



Who can speak on my behalf?

This leaflet explains what advocacy is and who can support you



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Advocacy is about getting support from another person to help you express your views and wishes. It is also about ensuring that your voice is heard, and your best interests are represented and taken into consideration. The Care Act 2014 placed a duty on local councils to ensure people are involved in all their care and support decisions and provide an independent advocate when required.

This leaflet explains what advocacy is and what support you can get if you are going through an assessment of needs, carers assessment, care and support planning, review, safeguarding or complaints process.



What is advocacy?

Sometimes it helps to have someone else who can speak on your behalf and represent your views and interests. You may feel that you need support to help you to speak for yourself, especially in formal situations, or when you don't feel very confident about something. Someone who speaks on your behalf or who supports you to speak for yourself in this way is often called an 'advocate'.

Advocacy doesn't always have to be provided by paid professionals. Often people take a friend or family member with them to important meetings to give moral support, and to speak up on their behalf if required.



How can an advocate help?

An advocate can help you to make informed choices and decisions. Whether they are a family member, carer, friend or professional, an advocate must always act on your behalf to ensure that your care and support needs are met and are appropriate for you.

An advocate should be able to:

- Help you to understand the care and support process and options available to you.
- Support you to prepare for an assessment or any meetings or safeguarding enquiries.
- Make sure that your views and wishes about your care and support needs are expressed.
- Work with you so that you are able to make your own decisions and are able to take as much control as you want or can.
- Support and represent you as appropriate, to challenge decisions if it is felt that your views, wishes and feelings are not being considered appropriately.
- Find out more information and services available that may be appropriate for you.
- Understand and defend your rights and responsibilities.
- Be able to resolve conflicts and negotiate a way forward should the need arise.

Case Study

Tom lives in supported living. The staff on site help Tom with day to day things such as washing his clothes and doing the cleaning. Recently Tom felt that the staff have not been helping him in the way he would like. Tom tried to explain that things weren't being done as he would like, but he wasn't able to communicate his concerns and views very well. With help from his social worker, Tom asked an advocate for help.

The advocate spent time with Tom and discussed how he felt and asked him what he would like to change. Tom said he wanted to talk to the manager of his supported living accommodation but was worried he wouldn't be able to communicate very well. The advocate helped Tom prepare what he wanted to say and supported him to organise a meeting with the manager, in an informal setting where he felt more comfortable. In the meeting, Tom asked the advocate to start the conversation, and then support him to say what he had prepared.

With support from the advocate, Tom felt more relaxed and able to say what he wanted. He felt listened to and was able to agree with the manager how he would be supported in the future.

How do I get an advocate?

If you do not have someone who can speak on your behalf and you feel that you need some extra support, the council can refer you to an independent advocate. The local advocacy service is delivered by VoiceAbility.

VoiceAbility provides free independent and confidential advocacy support to help you make the right choices and decisions. A trained and qualified advocate will work with you and provide the support you need to ensure that your views and wishes are expressed and taken into consideration. The advocate can also speak to other people and professionals on your behalf.



Mental Health Advocacy

VoiceAbility can also provide specialist advocacy support under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Mental Health Act. If you require an Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA) or Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCA), a qualified and trained advocate from Cambridge House will be able to work with you and provide seamless support in both areas.

You can contact VoiceAbility on:

Care Act Advocacy

Phone: 0300 222 5948

Email: careadvocacy@voiceability.org

Mental Health Advocacy

Phone: 0300 222 5499

Email: imca@voiceability.org

Website: [www.voiceability.org/services/
london-borough-of-wandsworth](http://www.voiceability.org/services/london-borough-of-wandsworth)

Our contact details

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Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

Telephone: (020) 8871 7707

SMS Phone: 07940 775107

Email: accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk

Website: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/adultsocialcare

Write to us at:

Wandsworth Council
Adult Social Care
Wandsworth High Street
London, SW18 2PU

For information on local services please visit CarePlace
www.careplace.org.uk

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