

Help so you can be fully involved (Independent Advocacy)

This factsheet tells you how we help people over the age of 18 to get support so they can be fully involved in their assessment, care and support planning and review.

We provide care and support for people over the age of 18 so they can remain independent, safe and well. This includes care and support for adults, older people, people with a learning disability and people with a mental health problem. We also provide support for carers, and for families with a disabled young person (as part of them moving to adult care and support).

‘Care and support’ is the help some people need to live as well as possible with any illness, disability or impairment they may have. It can include help with things like washing and dressing yourself, preparing and eating meals, getting out and about, and keeping in touch with friends and family.

This is one of a range of factsheets about care and support in Sheffield (details on page 4).

Introduction

When we work with you on your assessment, care and support planning and review we will check that you are able to take part fully in each step. If you have substantial difficulty in being involved (such as difficulty understanding or retaining information), and you have no family or friends who can help, we will arrange for an independent person (called an advocate) to help you so you can be fully involved. You do not have to pay for the support of an Independent Advocate.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is helpful if you find it hard to make decisions about the care and support you need. It can also help if you feel you're not being actively involved in a decision, or you have real difficulty in understanding what's happening. An advocate is a person who works with you to make sure your ideas and wishes are heard, and that you get the right care and support for you.

Where do advocates come from?

We have agreed contracts with a range of voluntary organisations to provide trained advocates in Sheffield. This means your advocate does not work for the council and is an independent person.

We want to make sure your advocate supports you so you can be fully involved, so we know they will need time to talk to you, and to your family and friends (if you want this), before they support you when you meet your social care worker. If you wish we can also help by informing other organisations that are involved in your care and support how they can contact your advocate, and explain how they are supporting you.

How do you decide if I need an advocate?

Your social care worker will talk to you about any problems you may have during your assessment, care and support planning and your review. If your social care worker decides you are having substantial difficulty either

- understanding, retaining and using information
- expressing your views, wishes and feelings
- making decisions
- understanding your rights or challenging things you don't agree with

they will talk to you about who can help support you to be fully involved. If there are no appropriate people willing and able to support you we will arrange support from an advocate.

Talk to your social care worker if you would like to use the same advocate as someone else who lives in the same home as you.

People who are paid to provide you with care or treatment, like your doctor, are not allowed to be your advocate. If you have an interpreter, they can't be your advocate as well.

Even if you have other people who support you, your social care worker may suggest that you have an advocate to support you instead.

What will my advocate do?

Your advocate will get to know you so they can act in your best interests, to make sure your wishes, feelings and views are taken into account. They will help you to

- understand how we provide care and support
- retain and use information in your daily life
- express your views, wishes and feelings
- make decisions
- understand your rights and challenge things you don't agree with.

You and your advocate will decide the best way of supporting and representing you. They will always consider your wellbeing and best interests.

Your advocate will usually begin by meeting you in private, without your social care worker. They should ask for your consent to look at your records, and may talk to your carer, family and anyone else who can provide information about your needs, wishes, beliefs and values. Your advocate may also ask if they can make copies of your records in certain circumstances.

How do I ask for an advocate?

Talk to your social care worker. Or you can ask for an advocate to support you by contacting us (see contact details on page 4).

What if I'm not happy with my advocate?

If you're not happy with your advocate speak to your social care worker about this.

Tell us what you think

If you have a suggestion, comment or complaint about any council service you can tell us what you think:

- Telephone: (0114) 273 4567.
- Website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/tellus
- Write to: Customer Services, Sheffield City Council, Town Hall,
Pinstone Street, Sheffield S1 2HH.

Where can I get more information?

If you have a question about this factsheet, want a printed copy to be sent to you, or want to speak to someone you can contact us.

Factsheets can be downloaded from our website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/factsheets.

Information can also be provided in alternative formats and other languages on request.

- Prevention and enablement
- Getting care and support
- Help for carers
- Children's Transition to Adult Social Care
- Planning and organising your care and support
- Help with travel
- Paying for your care and support at home
- Paying for your care and support in a residential or nursing home
- Managing your finances
- Managing your Direct Payment
- Disability Related Expenditure
- Deferred Payments
- Personal Assistant Handbook
- Reviewing your care and support
- Personal Assistant Handbook
- Reviewing your care and support

Contact us

- Email: adultaccess@sheffield.gov.uk
- Telephone: 0114 2734908
- Write to: First Contact, Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2SH

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