

# The Advocacy Charter

We support adults with learning disabilities to live without prejudice and have confidence, opportunities and control over their own lives.

## Clarity of Purpose

Advocacy Providers ensure that the individuals they advocate for, referrers, health and social care services and funding agencies all receive information that helps them understand the advocacy service and the role of the advocate, including its benefits and boundaries.

The Advocacy Providers objectives and activities must align with the principles set out in this Charter.

## Independence

The Advocacy Provider is independent from statutory organisations and all other service delivery and is free from conflict of interest, both in design and operation of advocacy services. The Advocacy Provider's culture supports Advocates to promote their independence with individuals, professionals and other stakeholders; Advocates will be free from influence and conflict of interest so that they can represent the person for whom they advocate.

## Confidentiality

Information held by the advocacy service about individuals will be kept confidential to the advocacy service. The Advocacy Provider will have a Confidentiality Policy that reflects current legislation. It will be clear about how personal information held by the Advocacy Provider will be kept confidential, under what circumstances it may be shared, the organisation's approach to confidentiality in the delivery of Non Instructed Advocacy and how the organisation responds if confidentiality is breached. Advocates will ensure that information concerning the people they advocate for is shared with these individuals unless there are exceptional circumstances, when a clear explanation will be recorded. Advocates must also be aware of situations that require making a child or adult safeguarding alert.

## Person Led

The Advocacy Provider and Advocates will put the people they advocate for first, ensuring that they are directed by their wishes and interests. Advocates will be non judgmental and respectful of people's needs, views, culture and experiences.

## Empowerment

The Advocacy Provider will support people to self-advocate as far as possible, creating and supporting opportunities for self-advocacy, empowerment and enablement. Advocates support people to access information to exercise choice and control in their lives and the decisions affecting them. People will choose their own level of involvement and the style of advocacy support they want. Where people lack capacity to influence the service, the Advocacy Provider will ensure the advocacy remains person led and enable those with an interest in the welfare of the person to be involved. People receiving advocacy will be involved in the wider activities of the organisation up to and including the Board.

## Equality and Diversity

The Advocacy Provider will have an up to date Equality and Diversity Policy that recognises the need to be pro-active in tackling all forms of inequality, discrimination and social exclusion so that all people are treated fairly. Advocates time will be allocated equitably. Advocates make reasonable adjustments to ensure people have appropriate opportunity to engage, direct and benefit from the advocacy activity.

## Accessibility

Advocacy will be provided free of charge to eligible people. The Advocacy Provider will ensure that its premises (where appropriate), policies, procedures and publicity materials promote full access for the population that it serves. Advocates will provide information and use language that is easy to understand and accessible to the person.

## Accountability

The Advocacy Provider is well managed, with appropriate governance arrangements in place, meeting its obligations as a legally constituted organisation. People accessing the service will have a named Advocate and a means of contacting them. The Advocacy Provider will have systems in place for effective recording, monitoring and evaluation of its work, including identification of the impact of the advocacy service and outcomes for people supported. In addition, it will be accountable to people who use its services by obtaining and responding to feedback and complaints. The Advocacy Provider will address systemic issues in health and social care provision or other services.

## Safeguarding

As part of supporting people to realise their Human Rights, the Advocacy Provider will have a thorough understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and processes as set out in law and best practice guidance. The Advocacy Provider will have clear, up to date policies and procedures in place to ensure safeguarding issues are identified and acted upon. Advocates support people to have their rights upheld and will be supported to understand and recognise different forms of abuse and neglect, issues relating to confidentiality and what to do if they suspect an individual is at risk.

## Supporting Advocates

The Advocacy Provider will ensure that Advocates are suitably trained, supported and supervised in their role and provided with opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, including access to legal advice where necessary. It will create a supportive culture that enables Advocates to undertake their role in line with this Charter.

The Advocacy Charter was originally produced by Action for Advocacy

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