; and
- try to include people with direct experience of using services in every area of the organisation.

In section 1 this is explained in the principles '*independence*', '*community roots*', and '*involving users*'.

How organisations act

Independent Advocacy organisations, their staff, managers, and advocates:

- concentrate on reaching people who are most in need of safeguarding and empowerment, including people who are difficult to find out about;
- actively find out about people who might need support, and about what practice takes place in the services that they receive;
- pay particular attention to how their practice affects the image of the people they believe need support;
- treat sensitive information about the people they help in an appropriate way;
- make sure that their image emphasises their independence and their community roots, and that they don't do anything which lessens this; and
- act with integrity (see page 24).

In section 2 these are explained in the principles of '*focusing on those most at risk*', '*being proactive*', '*positive imagery*', '*confidentiality*', '*organisation identity*', and '*organisation integrity*'.

How advocates act

Those supporting advocates (mainly Independent Advocacy organisation co-ordinators or managers) try to make sure that advocates:

- act on the side of the person or group receiving support, and are determined and persistent in doing this;
- make sure the people they support are as fully involved and in control as they can be;
- initiate action based on a person's fundamental needs and rights if this person is not able, for whatever reason, to do this themselves; and
- treat the people they support with respect and decency.

In section 3 these are explained in the principles of *'loyalty'*, *'maximising involvement'*, *'initiating action'*, and *'respect and decency'*.

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Outcomes

Independent Advocacy organisations aim for **all** the following outcomes.

- To safeguard people through encouraging good practice and preventing poor practice by those in a position to disempower, neglect or abuse them.
- To add weight to the ideas, hopes, ambitions and opinions that people have to increase the amount of control they have over their life, so that poor practice is challenged.
- To empower people so they will be able to expand their hopes and ambitions and will become more confident and able to make others take note of their opinions, hopes and ambitions, and less easily influenced by those with conflicting interests.
- To improve the way that some groups of people are treated in general by society, by the community and by the services that are provided on their behalf. Some also aim for people to be directly included in the ordinary community.

These four outcomes are explained in section 4 in the principles of *'safeguarding'*, *'adding weight'*, *'empowerment'*, and *'cultural change and social inclusion'*.

Section I

The foundations of an organisation

Independence

Independent Advocacy organisations are designed to be as free as possible from interests which conflict with those of the people they support, and they continually and actively work to reduce conflicting interests.

Independent Advocacy organisations have structural independence and psychological independence. They make sure that those involved in an organisation understand that it is separate from any of the other services or support that people receive and that they act accordingly. They also try to be financially independent.

Independent Advocacy organisations are limited in their action by these principles, resources, and the law, but do not have other limits on their action.

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This principle is important because conflicting interests could limit the actions of advocates. It is also important because people who might most need the support of an advocate may be those who are particularly sensitive about any links that they believe exist between an advocate and other people or organisations.

It is important to remember that clear conflict of interest arises from having funding from any source that might be challenged by the organisation or advocates or the people they support. Relying on one such source may have a much more negative effect than relying on more than one. Generally, the more sources of funding an advocacy organisation has, the less powerful any one conflict of interest is. Agreements with funders can also reduce the effect of conflicts of interest, although these still exist.

Conflicts of interest also come from many other sources. One of these is through a formal connection with another agency, for example, if an agency is providing other services and also managing an Independent Advocacy organisation.

Limits on the practice of an advocate or advocacy organisation cannot remove a conflict of interest, but instead show that an organisation

recognises that a conflict exists (for example, an organisation cannot reasonably say that no conflict of interest exists because they have promised never to challenge those who fund them). Also, staff, advocates and volunteers involved in a project should not think that there are limits on their practice where none actually exists (psychological independence or independence of mind).

The fact that a conflict of interest has not had an effect on the action of an organisation or advocate does not mean that the conflict of interest is no longer there. Advocates may be able to act despite a conflict of interest.

This principle relates to **all** the outcomes of Independent Advocacy.

Indicators

- The organisation has sources of funding without conflicting interests.
- There is nothing inappropriate in agreements related to funding.
- Organisation staff are not employed by an agency with conflicting interests.
- There are no family connections between organisation staff, advocates or volunteers and relevant service staff.
- Organisation staff, advocates and volunteers describe the people who are supported by advocates, and their situations, more from the point of view of the people being supported than from the point of view of any service provider.
- Organisation staff, advocates and volunteers avoid developing friendships that might make it more difficult for advocates to follow the principle of 'loyalty' later (for example, an advocate might find it difficult to help the person they support to criticise their friend).
- The organisation recognises any conflicts of interest that exist.
- The organisation deals appropriately with those conflicts that it does recognise.
- The organisation has plans to reduce conflicts of interest.

- There are no other limits on the organisation written into its constitution or any equivalent document.
- Staff, advocates and volunteers do not feel there are limits on their practice where none actually exists (psychological independence). Those who provide support have dealt with these feelings if they have arisen in the past.
- The organisation does not have formal connections with a body that has interests that might be in conflict with those of the advocacy organisation or those of the people the organisation believes need support. If there are formal connections, there are appropriate agreements in place, which lessen the effect of the conflicts of interest.
- Any training programmes for organisation staff and volunteers contribute to psychological independence.
- The organisation has policies or plans that contribute to its independence.

Minimum practice

- Organisations have more than one source of funds if one of these is a statutory agency (a national or local government organisation or an agency working on their behalf).
- Organisations are not formally limited by funders through inappropriate agreements (agreements only refer to **that** funding and don't limit how the organisation spends or applies for other money or how they carry out other activities).
- Constitutions do not include extra inappropriate limits on organisation action.
- Organisations are not managed by an organisation that provides any basic care and support services, or which has interests in this.

Community roots and beneficial allies

Independent Advocacy organisations have roots in the community in which the people who are supported by advocates belong. This means they are managed by a structure which is closely connected to this community - usually a management committee or board of directors whose membership is made up mostly of people who are involved mainly as members of this community (that is, they are not members because of any involvement in social care). It also means they have other well-developed connections and allies within these communities and beyond the management committee. Some of these are relationships with people in positions of power (for example, councillors) or who are respected (for example, a teacher).

Organisations try to increase their strength, skills and knowledge through relationships with other Independent Advocacy organisations and the Independent Advocacy movement as a whole. They also specifically build relationships with collective or self-advocacy groups whose knowledge and opinions are useful, which might be better placed to deal with some issues and who might know of people who need individual advocacy.

This principle is important because community roots are an effective way of achieving the outcome of *'cultural change and social inclusion'* without affecting direct advocacy practice (you can find more details in section 4). Community roots also increase the independence and security of an organisation. The outcomes of *'safeguarding'* and *'adding weight'* are also likely to be better achieved where organisations are seen to act with the backing and knowledge of the community.

This principle is intended to refer to a 'local community' (in other words, the ordinary groups of people who are linked through friendships, shared interests, the ordinary services that they use, and where they live, for instance), not the 'community of interest' (which is described in the principle of *'involving users'*).

If the outcome of '*cultural change*' is to be achieved, Independent Advocacy organisations must form community roots that are deeper than just including ordinary community members on their management committee. These roots may be in the form of people who are committed to the survival of the organisation, people who understand its activity, and people whose opinions about services might be influential (that is, an increase in their knowledge and experience should influence services). It is important that, while recognising the need to maintain appropriate confidentiality about individual people, those connected with an organisation are able to learn about the care and support services that are provided for them. In achieving this, a particularly important contribution is likely to be made by people who themselves use these services.

This principle refers firstly to having roots in the community that is local to the people supported by advocates. Due to specific circumstances, some organisations might need to interpret this as referring to a wider geographical area. One circumstance is where those being supported are people detained in a locked hospital ward, where the local community is closely connected to staff of the hospital, and where people see themselves as belonging to a community that is distant from the hospital.

