



OVERVIEW OF INDEPENDENCE AND QUALITY OF SERVICE PROVISION

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1. WHO WE ARE.

Advent Advocacy has provided a quality assured nationwide advocacy service with a full range of statutory and non-statutory advocacy services since 2007, including Generic Advocacy, Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA), Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA), Care Act Advocacy, Paid Relevant Person's Representative advocacy (PRPR), Children and Young People's Advocacy, and Non-Instructed Advocacy. Advent Advocacy also provides independent mental health advocacy in universities, schools, and colleges.

2. MENTAL HEALTH ACT 1983: CODE OF PRACTICE. THE PURPOSE OF IMHA SERVICES.

IMHA services provide an additional safeguard for patients who are subject to the Act. IMHAs are specialist advocates who are trained specifically to work within the framework of the Act and enable patients to participate in decision-making, for example, by supporting and encouraging patients to express and communicate their views. IMHAs should be independent of any person who has been professionally involved in the patient's medical treatment.

Section 130A¹ of the Mental Health Act 1983 requires that the Secretary of State enable Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs) to be available to support qualifying patients. These regulations contain provisions about the arrangements for the appointment of IMHAs and as to who can be appointed to act as an IMHA. Regulation 3² directs that, where relevant, a commissioning body or provider of advocacy services must ensure that an individual who is appointed to act as an IMHA satisfies the conditions in regulation 6. Commissioning bodies are also directed to take reasonable steps to ensure that the different needs and circumstances of qualifying patients, in respect of whom they may exercise the functions under section 130A of the Act, are taken into consideration.

Regulation 6³ provides that a person can only act as an IMHA if they have satisfied certain requirements as to experience, training, good character, and independence.

Our independence statement below provides an in-depth breakdown of our advocacy provision in line with the Mental Health Act (1983), Quality Performance Mark (QPM), and NICE guidelines. Advent Advocacy work is funded by commissioners, local authorities, health and social care providers and educational establishments.

3. OUR INDEPENDENCE

Advent Advocacy stand structurally and operationally independent from healthcare sites, providers, commissioners, funders, and local authorities. We only provide Independent Advocacy services. Organisational aims, values, design, and operations are separate from other services and statutory organisations. Our culture supports advocates to promote their independence with service users, professionals, and other stakeholders.

Our service is independently verified by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi), and we are commended often by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as well as local authority teams, including DoLS and Adult Safeguarding.

Advent Advocacy's independence is bolstered in contractual clauses stated within our formal contracts between our organisation and the healthcare provider or local authority. The most notable of these clauses is the instruction that Advent Advocacy:

'shall act as an independent contractor for the purposes of this Agreement and nothing in this Agreement shall, and no action taken by the Parties pursuant to this Agreement shall, constitute or be deemed to constitute a partnership, association, joint venture, or other co-operative entity between (provider/local authority) and the Consultant and neither Party is authorised to act as agent for the other'.

We provide a non-adversarial approach. We believe an adversarial approach can be detrimental to the therapeutic alliances which the service users and service providers have developed. Our Independent Advocates understand that the nature of challenging professionals is a vital part of our role.

¹ 130A Functions: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/20/section/130A>

² Regulation 3: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2375/regulation/3/made>

³ Regulation 6: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2375/regulation/6/made>



Central to our values is the belief in, and active support of, the NHS's drive to have *'No Decision About Me, Without Me'*. We work with people to aid understanding of rights, choices, and risk, facilitating discussions to support people to understand the situation at hand, the choices involved, and the potential outcomes of those choices. We offer an equitable service that is without judgment or prejudice, and this enables the service user to continue to work with the care team, thus facilitating independence, self-advocacy, and cohesiveness in a safe environment.

4. ADVOCACY QUALITY PERFORMANCE MARK (QPM)

Advent Advocacy is an accredited holder of the Quality Performance Mark (QPM) as awarded by the National Development Team for Inclusion. QPM is a quality assurance assessment for providers such as Advent Advocacy of Independent Advocacy in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It is based on the principles contained in the Advocacy Charter and the Advocacy Code of Practice, enabling providers to demonstrate how they are meeting the different standards. In conferring the award, independent assessors stated that the service had excellent continuing professional development, support and supervision and accountability systems. They confirmed that the advocacy service supported recovery, self-determination and was person-centred. Advocates had a comprehensive knowledge of the role of the IMHA, as stated within the Mental Health Act Code of Practice.

