

What is advocacy?

Advocacy services are provided for eligible people to ensure that they are able to:

- have their voice heard on issues that are important to them
- express their views and concerns
- defend and safeguard their rights
- have their views and wishes considered when decisions are being made about their lives
- access information and services
- explore choices and options

An advocate is someone who provides advocacy support when people need it (usually when there isn't a relative or friend available).

This may include:

- helping people access information
- going with them to meetings or interviews in a supportive role
- writing letters on peoples behalf
- speaking for people in situations where they aren't able or don't feel able to speak

Three advocacy services provided by Kirklees Council are to be bought into an Advocacy Hub.

These are:

- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) and Relevant Person Representative Services (RPR)
- Care Act Advocacy and General Advocacy
- Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy (NHSCA)

The anticipated benefits of a hub are:

- Improved accessibility for individuals and referral organisations
- Providing a clearer, more seamless pathway for individuals
- Providing greater flexibility and improved user experience with regards to service response, enabling the service provider greater scope to move resources within the hub at times of increased demand for one type of advocacy provision
- Providing a more cost effective, efficient and financially sustainable service through economies of scale

A summary of the three Advocacy Hub Services:

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) and Relevant Person Representative Services (RPR)

It is a legal requirement for people lacking mental capacity to make decisions about where they will live or serious medical options, to have independent advocacy when there are no known relatives or close friends to speak for them. The IMCA service provides advocates to undertake roles as set out in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and associated regulations.

The purpose of the RPR Service is to provide advocacy for people deprived of their liberty subject to standard authorisations under the Mental Capacity Act 2005; where there is no relative or friend acting as RPR.

RPRs will where required:

- maintain contact with the relevant person
- represent and support the relevant person in all matters relating to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.
- request reviews where necessary
- make a complaint on behalf of the person where necessary
- make an application to the Court of Protection where necessary

Care Act Advocacy and General Advocacy

This service is provided for the residents of Kirklees in all settings who are aged 18 and above at the date of referral for whom the advocacy duty applies. (This excludes people experiencing mental ill-health and who are using mental health services. A separate service exists for mental health and the hub will have good links with and a referral route to the mental health service.) The service is also available to young people in transition between childrens services to adult services from the age of 16. This includes people placed outside the boundaries of Kirklees Council but for whom the Council has financial responsibility. People placed within the boundaries of Kirklees Council from other local authorities may be eligible for the Service at the discretion of the Council.

The advocacy duty will applies from the first point of contact with the Council, for those people seeking information and advice, and at subsequent stages of the assessment, planning, care review, safeguarding enquiry or safeguarding adults review.

The service is provided to people who have substantial difficulty in being involved in decisions about their care and support and who do not have an appropriate individual to support them.

Other people may also be referred to the Hub who do not strictly fall into the above services but for whom the involvement of an independent advocate is appropriate. It is envisaged that the needs of these people will be addressed by a brief intervention.

The Hub will also provide an information and signposting element.

Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy (NHSCA)

The NHSCA supports people to make a complaint about an NHS service such as GP, hospital and dentist. This is a client-centred, flexible service empowering anyone who wishes to resolve a complaint with a healthcare service commissioned and/or provided by the NHS in England.

Healthwatch

A key role of local Healthwatch organisations will be to promote the local consumer voice to ensure that the views of local patients, service users and the public are fed into improving local health and social care services. The primary task of local Healthwatch organisations will be to gather evidence from the views and experiences of patients, service users and the public about their local health and social care services and to provide feedback based on that evidence.

They will take this information and report the evidence to those in charge of arranging and funding services and making decisions – and those providing services – about the quality of care, including through statutory representation on the local health and wellbeing board. This should help to ensure that those who make decisions about health and social care services can be aware of and act and respond quickly to concerns. Local Healthwatch organisations will also feed this evidence into Healthwatch England.