The project's community roots should only be through relationships and links that they choose to make, and should not lead to any conflict of interest.

This principle relates particularly to the outcomes of '*cultural change and social inclusion*', '*safeguarding*', and '*adding weight*'. Community roots also influence an organisation's independence.

Indicators

- The organisation is managed by a group or committee whose only role is to manage the work of this organisation.
- The committee membership includes people who, until they became involved, had very limited knowledge of the social care system and very limited knowledge of the group of people who the organisation believes need support.

- In the eyes of the general community the status of committee members is high. They are viewed more as community members than as holding any other role.
- Committee members have a detailed knowledge about the practice of the organisation and about the people it supports.
- There is frequent communication between staff, advocates, volunteers and management committee members.
- There is a more distant organisation 'membership' scheme, which involves ordinary community members.
- The organisation holds appropriate public events, such as an annual general meeting. The people going to those events include ordinary members of the local community.
- Some of the people who are involved are generally respected by the local community.
- Some of the organisation's allies hold power in, or over, political systems.
- The organisation has led to people in positions of power having direct experience of individuals who are supported by the organisation.
- The location of any organisation office emphasises its connections to the community rather than to care and support services.
- People in premises near organisation offices know about its business. Their attitudes to the people the organisation believes need to be empowered and safeguarded would seem to have been improved by their knowledge of the organisation.
- The organisation knows about, and has been involved with, a range of people who they feel they could ask to contribute to its activity in small ways and without payment.
- There is a core group of people with useful connections who would defend the organisation if it were in trouble.
- The organisation has connections with other Independent Advocacy organisations.

- The organisation has connections with collective and self-advocacy groups.
- If the organisation's funding ended, some activity would continue.
- The organisation has policies or plans that should safeguard existing community roots or lead to better roots in the future.
- There are training programmes for organisation staff or volunteers that should support the organisation to develop its community roots.

Minimum practice

- The organisation has a management committee (with a constitution) whose only role is to manage the work of this organisation.
- The management committee includes at least two people who do not have a job that is related to the field of social care.

Effective organisation

Independent Advocacy organisations are run to be as effective as possible. They have appropriate management structures, policies, support structures and office management procedures.

This principle is important because running an organisation uses scarce money and resources. If an organisation wastes these, this is unfair on those it believes need support. There are many parts to effective organisation, including the following.

- Organisations should be effectively managed and there should be appropriate supervision and support systems.
- A clear and positive financial situation is important.
- Money should be handled appropriately.
- Job descriptions and salaries should be suitable.
- Nobody should be confused about the differences between different people's roles.
- People involved with the organisation should feel motivated.
- Resources and time should be used efficiently.
- Volunteers should be treated positively and effectively.
- Clear communication should take place between those involved.
- The strength of a core group of people who are committed to the organisation is essential.
- It is important to plan ahead, and to invest in the future of the organisation.
- Organisations should have appropriate and supportive relationships with other Independent Advocacy organisations and other local supportive bodies they have chosen.
- There should be appropriate written policies.

- The organisation should be flexible and be able to change if it needs to.
- The organisation should be knowledgeable about effective strategies for getting information on rights, responsibilities, service procedures, and so on.
- The organisation should be knowledgeable about the things that influence the effectiveness of explaining a point of view, particularly in adversarial situations (where the person or people the point of view is being put to, disagree strongly with it). It should also be effective in passing this information to advocates.

This principle specifically avoids commenting on measures such as the number of people using an organisation, or the length of the waiting list, because these have very limited value as indicators of quality, although they do influence the experience of somebody using the organisation. It is also important to remember that this is not a full list.

This principle is related to **all** the outcomes that Independent Advocacy organisations aim to achieve.

Indicators

- Money is handled appropriately.
- The financial circumstances of the organisation are strong.
- The likely future financial circumstances of the organisation are strong.
- The organisation does not spend too many resources on administration and bureaucracy.
- Staff, volunteers and advocates have enough support to allow them to work to their ability.
- There is no confusion or conflict about who answers to who in the management structure.
- Communication systems work well.
- The work of the organisation is divided effectively between the people who are involved.
- Formal supervision and support systems are used regularly.

- Staff, advocates and volunteers are competent enough.
- Job descriptions are appropriate.
- There are regular and appropriate meetings.
- The morale of volunteers, staff and advocates is high.
- A strong core group of people, other than the staff, would defend and work for the organisation when necessary.
- There are regular internal reviews of the practice of the organisation.
- There are plans for the future.
- There is investment in the organisation's future.
- Staff, volunteers and advocates show a willingness to continue to learn and improve their knowledge and practice.
- The organisation looks for information on rights efficiently and effectively.
- Staff, volunteers and advocates have a good knowledge of where they can get information from.
- Staff, volunteers and advocates have a good knowledge of legal rights and procedures where necessary.
- There are training programmes which support effective organisation.

Involving users

Independent Advocacy organisations involve the community of interest in all levels and areas of the organisation.

This is important because people who have personal experience of being disempowered, harmed, or socially excluded through the services they have received have invaluable knowledge and a unique view. It is also important because the organisation, to achieve its aims, must demonstrate that the opinions and knowledge of these people are valuable.

The community of interest is the general group of people the project believes need the support of an advocate or need to be safeguarded and empowered - for example, project users, potential project users, people who have used the project in the past, people with advocates, and people who have used or are using the same services as these people.

This principle relates most strongly to the outcomes of *'cultural change and social inclusion'* and *'empowerment'*.

Indicators

- People who have used the organisation are involved in its management.
- They have significant influence.
- Others involved in the organisation management treat them appropriately.
- Those with experience of being disempowered, harmed or socially excluded through the use of services, although they haven't had support from the organisation, are involved.
- The organisation has policies to make sure that its users are involved.
- People from the community of interest are involved in training programmes for staff or volunteers, or in preparing advocates for their role in other ways.

Minimum practice

- There is a system in use for getting feedback from the people who have, or have had, the support of an advocate.

Section 2

Organisation actions

Focusing on those most at risk

Those who manage an organisation concentrate on reaching those individuals and groups who are currently most in need of safeguarding and empowerment and of having weight added to their position. When supporting groups, the membership of the group should include those most at risk.

This principle is important because Independent Advocacy organisations are not able to provide adequate support to every individual who may be at risk of being disempowered, ignored, ill-treated, and socially excluded. This means they must focus their efforts on those who are most at risk of this, and for whom the consequences are greatest.

If the organisation does not maintain this focus, they will not reach this group. Instead, the things that decide who they support will be firstly the abilities of the people who will more easily ask for help themselves, and secondly the priorities of the staff of service providers who refer people to the organisation.

Section 4 explains about safeguarding, empowerment and adding weight.

Organisations should also take account of things such as a person's ethnic background, sex, sexuality, age and religion when considering the risks they face.

It is important that organisations support, or find advocates for, a wide range of people in a wide range of situations. It is also important that people receiving the support of an advocate do not have to pay for this support.

This principle relates most strongly to the outcome of '*safeguarding*'.

Indicators

- The situations of the people who are supported by advocates show that they are 'most at risk'. They are disempowered, socially isolated, socially excluded, and have (or would have had) few or no allies who might advocate for them in the short term or the long term.
- Many of those who have received support are people who didn't approach the organisation for help and weren't referred by service staff.
- Many of those who have received support may have faced severe consequences without this.
- The organisation has policies that support it to focus on those most at risk.
- Training for organisation staff or volunteers supports them to focus on those most at risk.

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Minimum practice

- Organisations do not only provide support to people who approach the organisation themselves or to people who are referred to them by care service staff.

Being proactive

Independent Advocacy organisation staff and volunteers take action to find out about what practice occurs in the services that people receive (in other words, they are 'proactive'). They try to find out about people who might be in need of support, and offer, provide or look for this support where appropriate.