“ADVOCATES HAVE AN EXCELLENT UNDERSTANDING OF ADVOCACY PRACTICE AND CLEARLY APPLY THIS IN THEIR WORK. ADVOCATES AND MANAGERS ARE EXPERIENCED, SKILLED, AND KNOWLEDGEABLE. THIS WAS SUPPORTED BY COMMENTS FROM THE PEOPLE THAT HAD USED THE SERVICE AND EXTERNAL PROFESSIONALS. ADVOCATES HAVE AN EXCELLENT

UNDERSTANDING OF THE ELIGIBILITY FOR THE TYPE OF ADVOCACY THEY PROVIDE”.

THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM FOR INCLUSION

The assessor also interviewed service users who were able to verify that they understood how the advocate was independent from the service commissioners and providers. The assessor commented that Advent Advocacy had a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures including a well-structured Equality and Diversity and Recruitment policy.

“THE ORGANISATION (ADVENT ADVOCACY) ITSELF IS INDEPENDENT FROM ANY OTHER PROVISION, AND APPROPRIATELY CONSTITUTED TO MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE. RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMISSIONERS AND ‘HOST’ SETTINGS ARE POSITIVE AND IN NO WAY ENCROACH ON THE ABILITY OF ADVOCATES TO ACT IN THEIR INDEPENDENT ROLE. ADVOCATES COULD DESCRIBE HOW THEY MAINTAINED A CLEAR, VISIBLE BOUNDARY FROM THE WARD STAFF TO ENSURE CLIENTS COULD SEE THERE WERE INDEPENDENT.”

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5. NICE GUIDELINES

To be read in conjunction with the attached NICE Guidelines Response.

Advent Advocacy reviewed the updated NICE Guidelines, published in November 2022. The recommendations include operational guidance relating to the legal right to Independent Advocacy (1.1), ensuring Independent Advocacy is offered to those not covered by the legal entitlement (1.2), improving access to Independent Advocacy (1.4) and collecting data for quality improvement (1.11). Advent Advocacy are assured by these recommendations and already operate within the parameters set out. We pride ourselves on our 'opt out' approach to Independent Advocacy. We offer a regular, consistent Independent Advocacy service to those who require our support, tailored specifically to their needs, including Generic Advocacy, IMHA, IMCA, Non-Instructed Advocacy and Relevant Person's Representatives. Our work is documented in regular robust reporting structures, including confidential case notes, monthly and quarterly reports, and safeguarding practices.

6. WHORLTON HALL

To be read in conjunction with the attached Whorlton Hall Response.

Advent Advocacy has compiled a response to the Safeguarding Adults Review report on Whorlton Hall, commissioned by Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership. Advent Advocacy's delivery of Independent Advocacy meets the requirements stated in the report.

7. CQC

Advent Advocacy welcome opportunities to meet with CQC inspectors during inspections. We have been commended on our high-quality Independent Advocacy service within CQC reports spanning over 14 years. The following excerpts are taken from a CQC report for Cygnet Maidstone, for example.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE ELIGIBILITY FOR THE TYPE OF "STAFF INVOLVED PATIENTS IN CARE PLANNING AND RISK ASSESSMENT AND ACTIVELY SOUGHT THEIR FEEDBACK ON THE QUALITY OF CARE PROVIDED. THEY ENSURED THAT PATIENTS HAD EASY ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT ADVOCATES."

"THE PROVIDERS COMPLAINTS PROCESS WAS DISPLAYED ON THE WARD NOTICEBOARDS AND IN THE PATIENT WELCOME GUIDES. PATIENTS WE SPOKE WITH TOLD US THEY KNEW HOW TO COMPLAIN. AN ADVOCATE WAS ALSO AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT PATIENTS IN RAISING ANY CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS."

"STAFF ENSURED THAT PATIENTS HAD ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT ADVOCATES. POSTERS ABOUT THE ADVOCACY SERVICE AND HOW TO CONTACT THEM WERE ON DISPLAY IN THE COMMUNAL AREA OF THE WARD. ALL PATIENTS WE SPOKE WITH WERE AWARE OF THE ADVOCACY SERVICE AND THE SUPPORT THEY OFFERED."

8. LEADERSHIP

Advent Advocacy has an experienced Senior Management Team. It is the responsibility of the Senior Management team to ensure organisational values and behaviours inform the work of each individual advocate for each individual service. Ongoing refinement and future planned activities are based on data from a range of stakeholders and guided by the principles in the Advocacy Charter and the Quality Performance Mark (QPM).

9. RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

Advent Advocacy's Human Resource Management (HRM) team is an established part of the organisation. The HRM team comprises a Head of Human Resources and Corporate Compliance, who holds a fully Chartered Membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (Chartered MCIPD) with over 30 years' public sector experience at senior and management board level. Advent Advocacy also have a Human Resources Manager who is CIPD Level 5 qualified and working on CIPD Level 7. Together they ensure that Advent Advocacy's recruitment, selection and appointment procedures and practices are compliant with employment law requirements and that we follow CIPD best practice in this regard.

10. INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING AND REGIONAL NETWORK

Safeguarding is a vital theme throughout Advent Advocacy. Safeguarding is one of the mandatory, core internal training modules that advocates must participate in within their induction period. We have a four-stage safeguarding training programme. Furthermore, Advocates undergo a three-month probation process whereby they are required to complete three Safeguarding training sessions. The first session was produced by The Social Care Institute of Excellence who Advent Advocacy commissioned. The following two training sessions were devised internally - 'Poor Care Vs Safeguarding' and 'Safeguarding Processes'.

"HAVING THE ADVOCATE ATTEND SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY MEETINGS HOLDS US TO ACCOUNT AND ENSURES SERVICE USER VOICE IS HEARD THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS".

HOSPITAL MANAGER OF A SERVICE IN SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

Advent Advocacy's Safeguarding Team holds over 30 years' experience of safeguarding, guided by a member of our team who has worked within local authority adults and children's services as a Consultant Manager. Our Safeguarding Team have established links with stakeholders, local authority, social workers, CQC, and other professionals, and attend regional safeguarding meetings every three months to discuss best practice and complex safeguarding cases. We also attend several safeguarding regional forums.

Additionally, Advent Advocacy establishes service-wide safeguarding meetings with commissioning bodies, that include the Named Professional for Safeguarding, to ensure that safeguarding trends, patterns, and themes, including serious safeguarding matters, are discussed. We believe we are accountable for joint working with multi-agency professionals. Advent Advocacy are experienced in joint working to protect people's right to enjoy security, safety, and to take positive risks.

Independent Advocates do all that they can to ensure that service users know they have continuous access to our service during safeguarding processes.

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THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM FOR INCLUSION.

11. INTERNAL CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

All supervisors are internally and externally trained and qualified to IAQ standard. We ensure that staff have appropriate skills, experience, training, and qualifications. The NDTi noted that we have *'...a breadth of internal training and development for staff, including non-instructed advocacy, and specialist sessions about acquired brain injury, eating disorders, personality disorders and safeguarding. [Advent Advocacy are] committed to reflection and development'*.

Advent Advocacy's CPD programme ensures that all training delivered to Independent Advocates is bespoke and informed by the nature of casework. This ensures that our team are equipped to deliver a quality Independent Advocacy service tailored to the needs of each individual seeking advocacy support. This includes methods to support individuals with complex needs, the use of communication tools (including PECS and Makaton) and knowledge of diagnosis.

Advent Advocacy regularly facilitate 'Advocacy Awareness' sessions. This is to ensure that staff can help people being treated to get the very best out of advocacy and understand how advocacy can support those individuals. These sessions also allow us to reinforce the independent nature of the role.

In addition, we attend and contribute to the Leaders in Advocacy Network, where leaders from Independent Advocacy providers nationwide meet on a monthly basis to develop a shared understanding of issues impacting the sector and sharing best practice.

12. NATIONAL ADVOCACY QUALIFICATION

An Independent Advocacy qualification is required by those individuals delivering an Independent Advocacy services. It recognises the need for Independent Advocates to be trained and assessed across their knowledge and practice skills to a Level 4 standard.

The Independent Advocacy qualification is required by legislation through statutory guidance, codes of practice, relevant regulations throughout England and Wales.

Advent Advocates are enrolled within 3 months of their employment and complete their Level 4 Qualification for Independent Advocacy within 12 months. Advocates are qualified to Level 4 for IMHA services, IMCA Services and Care Act Advocacy services. City & Guilds are the only awarding organisation that offer this nationally recognised Independent Advocacy qualification, and its completion denotes 'qualified' status for practising Independent Advocates.

13. REPORTING STRUCTURE

The principle of 'Independence' runs through the entirety of Advent Advocacy, including our reporting structure. Advent Advocacy produce monthly and quarterly reports to capture the themes of Independent Advocacy work delivered, as well as the frequency of visits and overall engagement. The reports are anonymised and are analysed to inform of any recurrent themes, duration, outcomes and impact of Independent Advocacy. Importance is placed on including service user voice within our reporting; therefore we include an 'Impact of Advocacy' section, 'You said, we did' section, and a section for anonymised case studies.

Advent Advocacy have established co-productive links with the providers that we work with. We provide each board with reports to ensure service user voice is heard to impact change from the top down. Furthermore, we have recently produced a Thematic Quarterly Report that is presented at board level to healthcare providers. This ensures that an independent perspective is provided, alongside common themes and issues affecting people are heard high-level.



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