

DEFINITIONS OF ADVOCACY

Advocacy is not new, and it is part of everyday life. People advocate (or speak up) everyday for themselves, for their children, for their relatives and for their friends. Concerned individuals advocate for people whose rights are particularly vulnerable and whose contribution as citizens is undervalued. There is a spectrum or continuum of advocacy, which ranges from legal advocacy through to the informal support and/or encouragement of a friend.

In addition to groups that specifically describe themselves as 'advocacy' organisations, there are a host of others that also provide some type of 'advocacy'. Some of the latter, like many ordinary citizens, might not consider themselves as 'advocating' for someone. Very often, these forms of 'advocacy' have just evolved organically. Lawyers and advice providers obviously advocate to some extent for their clients, but would not necessarily use the word 'advocacy' in their title. Family members, carers and friends often have to take on the role of advocate. There are other supports that, although related to advocacy, are not the same thing.

Although each of the different forms of advocacy is distinct, there are links between them. No person's needs are addressed entirely by one form of advocacy, and needs change. People should have different options available to them to meet their various needs.

ADVOCACY RELATED ACTIVITIES

Information Giving

This is the communication of knowledge, facts and ideas to people. It is generally about providing information that will help people to deal with an issue their self or signpost them to other services, such as advice, for example.

Advice

The Community Legal Service divides advice into three levels. **General help** is described as diagnosing clients' problems, giving information and explaining options, identifying further actions the client can take and giving basic assistance. **General help with casework** is described as taking action on behalf of clients to move the case on. This might include negotiation and speaking on the client's behalf to third parties. **Specialist help** involves advice

and legal help on complex matters. This would include representation in a formal context such as a tribunal, court or adjudication.

Befriending

Befriending involves the matching of volunteers to visit and/or take part in social and leisure activities with another person.

ADVOCACY

Short-term, Issue Based or Crisis Advocacy

This recognises that some people may require the support of an independent advocate during a major change in their life, e.g. death of a carer, or with a particular issue, e.g. accessing housing advice or making a complaint. The short-term advocate is somebody who is not involved in the person's issues, and offers them person-centred independent support. The relationship would usually only last until the issue has been dealt with by the appropriate body.

Citizen Advocacy

Citizen advocacy is a one-to-one relationship between an unpaid advocate and their (advocacy) partner. The emphasis is on a long-term relationship based on equality and on promoting human rights and challenging social exclusion. Citizen Advocacy is especially useful to people who have experienced, or are experiencing, long-term social exclusion.

Advocacy Visitors

Advocacy Visitors (usually volunteers) maintain contact with a number of people who it is felt may be in need of advocacy support at a future date, but for whom there is not an immediate issue or crisis. Their role involves visiting or meeting with the potential (advocacy) partners on a regular basis and getting to know them. They would then be required to identify any advocacy needs and report them back to the Citizen Advocacy Co-ordinator.

Self-Advocacy

The process of people speaking out for themselves, thereby gaining or regaining control over their lives. It often involves people working as a group and often self-advocates become peer and/or citizen advocates.

Peer Advocacy

Peer advocacy recognises the value of an advocate having shared common experiences with a person that they are supporting, e.g. a person who has faced mental health difficulties supporting somebody with similar experiences.

Collective or Group Advocacy

People who face a similar situation or have a shared concern come together to make their common cause known, and get their collective voice heard.

Professional advocacy

People with specific expert knowledge of the legal, health or welfare system provide this type of advocacy. This service is most likely to be provided by a paid professional staff, with relevant training and experience.

Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA)

Has a specific (trained) role in situations that have been clearly defined in the Mental Capacity Act.

Independent Mental Health Act Advocate (IMHAA)

Currently the subject of discussion, but would have a specific (trained) role in relation to Mental Health legislation.