This principle is important because those who are most in need of safeguarding, of being empowered, and of having weight added to their opinions and views are not likely to ask for help or to be referred to an organisation.

This principle relates most strongly to the outcome of '*safeguarding*'.

Indicators

- Staff, volunteers and advocates describe situations where the organisation was proactive.
- Documents show that this has happened.
- The organisation has many allies who pass on information about people who might be at risk.
- Staff, advocates or volunteers are seen to be present and spending time in care institutions. They have a good level of access to these institutions.
- The organisation has policies which support it to be proactive.
- Training programmes for organisation staff or volunteers support them to be proactive.

Minimum practice

- Organisations do not only provide support to people who approach the organisation themselves or to people who are referred to them by care service staff.

Positive imagery

Those managing an Independent Advocacy organisation pay attention to imagery in relation to the people that the organisation believes need to be empowered and safeguarded. They make sure that the organisation does not allow its actions, design or publications to contribute to people being devalued.

Imagery is the messages, ideas, and values that are given by things such as the actions, design and publications of the organisation. Actions include many things such as how people involved with the organisation behave, the words they use and the attitude they have, what type of events it runs, who takes part and how they are involved. Design includes many things such as the appearance of the organisation, its address, the membership of its management committee, its name, and its logo. Publications include many things such as letters, leaflets, posters, advertisements, job specifications, and constitutions.

This principle is important because Independent Advocacy organisations are aiming to demonstrate the value and equality of the people they support. It is important that the positive messages, which result from empowering people and adding weight to their views, aren't undermined by messages that the organisation conveys through other things. Such imagery may also directly affect how people who are supported through the organisation feel about themselves. If an Independent Advocacy organisation is not especially careful about imagery, it is likely to contribute to people being devalued. However, it can challenge this through simple and effective action.

This principle relates to the outcomes of '*cultural change*' and '*empowerment*'.

Indicators

- Those involved in an organisation recognise the importance of this principle.
- The organisation's publications reflect positively on the people the organisation believes need to be empowered and safeguarded.

- Advertisements for staff or volunteers, the organisation's name, logos, and address, and where the organisation has its premises reflect positively on the people the organisation believes need to be empowered and safeguarded. No negative associations can be made.
- The presentation of organisation staff reflects the importance of the work they do and of the people they hope to safeguard and empower.
- Organisation staff, volunteers and advocates describe the people who are supported by advocates in a positive way.
- Staff, volunteers and advocates are seen to treat people receiving support in a way that suggests their equal value.
- People who need advocates are portrayed as individuals who are worth knowing, not as 'needy'.
- Training programmes for organisation staff or volunteers support the use of positive imagery within the organisation, and support the organisation to work to this principle.
- Advocates are prepared for their role in a way that uses positive imagery, and which encourages them to do this.

Confidentiality

Those involved with Independent Advocacy organisations handle personal information in a way that allows the advocate to stay loyal to the person they support. If the organisation has any information on people, they treat this as confidential. Taking account of the unique nature of advocacy relationships, organisations make sure they are as clear as possible about when and how confidentiality might be broken. Confidential information is only shared within an organisation for a good reason. People are given details about how information about them has been shared.

This principle is important because people who are being treated badly, or who feel they are being treated badly, may be particularly afraid of the consequences of speaking out. This is particularly true because such fears may have some foundation. When an Independent Advocacy organisation acts in this way it also gives powerful messages about its role and about the people who are supported by advocates to everyone who comes into contact with it.

People who are afraid of the consequences of speaking out are unlikely to provide information to an organisation or advocate if they feel there is a risk that this will make their situation worse. This means it is essential that they are sure their dealings with an Independent Advocacy organisation will be in confidence, and that information about them will be under their control. This is especially important because people who are afraid of speaking out may be particularly in need of an independent advocate.

This principle should not unnecessarily limit the ability of an Independent Advocacy organisation to fulfil its role. It means that information must be handled in a sensitive way and that, where possible, an individual stays in control of what happens to this information. Advocates or organisations should sometimes share some information with an outside person or organisation. Sometimes, organisations will not be able to find out whether an individual agrees to their information being passed on, but passing that information on may be part of carrying out necessary action related to their basic rights and needs.

This principle relates to the outcome of '*safeguarding*' and the principle of '*focusing on those most at risk*'. It is closely related to the principles of '*maximising involvement*' and '*loyalty*'.

Indicators

- The organisation has an appropriate confidentiality policy.
- The policy includes information on how and why confidentiality might be broken.
- Staff, volunteers and advocates don't pass on information unnecessarily or inappropriately to those evaluating the organisation.
- Practice in the organisation shows that some information is not always shared, even with other people involved in the organisation.
- Training for organisation staff or volunteers supports them to work to this principle.

Organisation identity

Independent Advocacy organisations portray an image that shows they are separate from any of the other services or support that people receive, and that emphasises their community roots.

It is vital to avoid a situation where anyone might believe that an individual's wishes have been influenced by the Independent Advocacy organisation, its workers or its volunteers. This means that people who are seen to be representing the organisation must be very careful when expressing a view or taking a position on care and support systems.

This principle is important because people who need support may be put off from using the support of an advocate, or may not trust that an advocate is acting on their side, if they believe that the organisation has interests which conflict with their own. Some of the people who are most in need may be those who are also most sensitive to this. However, it is inappropriate to disguise conflicting interests (principle of '*respect and decency*').

An organisation reinforces the idea of its independence by emphasising its community roots. This makes its role of safeguarding people stronger, and it helps to add weight to the position that advocates take. It also carries an important message, to the community itself, about the value of those who receive support.

The second part of this principle is not intended to refer to the views that an advocate rightly expresses as part of their normal direct Independent Advocacy work. The other principles in this document provide guidance on this direct work.

This principle relates most strongly to the outcome of '*cultural change and social inclusion*' but also to the principle of '*focusing on those most at risk*'.

Indicators

- The organisation's location, logo and name emphasise this.
- Written publications, including posters or advertisements, emphasise this.
- People who are seen as ordinary community members by the local community speak on the organisation's behalf.
- Policies and training for organisation staff or volunteers support the organisation to meet this principle.

Minimum practice

- The organisation has a name or logo that is not generally seen to connect them with those who provide care and support services.

Organisation integrity

Independent Advocacy organisations and those involved with them act with integrity. This means they act in an open way, demonstrating that:

- **they recognise that in their practice they will come across dilemmas which do not have right and wrong solutions;**
- **they can always improve the quality of their practice;**
- **they recognise that the importance of their aims does not justify all means of achieving these aims; and**
- **they recognise that their action has the potential to do harm.**

Organisations, and the people involved with them, act as far as possible without creating interests which might conflict, or appear to conflict, with those of the people who are supported by advocates.

People are entitled to make decisions and take actions that others see as against their best interests, and it is entirely appropriate for them to have an advocate's support in this. It is not appropriate for an Independent Advocacy organisation to refuse further help to someone who could reasonably be seen to have used their support in this way. In these circumstances an organisation must make every effort to make sure that Independent Advocacy support is still available.

This principle is important because Independent Advocacy organisations are likely to be in a position where they could do harm. It is also important because the integrity of an organisation will affect how people who deal with or use the organisation view it. This is linked to the principle of *'positive imagery'*.

Organisations can usefully contribute to integrity by asking for appropriate external evaluation, with the aim of receiving constructive criticism of their practice.

Organisations should frequently think about whether they act with integrity in their response to the ethnic backgrounds, sex, sexuality, age, disability and religion of all those it comes into contact with.

This principle relates to **all** the outcomes that Independent Advocacy organisations hope to achieve.

