

What is an Advocate?

An advocate is someone who can help their partner to speak up and have their views heard, so that they can be involved in making decisions which affect them. An advocate helps to make their advocacy partner aware of their rights when dealing with specific issues and helps them to protect these rights.

An advocate is independent from any other agency or service that may be involved in their advocacy partner's life, and so will represent only the advocacy partner's views and wishes.

This is what an advocate does...

Deal with a specific issue that the advocacy partner has. With regard to this issue we will:

- Help the advocacy partner to have their wishes and views heard.
- Spend time with the Advocacy partner and help them explore what they want*
- Go to meetings with the advocacy partner.
- Write letters and make telephone calls with the involvement of the advocacy partner.
- Access information and help the advocacy partner to understand about their rights.
- Access other support services, for example:- social worker, housing advisor, or solicitor
- Keep information about our advocacy partners confidential unless we believe that they or others are vulnerable to abuse. We work within the West Sussex Adult Protection Policy.
- Work within the Advocates "Code of Practice" (Copies available from the Advocacy office).

This is what an advocate does not do...

- Offer advice or counselling.
- Influence or make decisions for their advocacy partner.
- Offer a befriending service.
- Take sides in a disagreement but represent the views of the advocacy partner (not those of other parties involved).
- Take on the role/responsibility of a paid carer.

* **Speaking for a Person:** We sometimes work with people who are not able to offer clear and consistent instructions and we are aware of the issues inherent in non-instructed advocacy. We employ different approaches to our work for instance:

- a "rights based" approach where we are concentrating on the partner's legal and moral rights, getting those met as quickly as possible, or using
- a "best interests" approach extrapolating from what we know about our partner's wishes and feelings and applying these to the issues to be decided, or again
- a "person centred" approach taking time to engage with our partner in any way we can to build our understanding of what is important for them.

If you would like to speak to somebody about the Advocacy Service please contact our office at:

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