



# WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

# WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

**Advocacy takes many forms – some formal, some informal.**

**Here are some of the ones you are most likely to come across:-**

## **ADVOCACY ...**

- Is the name given to the many ways in which people can be enabled to get their message across, particularly if they are disabled, older or having difficulties.
- Respects people's rights to control their own lives and make their own choices.
- Places the emphasis on empowering people – not solving problems for them.

## **SHORT TERM ADVOCACY**

Short term advocates support people to express their own needs and views when they are dealing with major services providers such as Health and Social Services. They work one to one with individuals to help them gain confidence and support them in potentially stressful situations such as meetings or assessments. The advocacy is provided by trained volunteers co-ordinated by a paid worker and usually lasts as long as the problem.

## **SELF ADVOCACY**

Many people, for example those with learning difficulties or mental health problems have traditionally had their views ignored and devalued by a society which thought it knew best. In self-advocacy groups people can meet together to learn the skills that they need to speak up for themselves. They can discuss issues and practise new skills in a safe environment and take steps towards changing the stereotypes which surround them. The members control the group themselves and may have an adviser to support them.

## **CITIZEN ADVOCACY**

Citizen advocacy provides long term, one-to-one relationships between ordinary members of the community and people who may be isolated and excluded from everyday activities. The aim is that the volunteer will share his or her time, abilities and friendship with the individual who has a limited ability to assert their rights. The initial partnership is set up under the guidance of a co-ordinator who gives support as and when required.

## **GROUP ADVOCACY**

Group advocacy happens when a group of people unite to campaign on issues which are of common concern to them. Some voluntary organisations campaign nationally whilst their affiliated branches are active at a local level. (e.g. MIND or SCOPE)

## **PEER ADVOCACY**

A peer advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of others in the same position as him or herself. For example, a service user representative on a client care planning team.

## **PROFESSIONAL/LEGAL ADVOCACY**

The broad range of activities by which trained specialists assist people to assert or defend their rights. This can include reforms or the creation of new laws as well as formal and informal activities to protect a client's rights or interests under existing law.