Indicators

- The organisation has asked for an external evaluation and is prepared to make significant parts of this public.
- Organisation staff, volunteers, managers or advocates speak about some advocacy situations being difficult to get right.
- Organisation staff, volunteers, managers or advocates show they want to improve their practice.
- Organisation staff, volunteers, managers or advocates recognise some practice as inappropriate.
- Organisation staff, volunteers, managers or advocates describe situations where they have had to be proactive in avoiding conflicts of interest.
- There are no indications of the organisation refusing further support to a person (or group) who has had their support in taking action that could reasonably be seen to have badly disadvantaged them.

Section 3

Supporting the practice of advocates

Loyalty

Being on one side

Those supporting advocates try to make sure of the following.

Advocates act only on the side of the person or group receiving support. They follow the agenda of this person or group (that is, they work in a way that is directed by the ideas, hopes, ambitions, wishes and opinions of the person or group), act in a non-judgemental way, maintain this position, and avoid action that might affect their loyalty in the future.

Advocates limit this loyalty only:

- **where someone (or a group) has substantial power over others who do not themselves have effective Independent Advocacy support and whose agenda might be different;**
- **through practical restrictions, for example, the time they have available or restrictions under the law; or**
- **because this is necessary to avoid serious harm to an individual or other people.**

Tenacity and effectiveness

Those supporting advocates try to make sure of the following.

Advocates act tenaciously, that is, with determination and persistence, and take the most effective course of action. In evaluating what courses of action are available, they take account of other principles in this document (for example, asking for instruction according to the principle of 'maximising involvement') and the limits listed above. They also consider both long-term and short-term effectiveness. They do not necessarily accept other restrictions which people try to place on them (for example, an advocate supporting someone to complain might be asked by other organisations to work within their official procedures, but they do not need to accept this restriction).

Loyalty in handling information

Those supporting advocates try to make sure of the following.

Advocates do not withhold information from the person or group that they are loyal to. They may also need to refuse to be given some information that is offered to them by others.

This principle is important because the people that Independent Advocacy organisations focus on supporting are those who are disempowered, who have few, if any, people on their side, and who are involved with services that might possibly mistreat, ignore, or abuse them.

It is empowering for an individual to have someone on their side. It is particularly empowering if a person has nobody else in this position.

Remember that the phrase 'practical restrictions' is intended to refer to restrictions that cannot be removed, such as those we have mentioned, and not to restrictions that other people or organisations might want to place on them. If the organisation accepted other restrictions, this would be against the principle of '*independence*'.

The principle allows a limit on loyalty where someone has substantial power over others. This is intended to refer to rare and unusual situations that happen as a very small part of an advocate's dealings with an individual or group. This limit does not apply in situations of more limited influence, for example, it would not prevent an advocate arguing for something for one person which was costly and which might result in less money being available to support others.

The sentence which allows a limit on loyalty to avoid 'serious harm' is intended to cover rare and extreme situations. It is almost always appropriate for an advocate to make sure that someone's opinions are listened to, whether or not these could be seen as extreme, as other people have their own responsibilities for action based on these opinions.

Some other forms of organisation, or workers such as mediators, advice workers, and care staff, may advocate for a person or group without being loyal in this sense. They may take one side and then another, advocating for more than one side, or they may simply refuse to be loyal in certain circumstances. The action of such organisations and workers may be of great value. However, it is different from the action carried out by Independent Advocacy organisations for whom loyalty is an essential part of the practice of an advocate.

This principle relates strongly to the outcomes of '*empowerment*', '*safeguarding*' and '*adding weight*'. The principle of '*independence*' is particularly important in allowing advocates to work with loyalty.

Indicators

- Documents show that these things have taken place.
- Advocates describe these things taking place.
- Advocates speak in a way that shows that they can empathise with the situation of the people they support (that is, they have some understanding of how those people must feel).
- Advocates, staff and volunteers show an understanding of the ways those who receive support are disempowered, socially excluded, and ill-treated.
- Advocates, staff and volunteers can appropriately recognise situations where they would not be able to maintain their loyalty.
- Advocates, staff and volunteers show that they would not withhold information from those receiving support.
- Advocates, staff and volunteers can appropriately recognise situations where they should refuse to be given information.
- Organisation staff, volunteers or advocates describe advocates receiving support or training, or being prepared for their role, in such a way to support them to act as described.
- Documents show that advocates receive support or training, or are prepared for their role, in such a way to support them to act as described.

Maximising involvement

Those supporting advocates try to make sure of the following.

Advocates make sure the people they support are as fully involved and in control as they can be. Except in exceptional circumstances, advocates always ask for instruction before acting and do not act against instruction.

An advocate will always prefer to support someone (or a group) to act for or represent themselves, rather than to act for or represent them (although this may also be appropriate). This preference may apply even although the result is that an argument is presented less effectively. If it is necessary to speak for someone (or a group), they should normally be present unless they choose otherwise.

Every opportunity is made available for an individual (or group) receiving support to change their mind, take over, redirect the support, or increase their involvement at any time.

The only reasons for advocates to act without asking for instruction, or against instruction, are that this is necessary to avoid serious harm to an individual or to others, or to act within the law. An individual is given full information in such circumstances.

If an advocate acts without instruction or consent, they make sure that other people know this.

This principle is important because it is more empowering for a person to express themselves directly than it is to rely on someone else to speak for them. It is also likely that statements made by an individual (with support) will carry more weight than when these are expressed by someone else on their behalf.

Advocates only act against, or without asking for, instruction in extreme situations if they believe there is a risk of **serious** harm. This is not

intended to cover situations that might be against the general interests of an individual or group. In some situations, the advocate, and those who support them, must judge very carefully whether harm seems likely or unlikely. In doing so, they take account of the potential value to the individual **and** to those around them, of a continuing and trusting advocacy relationship and the damage that acting without consent, or against instruction, may cause to this relationship.

This principle relates strongly to the outcomes of '*empowerment*' and '*adding weight*'.

Indicators

- Documents and the way that advocates describe people show they prefer to support people to speak for themselves rather than to speak for them.
- Documents and the descriptions given by advocates show that people are present when advocates speak for them unless the person has asked the advocate to act without them being there.
- Nothing in how the organisation or advocates behave seems likely to prevent an individual or group from changing their agenda.
- Documents and the descriptions given by advocates show that they ask for instruction before acting.
- Advocates show a clear understanding of the difference between representing the position or views that someone has clearly stated, and defending them in a way that is based on the advocate's understanding of the person's rights and needs.
- People who are supported by advocates feel that they are in control of the advocate's actions.
- Documents or the descriptions of organisation staff, volunteers or advocates show that advocates receive support or training, or are prepared for their role, in such a way to support them to work to this principle.

Initiating action

Those supporting advocates try to make sure of the following.

As well as following any agenda that has been identified by the person or group they support, advocates also initiate action based on basic human rights, needs, decency, and service standards.

They recognise that such needs and rights may be more fundamental in determining quality of life than any agenda that an individual (or group) has identified. The lack of recognition by an individual (or group) of their rights and needs is not a good enough reason for these to be ignored. Advocates only initiate action if those they support are themselves unlikely to do so, with or without their support (because of a lack of recognition), in the future.

One basic need is for an individual (or group) to be socially included to the extent that they would be defended strongly by other people if they were treated unfairly.

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This principle is important because some of the people who are most in need of safeguarding, and who are least likely to have their needs and rights recognised, are also those who are least likely to provide specific instruction on these to an advocate.

The involvement of an advocate may itself result in the person becoming empowered enough to initiate action as this involvement develops, and this must be allowed to happen.

Action which advocates initiate should follow the other principles in this document. An example would be where an advocate suggests to an individual that they could follow a new aim, the individual rejects this, and the advocate does not then take the matter further, although they might later suggest it again (principle of *'maximising involvement'*).

This principle relates strongly to the outcome of *'safeguarding'*.

