What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

express their views and concerns

access information and services

defend and promote their rights and responsibilities

explore choices and options

An advocate might help you access information you need, or go with you to meetings or

interviews, as a supportive presence. In some cases, you might want your advocate to

be more active. An advocate might write letters on your behalf, or speak for you in

situations where you don't feel able to speak for yourself.

What kind of advocacy is for me?

There are different kinds of advocacy, and diverse communities and groups understand

advocacy in different ways, but advocacy in all forms shares some core beliefs. An

advocate respects the views and wishes of the person they advocate for, without

judgement, and believes in their right to access information, representation, services

and opportunities. You can expect an advocate to be trained in listening and negotiating

skills. They should also have knowledge of the basic legal framework and provision of

mental health and community care services. Some different kinds of advocacy are listed

below:

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is about speaking up for yourself and making your views and wishes

clear. This can be very difficult to do at times, and there are skills and tools that can

A Guide To Advocacy

Updated 23/03/2021

2

support self-advocacy, such as assertiveness training, Crisis Cards or Advance

Directives, which set out your wishes in case of any crisis.

Group advocacy

Group advocacy is where a group of people with similar experiences meet together to

put forward shared views. Local mental health service-user groups, support groups and

patient councils are all examples of group advocacy.

Peer advocacy

Peer advocacy is support from someone else with experience of using mental health

services. Peer advocates can draw on their own experiences to understand and

empathise with the person they are working with.

Formal, professional, or paid advocacy

Many voluntary organisations have developed advocacy services, which train and pay

some or all of the advocates to work with anyone who wants to use their service.

Legal advocacy

People with specialist knowledge and training, such as lawyers and advice workers, are

sometimes called 'legal advocates'. A legal advocate will often give advice and express

their opinion about the best course of action, as well as represent you in court.

When might I need an advocate?

Advocacy can be helpful in situations where you are finding it difficult to make your

views known, or to ensure people listen and take them into account. Mental health

advocacy often focuses on complaints or concerns about accessing or using mental

health and community care services. Advocates can be assessed for other situations,

depending on the circumstances and level of need.

Mental Health advocates can be accessed via different routes depending on your

situation.

3

What advocacy services are available?

Statutory Advocacy

Statutory advocacy is when you are legally entitled to an advocate. There are five types

of statutory advocates in England and Wales. These are:

Care and Support Advocates. These can support certain people under the Care

Act 2014 for their social care needs.

Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs). These are specially trained

advocates who can support certain patients under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCA). These are specially trained

advocates who can support certain people under the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

NHS Health Complaints Advocates. These can support you if you wish to make a

complaint against a NHS or NHS funded service.

Children & Young People's Advocates. These can support young people with

specific care needs.

Independent Care Act Advocacy

Under the Care Act 2014, you may be able to receive care act advocacy if you have

care and support needs or if you are caring for someone with care and support needs.

To be eligible for care act advocacy, your level of need will need to be assessed by a

social worker or care co-ordinator. For more information about eligibility, please refer

to our factsheet on The Care Act 2014: directory.mindinharrow.org.uk/Content/

Factsheets/3579\_The%20Care%20Act%202014.pdf

If you are found to be eligible for care act advocacy, you will be able to receive support

for communicating your needs regarding your care and support. Some examples of this

will be if you are undergoing an assessment, applying for a personal budget, a care

plan review or a safeguarding enquiry.

Your social worker or care co-ordinator from CNWL NHS Foundation Trust can then

refer you to Pohwer who will be able to allocate you a care act advocate.

4

For more information you can contact Pohwer:

www.pohwer.net

Tel: 0300 456 2370 ( Charged at local rate) | Email: careact@pohwer.net

Independent Mental Health Act Advocacy (IMHA)

If you are detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 you will be entitled to

an advocate by law. You will be eligible for a Mental Health Act Advocate if:

you are placed under section (2) for assessment or section (3) for treatment.

you are “liable to be detained” – this includes:

where you are on leave of absence from hospital

where you are absent without leave from hospital

where a court order or application for admission has been made in

relation to you

you are subject to a community treatment order (CTO)

you are subject to guardianship

you are a conditionally discharged restricted patient

you are a voluntary/informal patient and certain treatments, including

neurosurgery, are being considered for you

If you require a Mental Health Act advocate in this situation you can refer yourself to

Pohwer Tel: 0300 456 2370 Email: [imha@pohwer.n](mailto:imha@pohwer.n)et Website: www.pohwer.net

The Mind website provides more information about the Mental Health Act 1983:

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/legal-rights/mental-health-act-1983/

5

Independent Mental Capacity Act Advocacy (IMCA)

A mental health professional may assess your capacity to make your own decisions.

