



What is advocacy?

Advocacy is supporting someone to enable their views to be heard. It is a free and confidential service.

An advocate will listen to you and try to understand your situation from your point of view. They can then:

- work and support you to find the best possible outcome to your situation
- help you to find things out
- help you to write letters or make phone calls on your behalf
- help you to prepare for meetings and come to meetings with you

Advocates are not there to tell you what to do, they are there to support you in your choices and decisions.

Models of Advocacy

There are a number of different models of advocacy. These include professional advocacy, collective advocacy and citizen advocacy. The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) describes these models as:

Independent Professional Advocacy

Advocacy is provided by both paid and unpaid advocates. The aim is to support people to represent their own interests. If this is not possible, the advocate will represent the person's views.

The advocate provides support on specific issues. He or she provides information not advice and will provide short or long term support. Independent professional advocates will support several people at any time.

Citizen Advocacy

This model encourages ordinary citizens to become more involved with the welfare of those who might need support in their communities. It is based on trust between the person being supported and the advocate. The advocate's loyalty is to the person being supported not to the advocacy project.

The advocate is not paid and is not motivated by personal gain. They will gain the right to be involved with their partner from the personal relationship they have with the person. The advocate will support their partner using their natural skills and talents rather than receiving training for the role. The advocacy relationship will be on a 1 to 1 basis and long term.

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Collective/Group Advocacy

This is when a group of people who are facing a common problem get together to support each other. Individual members of the group may also support each other over specific issues. The group as a whole may campaign on an issue that affects all of them.

This information was taken from SIAA website: www.siaa.org.uk/what.php.

SIAA can provide leaflets on the different models of advocacy and their website has further information including a directory of advocacy organisations in Scotland. Further details can be found in the **A-Z of useful contacts** factsheet.

Carers Advocacy

Carers may find themselves in situations where they feel their wishes and needs are not being taken into account. It can sometimes take all their time and energy to get what they want for the person they are caring for, leaving them with little for themselves. An advocate can support the carer to make sure their views are heard.

An example of how an advocate can help:

Janet cares for her mum who has dementia. Janet's mum has home care workers to help her to get up in the morning and provide meals but as her condition is deteriorating she is requiring more and more support from Janet. Janet feels that she would like more help to care for her mum. She contacts the advocacy service to support her in meetings with her mum's social worker to discuss additional support and respite.

VOCAL's Carers Advocacy Service provides volunteer professional advocacy. We recruit and train volunteer advocates many of whom are carers and former carers. They have all passed a selection interview, attended an extensive training programme and receive regular supervision.

The Carers Advocacy Service is not a service which can provide advice, counselling, mediation, support work or befriending but we will try and refer you on to appropriate agencies who can offer these services. VOCAL also has an Information and Advice team and a counselling service for carers. You can contact the advocacy service to discuss with the Co-ordinator whether an advocate would offer you the best support. Alternatively, you can contact VOCAL's Information and Advice team and they can refer you to the advocacy service if appropriate.

Become a Carers Advocate!

Could you spare a little of your time to become a carers advocate? We provide extensive training and support for this flexible and rewarding volunteering opportunity. If you would like to know more please contact Mark Johnston, on 0131 622 7625.