Indicators

- Staff and advocates show they have an understanding of how and why the basic human rights and needs of the people who are supported by advocates are not met.
- Staff and advocates understand that they are able to initiate action.
- Documents or descriptions of actions show that action has been initiated.
- Documents or the descriptions of organisation staff, volunteers or advocates show that advocates receive support or training, or are prepared for their role, in such a way to support them to initiate action when appropriate.

Respect and decency

Those supporting advocates try to make sure of the following.

Advocates treat people with decency.

Advocates work at whatever speed helps the people they support to have as much control as possible, they do not lie or provide only part truths, and they do not promise anything which is outside their control.

Advocates recognise that those they support are vulnerable to being heavily influenced by them and continually work to avoid having such influence. They continually work to make sure that their support is based on the agenda of the individual rather than their own. It is vital that the person (or group) who is supported is given the ability and opportunity to change their agenda or to have it develop over time.

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Independent Advocacy organisations pay particular attention to this principle because the people that advocates support are particularly vulnerable to being treated badly. By treating people with decency they demonstrate their value.

It is important that a person's (or group's) agenda is allowed to change because, in working with someone who has been disempowered, trust, confidence and experience may need to be built before they tackle issues of long-term significance.

This principle relates strongly to the outcomes of '*empowerment*' and '*cultural change and social inclusion*'.

Indicators

- Documents, the descriptions used by advocates, and observed behaviour and practice suggest that this takes place.
- Advocates recognise the difficulty of avoiding having an influence on those they support.
- People with advocates feel they are treated decently by them.

Section 4

Outcomes

Safeguarding

Independent Advocacy organisations aim to safeguard people through encouraging good practice and preventing poor practice by those who could possibly disempower, neglect or abuse them. They hope to make sure that injustice is prevented, and justice received. An added benefit is that this safeguarding commonly extends beyond those directly receiving advocacy support to safeguard others who share their situation.

Independent Advocacy organisations are designed to safeguard people because this is a basic need and a priority for the people who are supported by advocates. Independent Advocacy organisations can safeguard many more people than those who have direct contact with an advocate. The presence and involvement of an advocate or Independent Advocacy organisation can safeguard those known to the individual or group receiving support, and those that the advocate comes into contact with.

Empowerment

Independent Advocacy organisations aim to empower people. They hope that people will be able to expand their hopes and ambitions where there is a risk that these will be, or have been, heavily influenced by those with conflicting interests. They hope that people will become more confident and able to make others take note of their opinions, hopes and ambitions, and less easily influenced by those with conflicting interests. They try to create a situation where people are more able to access the information they need to make informed judgements, and are more able to think through their options. They hope people will develop a greater feeling of self-worth, and receive support from their involvement with the organisation or advocate. Those supporting groups aim for the empowerment of the group and its individual members, and they hope the effectiveness of the group's internal organisation will develop.

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Independent Advocacy focuses on people who are generally disempowered by systems that have a very significant effect on almost every area of their life. These are people who are disempowered to such an extent that they are unlikely to be able to fulfil their basic human needs, or to demand their basic human rights. In such a situation, this person's empowerment may be as important as the 'solving' of any other problem. A person's initial hopes and ambitions may also be limited by their initial situation, and Independent Advocacy can help them to widen these.

The relationships which come about through the actions of **Citizen Advocacy** organisations are also particularly empowering if the person with the advocate has had few such relationships, because they are **personal** and **freely given**.

Adding weight

Independent Advocacy organisations aim to add weight to a person's (or group's) ideas, hopes, ambitions and opinions to increase the amount of control they have over their life, and so that poor practice is challenged. If an advocate is supporting a group rather than an individual, this applies to the opinions of the group as a whole.

The most commonly understood part of the role of Independent Advocacy is that of helping someone to express his or her wishes and opinions. While advocates do this, their role is also to make these wishes and opinions carry more weight than they would have without support. They also aim to add weight to the **hopes** and **ambitions** that people may have or may develop. It is important that weight is added to these wishes, opinions, hopes and ambitions if people are dealing with systems that have power over them and that are strongly influenced by other things (such as wanting to spend as little money as possible, the need for staff to move on to dealing with other people as quickly as possible, or pressure on politicians from the public). It is particularly important if people are dealing with services that have a very significant influence on their life, and if they would not otherwise have allies whose involvement would make these things less easily ignored.

Cultural change and social inclusion

Independent Advocacy organisations aim to improve the way that some groups of people are treated in general by society, by the community and by the services that are provided on their behalf. They aim to do this specifically by giving members of the community direct personal experience.

Some, including all Citizen Advocacy organisations, also aim for people to be directly included in the ordinary community for the benefit of both the person and the community.

As well as taking note of the unique problems experienced by each individual, Independent Advocacy organisations recognise two basic needs that the people they support may have. The first is to be socially included. This is a basic human need, but social exclusion also means that people are unlikely to have access to those who will defend their rights sufficiently.

The second basic need is for society in general to change its views of people, and to understand more about the services offered on its behalf. It is expected that changes in society's views would result in changes in services.

In some cases, such as with people who are in a locked hospital ward or prison for the foreseeable future, the need for someone to be 'socially included' may not be achievable in the ordinary sense because of the conflicting needs of society. In this case the development of relationships with ordinary people outside the hospital or prison may fulfil some of the same purposes to a more limited extent.

To educate and influence public opinion, Independent Advocacy organisations are designed to provide direct personal experience to members of the community through their involvement with the organisation. This experience will be contact with, or direct knowledge about, people who need or have the support of an advocate. It will also be direct knowledge of the situations of these people and of how services

respond to them. This experience might come about through being part of a management committee, while providing voluntary or informal support, or through being more distantly involved in an organisation.

Organisations try to provide this direct personal experience because of a belief that this is much more powerful than information learnt through campaigns or through other less personal and direct sources. They also believe that a lack of personal experience actively leads to ignorance and prejudice. Independent Advocacy organisations need to avoid many other ways of influencing public opinion and attitude because of the potential to affect how advocacy is provided or to cause harm to individual people who are receiving support (see the principle of '*project identity*', for example).

Within Citizen Advocacy, **independent, personal** and **freely-given** relationships are created. These are between someone who is generally more valued by society as a whole and someone who is generally less valued. Such a relationship directly challenges, through its example, how that person is devalued and also how people who share their situation are devalued. The relationship also represents limited, but valuable, social inclusion in itself. The introduction of the devalued and socially excluded person to the advocate's friends, family, or contacts represents greater inclusion. Organisations hope that the example that such a relationship sets to other people will increase the chances of such personal relationships forming spontaneously, and will reduce the likelihood of people being socially excluded in the first place.

All Independent Advocacy organisations also expect that changes in services can come about because examples of poor practice are highlighted and through more general changes that are made to meet the needs of any one individual.

Section 5

Examples

This section gives examples to provide an easier way to think about why each of the principles and aims is listed in the document and what it means. They are only for this purpose - in reality the situations they describe would be much more complicated and 'right' and 'wrong' would not be so clearly defined.

