

### Where is the service delivered?

We work with people both in hospital and in the community. They can come along to our local office or we can meet somewhere of their choice. We visit people who find it difficult to leave the house at home: for a first visit, it is usual for advocates to come along in pairs. All advocates have identification badges, and clients are encouraged to request to see them.

### Over what period of time can a service-user access advocacy support?

Our aim is to enable our clients to take more control of their situation so that they feel better equipped to advocate for themselves in future. The service is there for clients to use as and when they require support; for as long as they feel they need our assistance, or until the issue they need help with is concluded or resolved. However, we are only a small service with limited resources, and this will have an impact on the level of input that we can provide.

### How does the referral process work?

Service users can self-refer by simply contacting the service and requesting an appointment. We will also accept third-party referrals. If your client is unable or unwilling to make the initial call, then you can contact the service on the client's behalf to make an appointment, but it is imperative that you have the client's consent to make the referral. If you feel that the client would benefit from accessing advocacy but find it difficult to fully explain the service, we can make an initial to offer them our assistance. We have leaflets that are designed to explain the service to service users

### Would you be prepared to come to our team meeting to explain advocacy to us?

Yes, presentations can be arranged upon request.

### What are your operating hours?

Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm, but it may be possible to make an appointment outside of these hours upon request. If met by an answering-machine when calling the office, please leave a message, including your contact number and an advocate will return your call. The answering-machine messages are picked up remotely, if there is not an advocate in the office. We endeavour to get back to you within 24 hours of you leaving a message. However, messages left after 4pm on a Friday will not be picked up until the start of the following week. We will try to respond as quickly as possible if the matter is urgent.

### How is the service funded?

We get our funding from Cambridgeshire County Council, The Greater Peterborough Primary Care Partnership and local Primary Care Trusts.

### Contact details:

**Peterborough office:** 5 York Road,  
Peterborough PE1 3BP Tel: 01733 758278

**Huntingdonshire office:** 22a High Street,  
Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 4TH  
Tel: 01480 454777

**Fenland & East Cambs office:** Old School  
Buildings, March PE15 8AN Tel: 01354  
652445

**Cambridge office:** Box 322, Therapy  
Resource Centre, Fulbourn Hospital,  
Cambridge CB1 5EF Tel: 01223 218500

**Email:** enquiries@cias.org.uk



**The Advocacy Service has been awarded the Community Legal Service Quality Mark**



## Information for Professionals Cambridgeshire Independent Advocacy Service

### What is advocacy?

The Advocacy Service is here to support people with mental-health problems speak up for their rights, either individually or as a group. The service is client led, which means that our clients decide what level of involvement they want the advocate to have in supporting them: we work under our clients' instruction.

### What sort of help do you provide?

In brief, advocates can provide their clients with support to do the following:

- ✓ discuss concerns
- ✓ find information
- ✓ understand their situation
- ✓ make informed choices
- ✓ express their point of view

The above can apply to any situation, and are not restricted to matters directly relating to service-users' mental health. In practical terms, we can help our clients to make telephone calls and/or write letters. We can also go along to appointments, if clients feel that they need extra support to communicate their views.

This is not an exhaustive list, however the work we do includes matters related to: housing, employment, benefits, social services, family, medical treatment, criminal and civil law. We often work in conjunction specialist advisors in these fields and do not seek to substitute their roles.

### Who can be referred?

Anybody aged 18-65, who experiences mental health problems and resides within Cambridgeshire.

### **What information will I need to provide in order to refer a client?**

The main thing that you will need is the client's contact details; sometimes background information can be of help, but we usually like to gain this from service-users directly, as their perspective may differ.

### **Can I talk to you in confidence about a service-user?**

No, you should be aware that we will relay all information that we receive to our client. If you do not want the client to know the information, then please do not divulge it to us.

### **Will the advocate share information with the professionals involved in the service-user's care?**

If the client concerned wishes us to, we are happy to share information. However, we have strict guidelines on confidentiality, which state that information will not be disclosed unless we have the express permission of the client to share the information with a third party.

### **What about risk?**

If our clients communicate risk of serious harm to themselves or others, we will inform the appropriate professionals involved in their care, consent is not required in this instance. Equally we expect care professionals to inform us if there are any risks associated with us engaging with a particular client. We should be informed either at the point of referral or as soon as the risk becomes apparent.

### **Can I be provided with regular updates on the work that the service is doing on behalf of the service-user whom I have referred?**

Once again, this would depend on whether the individual client agreed to this. If the client would like you to have regular updates, we are pleased to oblige.

### **How do I know if it is OK to provide advocates with the information that they request?**

Advocates work under direct instruction from their clients. If our clients want us to access information on their behalf, they are required to sign a consent form, giving the advocate authority to work on their behalf. If you are unsure about imparting information, please request to see signed consent.

### **Why would clients need an advocate to attend a meeting with them?**

Some clients find meetings intimidating and that it helps to have assistance from somebody to support them in expressing their point of view. During a meeting, the advocate's role is to ensure that clients are able to communicate their views. Sometimes clients will want the advocate to speak on their behalf, whereas others will require less support and may simply require support to remember what they wanted to say. Following the meeting, the advocate can help the client clarify what was discussed and help them to explore options concerning what they would like to do next.

### **Will the advocate's work be in the service-user's best interest?**

We will work from our clients' perspective and help them to progress towards what they perceive to be in their own 'best interest'. The concept of best interest is subjective and therefore we recognize that this will not always correspond with what other people perceive to be in that person's best interest. There are safeguards in place: we will not support clients to commit criminal acts or to place themselves or others in danger, as we are a professional service that works within the law.

### **What standard of service can my client expect to receive?**

You can expect that they will receive a professional service. All our advocates work to our Code of Practice (copies available upon request). We also work to national standards including the Advocacy Charter that has been produced by the Action 4 Advocacy. We work to guidance on equal opportunities and will not discriminate. The service has also achieved a quality accreditation from the Community Legal Service. All of our advocates, including volunteers, receive regular training, support and supervision.

### **What response can I expect to receive when contacting the service?**

All advocates are expected to treat any person they come into contact within the course of their work with courtesy and respect. We have signed up to a Memorandum of Agreement with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust to ensure that we maintain a positive working relationship between the two services for the benefit of all concerned.

### **What do I do if I have concerns about the work that an advocate is doing?**

In the first instance, it is usually best to try to talk to the advocate concerned. If this is not possible or you are not satisfied with the response you receive, then please contact the Service Manager on 01733 758278. We have a formal complaints procedure, which is available upon request; however, in most instances it is possible to resolve issues through communication. If you would like to speak to a more senior manager, then you can contact our Chief Executive by calling 01733 758211.