

## Self Advocacy – Overview

### WHAT IS SELF-ADVOCACY

Advocacy in the Health and Social Care sector is aimed at reaching a mutually acceptable outcome, between two or more parties for any given issue. Advocacy is not about winning complicated arguments and you do not have to be legally qualified to be a professional advocate, or to advocate for yourself.

Effective advocacy reaches a solution. It is not always about achieving a perfect outcome, sometimes a good outcome is good enough.

As a minimum, your outcome from discussions should always be compatible with your basic rights as set out in legislation. You should never be expected to, or be put under pressure to accept less than the minimum legal requirements.

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#### What rights do I have?

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Your human rights are exceptionally important as they are the basis on which many of your other rights are built.

The Human Rights Act 1998 provides a legal framework for how you, as an individual, should be treated by the state. It prevents the state from controlling aspects of your life and taking away your rights, rights which include your right to marry, your right not to be tortured, your right to be treated with dignity and your right to express yourself.

The consequence of losing your human rights would be that the state controls more aspects of your life. Human rights are universal, irrespective of your age, whether you have a disability or your ethnic group for instance.

In the health and social care sector, some other important rights include your right to autonomy – making decisions about your own life, your dignity, your liberty and your right to life.

If you have to compromise, a good compromise allows both parties get a better outcome than each originally envisaged.

Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself, either verbally or in writing, to give yourself a stake in decisions and future events that matter to you in your life. It includes knowing your rights and applying them to achieve the desired outcome.





Whilst having an understanding of the legislation is useful, the most important skill is communication: sharing your views, wishes, feelings and decisions with other people, in an effective way, to explain and try and bring about the changes that you want. Other significant skills are listening carefully and making measured responses to points raised, rather than quickly reacting.

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#### What other important legislation is there?

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In the health and social care sector there are other important pieces of legislation such as:

-  The Mental Capacity Act 2005
-  The Mental Health Act 2007
-  The Care Act 2014
-  The Equality Act 2010

n-compass has produced a wide range of factsheets to help you understand your rights, available on the n-compass website.

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#### The seven C's of communication

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When you communicate with people, try to consider the seven C's. Be clear, concise, correct, concrete, coherent, complete and courteous.

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### The eighth “C” - Confidence

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Some people struggle to communicate effectively as they feel unsure or anxious. For instance, many people don't like leaving messages on answerphones or leaving a voicemail. If you feel that way, you can always hang up, then call back later and leave a message, after you have prepared what you want to say.

You can improve your confidence through preparation and there are lots of tools available to help you prepare to communicate. The more you prepare, the easier communication becomes and you feel more confident about doing it the next time.

To begin with, gather the relevant information and your thoughts, then try and arrange them into the order of what you want to say or write. You can do this to prepare for telephone calls, writing letters and for attending meetings.

If you struggle with your literacy or language, try using a “thought shower”. This method involves putting your thoughts and feelings onto a sheet of paper, in no particular order, as they cross your mind. When you run out of thoughts, stop and see if there are any patterns or connections in them.

If you work better with patterns and structures, you could try making a “mind map”. This is similar to a thought shower, but you let one thing to lead on to another on the piece of paper, to join your thoughts together as you go.

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### Will professionals listen to me?

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You may feel powerless when dealing with Health and Social Care professionals, or you may think that you owe them a debt of gratitude if they help you. Some people worry about the consequences if they talk to a professional, so they try to avoid doing that, other people deliberately avoid conversations that they think might be difficult.

It is important to remember that the state is a servant to the public, not the other way round. In the Care Act 2014 for instance, your wellbeing is the guiding principle for all the work undertaken within that Act.

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### Listening carefully and making notes

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In formal meetings, the chairperson will usually follow an agenda and a minute taker writes notes and circulates the minutes afterwards. It is a good idea to write down action points that have been agreed in meetings or telephone calls, to ensure that they are followed through.

You will usually be invited to raise your points at some point during the agenda, but it is important to listen to the contributions from other participants, even if what is being said in the meeting triggers strong emotions. Arguing is never a good way to change someone else's opinion or perspective.

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### What do n-compass' advocates do?

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If an advocate has been appointed to support you, they can meet you in your own home, or at place that is more convenient or private for you.

Personal development support is free and confidential. It is consent-based, your advocate will only work on your behalf if you instruct them to do so.

Advocacy work undertaken is also free and confidential, there are several different types of advocacy work, including Self Advocacy, alongside n-compass' personal development initiatives.

The only time that your advocate will speak about you or speak on your behalf without your permission is if you say you have been harmed, or were going to harm, yourself, or someone else.

### In all cases, an advocate will

-  Listen carefully to what you tell them about your views and feelings.
-  Support you to speak up or speak up on your behalf if needed.
-  Make sure you are involved in decisions being made about you.

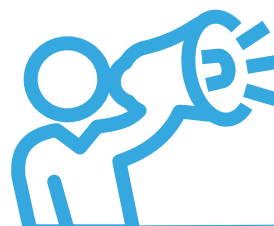
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### How can I make a referral?

Health and social care professionals have a duty to refer clients to an advocacy service in some circumstances and a discretionary power to refer to advocacy in other circumstances.

If you are a health and social care professional and you are unsure whether to make a referral, please contact us.

If you are an individual who would like advocacy or self-development support, please contact us and we can direct you to suitable support options to assist you with your personal development journey.



**TO LEARN HOW ADVOCACY  
CAN HELP PLEASE GET IN TOUCH**

**The n-compass Digital Advocacy Hub provides free and impartial information on a range of common advocacy issues. n-compass delivers several advocacy services across the north of England.**

**To find out if we deliver in your locality**

**Website** [www.n-compass.org.uk/our-services/advocacy](http://www.n-compass.org.uk/our-services/advocacy)

**Sign video** [ncompass.signvideo.net/](http://ncompass.signvideo.net/)