Examples on organisation foundations and action

<p>An Independent Advocacy organisation only works with those that are referred to the organisation through official channels by local care staff. They refuse to work with people who were referred by learning disability or mental-health services, giving as their reason: <i>"We have a clause in our funding agreement which specifies that our clients must be able to instruct us clearly, and these people can't."</i></p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Being proactive Focusing on those most at risk Independence</p>
<p>An organisation finds an advocate to support a person who had been seen being held on the floor by four staff members without apparent reason. They do this despite the protests of service staff who describe the person as 'manipulative'.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Being proactive Focusing on those most at risk Independence</p>

<p>An organisation's staff and volunteers talk about how much they help 'these poor people who can't help themselves'. It has an office in 'Hopeless Street' in a part of the local Social Work offices. It is managed by a small group of parents who have known each other for many years, and who are all members of a 'friends of' group for the local day centre.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Positive imagery Organisation identity Community roots Independence</p>
<p>An organisation uses professional-looking paper, a logo that is unique and distinctive and a neat office. An MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament) can occasionally be seen meeting organisation staff in the front office. Local shopkeepers know a lot about the organisation and describe its activity in terms of people's rights. It has a management committee that has a number of members who had no previous connections with the care system.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Positive imagery Organisation identity Community roots</p>

Examples on the support of the practice of advocates

<p>An advocate sits in a meeting and tells the meeting that Sheila should get to go to the local day centre. Sheila hasn't said she wants this, but the advocate thinks it would be best. The advocate had told Sheila that it would be better if she wasn't at the meeting.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Maximising involvement</p>
<p>An advocate sits in a meeting beside Sheila as she asks to have support from Social Work services to help her keep her job. Sheila occasionally asks the advocate to explain something to the meeting. The advocate is passing on what Sheila has asked her to say.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Maximising involvement</p>
<p>An advocate explains to Anthony's home manager that Anthony would like not to be supported by a particular care assistant. The manager explains that no other staff are available. The advocate says to the manager: "I understand, and I'll tell Anthony that he has to accept this." He tells Anthony: "We all have to accept some things we don't like."</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Maximising involvement</p> <p>Respect and decency</p>
<p>Anthony's advocate only meets the manager without Anthony being present because Anthony asked for this. He goes back to Anthony and explains what the manager had said. He explains that Anthony could ask again, and Anthony asks for more help. Later, the advocate and Anthony together go to a meeting with the manager's manager to ask for a change.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Maximising involvement</p> <p>Respect and decency</p>

<p>Jane's advocate repeatedly supports Jane to ask for tea instead of coffee over many months, but does nothing else despite Jane being given clothes to wear which clearly belong to another person. She says that she is following Jane's instruction because "tea" is the only word that Jane has spoken to her.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Initiating action</p>
<p>As well as dealing with requests for tea, Jane's advocate raises the fact that Jane is wearing someone else's clothes, firstly with the manager of the centre where Jane is receiving support, then with that person's manager. On each occasion she explains to Jane what she is proposing and asks if this is OK although Jane shows no indication she is listening.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Initiating action</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Respect and decency</p>

<p>An advocate supports Anthony to argue for the support he wants to allow him to move. He wants to leave the residential home and to live on his own in a different town. The Social Work department arranges this change. Later, Anthony decides he wants to return to the home, but the advocacy organisation refuses to allow the advocate to provide Anthony with support. They claim: <i>"Anthony has wasted the advocate's time"</i> and <i>"There are other people who need our help."</i></p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Organisation integrity</p>
<p>Anthony receives an advocate's support both to argue that he wants to move out of the home, and to argue that he wants to move back in. The advocate is determined and persistent when they argue this despite objections from care and support staff and family members.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Organisation integrity</p>



Part B

Independent Group Advocacy

Introduction

This part of the document describes the actions of Independent Collective and Self-advocacy groups, and some appropriate principles for their support. Independent Group Advocacy is an important part of Independent Advocacy. We hope that Collective and Self-advocacy groups, together with a future national support organisation, will further develop part B of this document.

The text is divided into sections on principles and the support of groups. Each principle is highlighted by a box - with text to explain it afterwards. Section 3 gives examples which should make the rest of the text easier to understand.

The rest of this introduction acts as a summary and index for the principles explained in sections 1 and 2.

What is an Independent Collective or Self-advocacy group?

There are many groups of people involved in collective advocacy of some type. However, for the purposes of this document an Independent Collective or Self-advocacy group:

- is an identified group of individuals;
- is made up only of users, likely users, or past users of care or support services which are provided by, or on behalf of, local authorities or health boards;
- advocates, as a significant part of its activity, points of view which the group has collectively identified to be put forward;
- itself decides, and is free to decide, without any significant influence from anyone who is not part of the group, how to act; and
- has only practical or legal restrictions on its action that could not be removed.

It may:

- act alone or with others;
- operate with or without support;
- be made up of people acting voluntarily or with payment; and
- carry out its action through the actions of those in the group or through actions of others who act as it decides.

“An identified group of individuals” means a group of people who could be individually named. This group may or may not have a formal structure, name and so on.

What do these groups aim to do?

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These groups may aim to:

- safeguard those in the group;
- add weight to the ideas, opinions, hopes and ambitions of those in the group;
- add weight to the ideas, opinions, hopes and ambitions of a wider group;
- add weight to the ideas, opinions, hopes and ambitions of individual people of its choice;
- empower those in the group;
- empower, or provide leadership for, those in a wider group;
- have a positive influence on the quality and character of basic care and support services;
- influence public attitude towards certain groups of people; and
- have an influence on other issues.

“Safeguard” means to encourage good practice and discourage bad practice by those in a position to disempower, neglect or abuse those in the group. It also means to make sure that those in the group are treated fairly.

“Wider group” means an identified group of people who the Collective or Self-advocacy group claims to represent to some extent.

“Empower” is explained in part A and part C.

Principles

Some of the ideas and principles that may be important to these groups are set out below.

- If the group claims to represent the views of a wider group, it should have an effective method of determining these views.
- If a group claims to act as the representatives of a wider group, this wider group must be able to determine how the group acts.
- The group will be more effective in its influence on others if it is seen by them to be acting as one.
- The group may need to avoid affecting its freedom to act through formal or financial relationships with others.
- If the group aims to safeguard people, it should pay attention to things that would prevent individuals from asking for or receiving the support of the group, or that would influence its image.
- The group may find it useful to keep in contact with other groups of people who have some of the same aims or interests.
- If the group wants to empower all those involved in it, it must make sure that these people each have equal opportunity, whether with or without other help, to take part.

These principles are described in more detail in section 1.

Support

An Independent Collective or Self-advocacy group may operate with or without support. If it operates with the support of a person or agency that could potentially have a significant influence on the group's action, this support should:

- be loyal;
- make sure the group is as fully involved and in control as they can be; and
- suggest options for action in specific circumstances only.

These points are described in more detail in section 2.

Section I

More details on principles

Representing the views of a wider group

If the group claims to represent the views of a wider group, it should have an effective method of determining these views.

A group cannot reasonably claim to be able to express the views, interests, hopes, ambitions, ideas or beliefs of others unless they do their best to check that their understanding of these is accurate. A group could do this through meetings, consultations, asking for feedback, or by being representatives of this wider group. Representation may be more effective if it is clear to others that a group correctly understands these views.

Acting as representatives of a wider group

If a group claims to act as the representatives of a wider group, this wider group must be able to determine how the group acts.

A group cannot reasonably claim to represent a wider group that has no control over its action (it might still be able to represent their views as we have described in the principle before this one). This control might be through the group being a body that is fairly elected from and by the wider group. It might also be through the group only taking action which has been agreed by, and which is in the direct control of, the wider group. Representation may be more effective if it is clear to others that the group is reasonably acting as representatives.

Acting as one

The group will be more effective in its influence on others if it is seen by them to be acting as one.

A group can act with one voice or in a way that had been agreed by the group rather than as a number of separate individuals, each operating

independently. If it appears to others that it is acting as one, its influence may be stronger.

Acting as one is not the same thing as presenting one position, view or idea. A group can act as one while presenting a range of conflicting views or representing a range of interests.

Keeping its freedom to act

The group may need to avoid undermining its freedom to act through formal or financial relationships with others.

A group might undermine its freedom to act by relying on money from people who expect to have a say in how the group acts.

The appearance that a group had been affected by interests other than the views or interests of the people it wants to act as representatives for may damage the effectiveness of its representation.

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Safeguarding people

If the group aims to safeguard people, it should pay attention to the things that would prevent individuals from asking for or receiving the support of the group, or that would influence its image.

There are many things that might influence the safeguarding effect of a group for individuals. One is that individuals who are in need may not be known to the group. They may not approach the group, or may not ask for or agree to its help if they fear the consequences.

