

Information on Advocacy

Local authorities must involve people in decisions made about them and where there is to be a safeguarding enquiry.

The local authority must help people to understand how they can be involved, how they can contribute and take part and sometimes lead or direct the process. People should be active partners in any enquiries in relation to abuse or neglect. No matter how complex a person's needs, local authorities are required to involve people, to help them express their wishes and feelings, to support them to weigh up options, and to make their own decisions.

Safeguarding situations can be distressing and difficult and safeguarding meetings can be complex and daunting to people who would not normally experience them, advocacy can help people to be involved and in control.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy services help people – particularly those who are most vulnerable in society – to:

- access information and services
- be involved in decisions about their lives
- explore choices and options
- defend and promote their rights and responsibilities
- speak out about issues that matter to them.

What will an advocate do for me?

An advocate will represent and help you to:

- understand the safeguarding adults process;
- communicate your views, wishes and feelings;
- make decisions and challenge those made by other people;
- understand your rights.

What does the law require of Local Authorities?

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to support people to be involved. Where someone has difficulties then the local authority must make reasonable adjustments and provide support.

Where someone has substantial difficulties in being involved the local authority will look to see if there is an 'appropriate individual' – a carer or relative that can help. This person must be able to understand the safeguarding adult's process, so they can support and represent their relative/friend and help their involvement in the processes. They must not

voice or express their own opinions. It is not sufficient for the person to know you well; the role is to actively support your participation in the process.

If there is no 'appropriate individual' then the local authority has a duty to arrange for an independent advocate. Also sometimes having a relative or friend to act as you advocate is difficult, for example, perhaps because you do not wish to discuss the nature of the abuse with them, then the local authority can help and provide an independent advocate.

There are also times when an independent advocate should be provided even where your family or others are involved. These are:

- when it is suspected that your family member or other person is causing the harm;
- where there is a disagreement between the local authority and the person who is or may facilitate your involvement, and both agree that an independent advocate would be beneficial.

Your advocate cannot be someone who is already providing care and treatment in a professional capacity or on a paid basis (regardless of who employs or pays them). That means it cannot be, for example, a GP, or a nurse, a key worker or a care and support worker involved in your care or support.

It is important that you agree to the person supporting you. If there are concerns and you do not have mental capacity to make this decision, then the local authority has to be satisfied that it is in your best interests to be supported and represented by the proposed person.

When will an advocate become involved?

From the first point of contact, and at any subsequent stage of safeguarding adults enquiry.

Your independent Advocate for this safeguarding concern is

Their contact details are:

Phone

Email

They/I can be contacted at these times