



WHAT IS INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY?

An Independent Advocate is a someone who supports people to have their voice heard, so that they can contribute to the decisions being made about their care and treatment. An Independent Advocate will help a person understand their rights and explain choices available to them.



HOW CAN AN INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE HELP ME?

An Independent Advocate can:

- Listen to you explain how you feel about your care.
- Help you to understand the care and support process.
- Challenge decisions about your care and support if you do not agree with them.
- Stand up for your rights.
- Write letters for you.
- Attend meetings with you.

An Independent Advocate can support you during:

- Assessments
- Care and support planning
- Safeguarding and reviews

An Independent Advocate will NOT:

- Make decisions for you.
- Tell you what you should do.
- Judge you.

CAN I TALK TO AN INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE?

Yes. The service caring for you has an Independent Advocate who visits regularly and is available to all service users.

If you would like to meet with an Independent Advocate you can ask a member of staff at your service to refer you, or you can contact our office and ask for a meeting. Our contact details are at the bottom of this page.

All of our Independent Advocates offer **Generic Advocacy** and **IMHA support**, so the service is **available to everyone**, to help you understand and express yourself regarding your care and rights.

WHAT IS AN IMHA?

When your Independent Advocate helps you to understand your rights under the Mental Health Act, they are referred to as a Statutory Advocate or Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA).

As an IMHA they have the following rights:

- To access wards and units to visit service users.
- To meet services users in private (unless there is advice not to do this).
- To attend meetings with staff when directed by the service user.
- To meet with and hold discussions with professionals involved in the care of service users.
- To access records with the permission of service users.

WHO DO INDEPENDENT ADVOCATES WORK FOR?

Your Independent Advocate works for Advent Advocacy. Independent Advocates do not work for the Local Authority, NHS, Health or Social Care providers. This means they are impartial and will represent your views, wishes and feelings. They are able to challenge organisations if your rights are not being considered.

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