To encourage people to ask for support, the group must be clear that:

- it will not act in any way which the person does not want (in relation to them asking for help); and
- it will maintain appropriate confidentiality.

Its effectiveness in safeguarding individual people may be increased if:

- the action it takes on behalf of an individual is agreed beforehand, or is based on basic human rights and needs;
- it is seen to act in this way;
- it is prepared to act with tenacity (persistence), and to the extent which is necessary to achieve the necessary effect; and
- it is generally understood by others that it is prepared and able to do this.

Networking

The group may find it useful to keep in contact with other groups of people who have some of the same aims or interests.

A group might benefit from being in contact with other groups who share their interests or views, or who want to influence similar agencies. A group might also benefit from speaking to other groups who share some of their methods of working, regardless of their interests.

Empowering those in the group

If the group wants to empower all those involved in it, it must make sure that these people each have equal opportunity, whether with or without other help, to take part.

Those in a group may not automatically work together in a way that makes sure that each person has an equal influence, or that the group operates effectively. The situation might be improved by:

- organising a group formally by using constitutions, agreements, an agreed structure, or an agreed way of operating;
- suitable training being available for each person; or

- individuals who have more difficulty taking part having support to do this.

Independent support for individuals would need to be:

- in the control of the individual;
- free of limits that would restrict how far the individual could take part; and
- provided in a way that did not directly influence the individual's views, ideas, hopes or ambitions.

Section 2

Support

Loyalty

Being on one side

Those supporting groups act only on the side of the group. They follow the agenda of this group, act in a non-judgemental way, maintain this position, and avoid action that might affect their loyalty in the future.

They limit this loyalty only:

- if a group has substantial power over others whose agenda might be different;
- through practical restrictions, for example, the time they have available or restrictions under the law; and
- because this is necessary to avoid serious harm to an individual or others.

Tenacity and effectiveness

Those supporting groups act tenaciously (with determination and persistence) and take the most effective course of action. In evaluating what courses of action are available, they take account of other principles in this document (for example, 'maximising the involvement of the group') and the limits listed above. They also consider both long-term and short-term effectiveness. They do not necessarily accept other restrictions which people try to place on them (for example, an advocate supporting a group to complain might be asked by others to support the group to follow official procedures, but they need not accept this restriction).

Loyalty in handling information

Those supporting groups do not withhold information from the group.

This principle is important if people are easily influenced as it makes sure that the group follows its own agenda.

The phrase 'practical restrictions' is intended to refer to restrictions that cannot be removed, such as those we have mentioned, and not to restrictions that other people or organisations might want to place on them.

The phrase 'serious harm' is intended to refer to rare and extreme situations, not those in which a group's action might be against the general best interests of other people.

To achieve this loyalty, it is necessary that the supporting person is substantially independent from any interests that might conflict with those of the group.

Maximising the involvement of the group

Those supporting groups always make sure the group is as fully in control as it can be. Except in exceptional circumstances, they always ask for instruction before acting and do not act against instruction.

The person providing support always supports the group to act for or represent themselves, rather than acting for or representing them, unless the group asks.

Every opportunity is made available for a group to change their mind, take over, redirect the support, or increase their involvement at any time.

The person providing support will only act without asking for instruction, or against instruction, if this is necessary to avoid serious harm to an individual or to others, or to act in line with the law. In the event that they act without instruction, they make sure that others understand that this is the case.

This principle is important because it is more empowering for a group to express themselves directly than it is to rely on someone else to speak for them. It is also likely that statements made by a group will carry more weight than when these are expressed by somebody else on their behalf.

Suggesting options for action in certain circumstances

As well as following any agenda that has been identified by the person or group they support, those providing support also suggest action to the group based on basic human rights, needs, decency, and service standards.

They recognise that such needs and rights may be more fundamental in determining quality of life than any agenda that has been identified by the group. The lack of recognition by a group of rights and needs is not a good enough reason for these to be ignored. The person providing support only suggests action if the group are themselves unlikely to do so in the future.

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This principle is important because some independent collective or self-advocacy groups may not recognise when basic human needs, rights, decency and service standards are not being met, or may not consider taking action on this.

The involvement of a supporting person may itself result in the group becoming empowered enough to initiate action as this involvement develops, and this must be allowed to take place.

The supporting person must also follow the principle of '*maximising the involvement of the group*' so that they ask for instruction on the action they suggest and do not act against instruction.

Section 3

Examples

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This section gives examples to provide an easier way to think about why each of the principles and aims is listed in the document and what it means. They are only for this purpose - in reality the situations they describe would be much more complicated and 'right' and 'wrong' would not be so clearly defined.

Examples about principles

<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group claims that it speaks for all the people who use learning disability services provided by the local authority. They say: <i>"Because we have used these services we know what people think about them."</i> The group uses no other method to check whether it is right.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Representing the views of a wider group</p> <p>Acting as representatives of a wider group</p>
<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group claims that it speaks for all the people who use a day centre. It is fairly elected by and from this group. On each issue it consults widely among this group before speaking. It presents its own view on each issue, but also any views which it knows about but does not share.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Representing the views of a wider group</p> <p>Acting as representatives of a wider group</p>
<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group receives money from, and only from, the local authority. It would no longer operate if this money was withdrawn.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Keeping its freedom to act</p>
<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group receives money as above, but would continue to act if this money was withdrawn, and has an agreement with the local authority which sets out that its action will not be affected. The group employs a worker, but is clear that they will expect the worker to act, even if this may lead to the funding which is linked to their employment being withdrawn.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Keeping its freedom to act</p>

<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group, made up of people using a secure hospital, has little contact with anyone outside of the hospital users and staff.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Networking</p>
<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group is made up of people using a secure hospital. It has occasional meetings with a group which is made up of users of a local learning disability service and also with a local environmental campaign group. They find this contact helps them think about which issues are related specifically to the hospital and which to society's attitudes in general, and about how best to get its message across.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Networking</p>

<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group is approached by an individual who complains that they are being badly treated by staff in a hospital. The group immediately writes a letter of complaint to the hospital director despite the protests of the individual.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Safeguarding people</p>
<p>This group agrees with the individual that they should find out about the legal rights that the individual has, and about the outcome of similar complaints in the past, but that they shouldn't take other action. Later, they agree with the individual that they should write a letter of complaint to the hospital director.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Safeguarding people</p>

<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group finds that its membership is passionately split over a particular issue. Some of those from the group argue with others from the group during a meeting with a day centre manager.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Acting as one</p>
<p>The group relates both views to the manager and explains that it is not in agreement over this issue.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Acting as one</p>

<p>An Independent Collective Advocacy group has a chairperson who frequently puts her own views forward as those of the group.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Empowering those in the group</p>
<p>The group chairperson arranges for two independent people to provide support to the two group members who need this.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Empowering those in the group</p>

Examples about group support

<p>A person supporting an Independent Collective Advocacy group tells the group that he thinks they are overreacting when they discuss how they feel about their treatment in the hospital that they all use. He tells the hospital staff that he thinks the group is wrong.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Loyalty</p>
<p>A person, despite themselves feeling that people are overreacting when they describe their treatment in hospital, supports a group to campaign about this. She does this persistently despite the protests of the staff of the hospital. She makes no comment about her own feelings.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Loyalty</p>

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<p>A person supporting an Independent Collective Advocacy group decides that the group needs more funding. She argues this with the group's funder, but without asking the group first.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Maximising the involvement of the group</p>
<p>A person supporting an Independent Collective Advocacy group supports group members to speak for themselves, even though she feels she could have explained their position more easily herself.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Maximising the involvement of the group</p>

<p>A person supporting an Independent Collective Advocacy group feels that the group is not aware that most people live in much better environments than they do. However, the group never mentions this, nor does he, and they choose to work on an issue surrounding the minibus service for the day centre that they go to.</p>	<p>Principles that are not being followed</p> <p>Suggesting options for action in certain circumstances</p>
<p>A person supporting an Independent Collective Advocacy group feels that the group is not aware that most people live in much better environments than they do. She suggests to the group that this is the case, and that she knows of a local housing association that would be willing to show them around some of its property. The group agree that this would be a good idea.</p>	<p>Principles being followed</p> <p>Suggesting options for action in certain circumstances</p>

Part C

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Supporting guidance

This section provides important information on how to interpret and use this document. It contains information on the activities the document covers and those that it doesn't. It gives essential information on how to interpret and use the indicators and minimum practice we have listed.