(i.e they will assess your ability to retain, understand information, weigh up the pros

and cons and communicate your wishes for a particular decision). If you are found to

have an impairment in any of these areas, you will assessed to lack capacity.

If this is the case, you can get advocacy help from an independent mental capacity act

advocate. This is an advocate appointed to act on your behalf if you lack capacity to

make certain decisions.

An independent mental capacity advocate should help you:

when an NHS body wants to provide serious medical treatment to you

when there are plans to give you long-term accommodation in hospital (more

than 28 days) or in a care home (more than 8 weeks). However, if the

arrangements are urgent, the NHS body does not have to appoint an

independent mental capacity advocate

in some cases, if the professionals apply for a standard or urgent authorisation to

deprive you of your liberty under the deprivation of liberty safeguards

You have the right to access support from an independent mental capacity advocate

with challenging an authorisation even if you have a relevant person’s representative

helping and supporting you to do this. Both you and your relevant person's

representative would be entitled to get help and support from an independent mental

capacity advocate.

If you require an IMCA or a RPR in this situation, please contact

Pohwer Tel: 0300 456 2370 Email: [imca@pohwer.n](mailto:imca@pohwer.n)et Website: www.pohwer.net

6

NHS Health Complaints Advocacy

If you wish to make a complaint against a NHS or NHS funded service e.g. a hospital,

GP, dentist, optician, NHS funded community service, NHS pharmacy, ambulance

service or paramedic, regarding the care and support you have received from them,

you may be able to access an advocate. This service is open to anyone who wishes to

make a complaint.

The complaint must be focused on the care and support you received that you were

dissatisfied with from the service and not related to any organisational or structural

changes. If you are not satisfied with outcome of a complaint response, the advocate

can help you to raise your complaint with the Health Ombudsman, who can make a final

decision on unresolved complaints.

To make a self referral please contact http://communityconnex.co.uk/our-services/advocay-1st

3 Jardine House, Harrovian Business Village, Bessborough Road, Harrow HA1 3EX

Tel: 020 869 8484 | Email: hello@communityconnex.co.uk

Opening hours: Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

Children & Young People's Advocacy Service

If you are a young person aged 7-25 living in Harrow you may be entitled to an

advocate if you are undergoing the process for one of the following:

Looked after children

Care leavers

Children in need (including young people with a disability)

Refugee and asylum seeking children

Having a Child Protection Conference

Seeking support to make a complaint about social care services

For more information please contact Coram Voice Advocates on [help@coramvoice,org.uk](mailto:help@coramvoice,org.uk), 0808 800 5792, [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk), WhatsApp:0775867036

7

Non-Statutory Advocacy

Carers Advocacy

If you are caring for someone with care and support needs (mental health needs or

other physical or learning impairments) you may be able to access an advocacy service

of the following types:

1 – 1 advocacy support where available, to provide individual support for carers,

for areas of concern such as housing and welfare benefits advice.

A range of workshops and training is available to support carers within their

caring role. Welfare Benefits and Advice sessions are available to help carers

understand any financial support that is available.

For further information please contact Harrow Carers, 376-378 Pinner Road, North Harrow, Middlesex HA2 6DZ

telephone Number: [0208 868 5224](tel:02088685224)  
Email id: [admin@harrowcarers.org](mailto:admin@harrowcarers.org)

Refugee Advocacy

Refugees and those seeking asylum from all countries of origin may require advocacy

to access their rights. The Paiwand Afghan Association is able to communicate in

various languages including: Dari, Farsi, Pashtu, Arabic and English and can be

contacted via:

www.paiwand.com

8

3rd Floor Middlesex House, 130 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BQ

Tel 0208 905 8770 or 07538573820 | Email: advocac@paiwand.com

On Your Side - Peer Advocacy

On Your Side offers specialist mental health advocacy and information to help people

overcome problems with welfare benefits or mental health services.

You ask for help from the service directly yourself by calling or emailing us. On Your

Side is offered by trained and supervised volunteers with their own lived experience of

mental health services (called ‘peers’). These volunteers will be allocated to you based

on your individual needs and preferences.

For further information please contact Leah Robertson Peer Advocacy Coordinator at

Mind in Harrow:

132-134 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BQ

Tel: 0208 515 7868 | Email: l.robertson@mindinharrow.org.uk

Legal Advocacy

If you require legal help, you can contact a solicitor to represent you in court or give

you advice on the best course of action. You can search solicitors by topic to find one

relevant to your circumstances via the Law Society website

http://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk/, and we have details of those who specialise in mental

health law on our directory

http://directory.mindinharrow.org.uk/Pages/Subjects?CID=630. Some of these

organisations may offer free advice like the government-run Civil Legal Advice service

(https://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice, 0345 345 4 345).

9

How do I find a suitable advocate?

If you would like to find out more about advocacy services in Harrow you could start by

contacting Mind in Harrow. We will be able to advise you on the right advocacy service

suitable to your circumstances. Where there is no advocacy service to support your

situation, Mind in Harrow will be able to provide you with the relevant information and

signposting to enable you to self-advocate.

The Support and Wellbeing information Service Harrow (SWiSH) will be able to advise

you on the correct path to access advocacy for your situation. They provide information

and signposting for those living in Harrow over 18 years old. For more information

please contact: 0208 426 0929 or info@mindinharrow.org.uk.

How do I work with an advocate?

It is important that you find an advocate with whom you are comfortable. Make sure you

discuss with your advocate how they operate, and what you do and don't want them to

do. These are some practical questions you might want to ask:

How will I contact you, and when are you available?

Can you come to meetings and appointments with me?

What issues can you help me with?

What can't you help me with?

What records do you keep and who sees them?

What is your confidentiality policy? What things won't you keep confidential?

If you do something I am not happy with, how can I complain?

Can you work with me if I am in hospital or if I am in the community?

You can usually take an advocate into health and social care meetings with

professionals. An exception may be where your psychiatrist believes that having an

advocate present will have a significantly adverse effect on your mental health or might

disrupt the meeting.

10

For more information, you can access the Mind Leaflet on a Guide to Advocacy, where

part of this information was sourced: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-tosupport-and-services/advocacy-in-mental-health.

Organisations offering advocacy support

In addition to the organisations listed above, the following organisations can provide

advocacy to people with specific needs.

Age UK Harrow

For people who are 60 years and over and people with dementia

www.ageuk.org.uk/harrow/our-services/advocacy

Tel: 020 8861 7980 | Email: enquiries@ageukharrow.org.uk

Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD)

For young people (7-25yrs old) and NHS complaints

https://sites.google.com/view/hadharrow/our-services/advocacy

The Wealdstone Centre, 38-40 High Street, Wealdstone, Harrow, HA3 7AE

Tel: 020 8861 8876 | Text: 07940 407566 | Email: handcadv@had.org.uk

Harrow Carers

For carers

www.harrowcarers.org/advocacy

376-378 Pinner Road, North Harrow, Middlesex HA2 6DZ

Tel: 0208 868 5224 | Email: admin@harrowcarers.org

Harrow Mencap

For people with learning disabilities and/or autism and their carers

www.harrowmencap.org.uk/peer-advocacy

3 Jardine House, Harrovian Business Village, Bessborough Road, Harrow HA1 3EX

Tel: 020 8423 7382 | Email: iag@harrowmencap.org.uk

11

Paiwand Afghan Association

Supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants

www.paiwand.com

3rd Floor Middlesex House, 130 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BQ

Tel 0208 905 8770 or 07538573820 | Email: advocac@paiwand.com

Brent Gateway

Providing IMHA and IMCA’s for Northwick Park Hospital

http://brentgateway.org/

Tel: 020 3948 0600 Email: info@brentgateway.org