Interpreting and using the document

This document describes the highest standard of practice for Independent Advocacy organisations and groups to aim towards.

It is important to remember that it takes time for all of these organisations and groups to adopt best practice, and this must be taken into account for new organisations. Some areas of practice can take longer to develop than others, and you must take this into account if you are judging the practice of an organisation that has been created or set up to deal with a particularly urgent situation.

It is also important to remember that each individual principle listed here cannot be used on its own, as some principles limit others. For example, in part A, an advocate who initiates action should still ask for instruction. Independent Advocacy organisations sometimes face dilemmas where some principles go against others and which do not have 'right' solutions.

People judging the effectiveness of the practice of Independent Advocacy organisations will need to use both subjective or qualitative judgement and objective or quantitative measures. Subjective or qualitative judgement is formed from the opinions of the people who are making the judgements. Objective or quantitative measures are things that are more factually based and can be measured without taking any notice of the opinions of the people making the measurements.

Evaluations of Independent Advocacy organisations must take account of **all** the outcomes listed in this document. Judgement needs a team approach, which includes significant input from those with direct knowledge and experience of Independent Advocacy. Conclusions are not necessarily easy - for example, an Independent Advocacy organisation that receives more negative criticism from those who use it might be working with people who want help with more difficult problems. We have developed a separate system to make it possible to evaluate Independent Advocacy organisations.

What activity is covered?

Part A of this document applies to all the work that Independent Advocacy organisations carry out, both in aiming to provide support to individuals and in aiming to provide support to collective or self-advocacy groups.

The practice of collective or self-advocacy groups is described in part B, as is their support by other bodies.

While part A of this document is intended to cover the practice of Citizen Advocacy organisations, this is already described by well-recognised and established standards known as 'CAPE' (Citizen Advocacy Program Evaluation). The document is intended to support, but not in any way to replace, the CAPE standards. The CAPE standards are produced in two forms - as a separate document Citizen Advocacy Program Evaluation (O'Brien, J & Wolfensberger, W, 1988) and in a modified form within Learning From Citizen Advocacy Programs (John O'Brien, 1987).

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When interpreting the section in part A on supporting the practice of advocates it is important to be aware of the differences between the practice of Citizen Advocacy organisations and other Independent Advocacy organisations. Citizen Advocacy organisations introduce two independent people, allowing a personal relationship to develop in which neither person 'belongs' to the organisation or can have their actions directed by it. In other Independent Advocacy organisations actions take place through advocates who they recruit, train, support and supervise, and who are answerable to it to some extent.

What isn't covered?

The terms 'advocate', 'advocacy' and 'advocacy organisation' are used for many other forms of activity. This document does not judge the appropriateness or value of this activity.

In particular, **nothing in this document should be taken to affect the freedom that ordinary people have to stand up for others or for themselves in any way they choose.**

The document does not comment on the practice of those who, as part of another role or organisation, provide support for people to make their views heard by others. This means it does not comment on the action of people, such as social workers, advice workers, or nurses, who advocate as part of their role.

Indicators and minimum practice

The list of indicators for each principle is **not a list of requirements, features that should be encouraged, or standards**. They are simply a note of some features which, if seen, would suggest that an organisation was working towards the relevant principle.

An organisation could be working towards the principle without some of these indicators being present, and in fact **some indicators should never be seen in some types of organisation**. Also, an observation of a situation which appears to be the opposite of the one described in an indicator does not necessarily mean that the organisation is failing to apply that principle. It is also important to remember that these are not full lists.

We have included minimum practice only for those principles where appropriate **objective** measurements can be made. The statements describe practice that is necessary in an Independent Advocacy organisation. It would be **inappropriate** for an organisation to only work to meet the stated minimum practice without also working to the stated principles. It is important to remember that the stated minimum practice may take new organisations some time to achieve. The key is that such an organisation can show it has definite and realistic plans to meet minimum practice within a reasonable timescale.

Language

Empowerment

In consultation, a small number of people raised strong objections to the use of the word 'empowerment'. It is argued that this word implies that advocates have power and that they generously pass some on to people who haven't. We agree that this is an entirely incorrect view of the role of an advocate.

In this document we use the word empowerment when referring to people who find that their life is determined (to a significant degree) by a system which is much more powerful than they are, and which is ignoring their hopes, ambitions and opinions. We see that this often results in people having a negative self-image that means they don't demand the rights and justice which everybody is entitled to. We use the word empowerment to describe the situation where someone comes to see that they already hold rights and to see that injustice is being done to them. We expect that people will become more able to stand up for themselves, using the power they already have.

We have not been able to find another word which we feel describes this process appropriately.

Independent Advocacy organisations and Independent Group Advocacy

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These terms are used in this document as titles for different activities. In consultation, some people correctly commented that collective and self-advocacy groups are also organisations. We have not been able to find convenient and meaningful titles that satisfy everyone, but which are clearly different from one another. Suggestions have included 'representational advocacy', 'third-party advocacy', and 'individual advocacy' for Independent Advocacy organisations, and 'Independent Advocacy schemes' for both this and Independent Group Advocacy.

Unfortunately, none of these titles explains the situation. Both activities involve representation, both may involve a 'third party', and Independent Advocacy organisations may support both individuals and groups. As the last suggestion is used to refer to both activities its use would be confusing in this document.

We would like to confirm that this document assumes that both the activities described in part A and part B are forms of Independent Advocacy.

The words 'organisation', 'group', 'project' and 'scheme' are often used to describe the same things. We have chosen to use the word 'organisation' for the activity described in part A, and the word 'group' for part B. We hope the distinction adds to the document's clarity. We specifically rejected the use of the word 'project' for the activity in part A because, in

consultation, many people said that this implies a short-term and temporary activity which is part of another organisation's work. Objections were also made by some people who felt that 'organisation' implies something impersonal and formal when good Independent Advocacy organisations are neither of these things.

“People the organisation believes need support”

This phrase, and others like it, are often used in the document to refer to people who may need the support of an advocate. It is used instead of others such as 'service users', 'disabled people', 'organisation users' and 'people supported by the organisation'. The first three of these alternatives do not cover, for example, people who do not use any services and people who do not currently use the organisation. The last alternative might not cover many of the relationships created by Citizen Advocacy organisations.

Documents

The word 'documents' is used several times in the lists of indicators. It is meant to mean documents written by an organisation or advocate to record what they have done. We have not used the word 'records' because this makes many people think about the kind of case notes or formal records which are kept about people by care and health services.

Advocate

The word 'advocate' is not intended to refer to legal advocates - people who are qualified to represent people in a court of law.

For part A, a person who provides support to a Collective or Self-advocacy group is rarely referred to as an 'advocate' in practice. However, we have used this word throughout because it makes the document easier to read than if we had used the phrase 'advocate or person supporting a group' repeatedly, and it is intended to cover such people.

“Staff, advocates and volunteers”

This phrase is used in the document to mean people who are employed by the project, people who act as advocates, and people who act as volunteers for the project. Some people can be more than one of these things at the same time (for example, advocates might also be volunteers), but some are only one of these things (for example, someone volunteering as a member of a management committee).

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