

# **ADVOCACY SERVICE ABERDEEN (ASA)**

## **NON-DIRECTED ADVOCACY GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE**

### **Why do we need Guidelines?**

- To enable us to provide, as far as possible, a service which is consistent, supportive and relevant for people who cannot communicate their views clearly
- To assist clients, referrers and commissioners to understand our approach to non-directed advocacy
- To establish a cautionary approach to practice so that we operate within legal boundaries
- To form a basis for support and supervision of advocates to ensure a continuing high standard of service
- To establish appropriate limits to the actions of advocates
- To challenge the assumption of intervention and try to define circumstances when this should not take place

The Guidelines are literally what they say they are – they are not meant to prescribe the response of ASA or the behaviour of advocates in every situation. Each person will require an individual approach and the rigid application of these guidelines will not always be appropriate and minor divergence must be accepted where appropriate in individual cases, as long as these take place within the overall framework set out in the document. The Guidelines should not be used as a substitute for proper supervision and may be over-ridden when an advocate and their supervisor/manager decide that it is important to do so in a particular instance. Any significant divergence should be clearly documented, giving reasons for the decision.

### **When should an advocate become involved?**

An advocate should become involved when:

- Someone is referred by a family member, care worker or relevant professional, or neighbour or friend who can explain why the person needs an advocate
- Where there is an identifiable area of concern

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- When an advocate identifies an advocacy role and confirms there is a need with ASA line management.

### **What an advocate should hope to achieve:**

Determining as far as possible what the person would wish to happen in specific circumstances relating to his or her care and lifestyle

Ensuring that these wishes are being considered by staff involved in planning and delivering care by raising questions about services and possible alternatives. The advocate should not presume to have an absolute knowledge of a person's wishes and should not claim to speak directly on behalf of the client.

As far as possible the advocate should promote the dignity and respect of the client.

Use best endeavours to ensure that clients are not being exploited for reasons of finance or the convenience of others. Particular sensitivity must be employed in family situations and the advocate must be aware of the implications of their actions for existing relationships which are important to the client.

### **How should advocacy work in non-directed situations?**

- On referral, the advocate will carry out as detailed a review as possible to determine the initial issues for the client by spending time with the person and using appropriate communication tools. He or she will also seek information from staff and relatives through questions which are relevant to the issue.
- The advocate will raise questions and issues with relatives, staff and service commissioners where appropriate, with the person as the focal point of the discussion. The aim of these questions will be to ensure that the person's feelings and interests have been, and will be, taken on board in the planning and delivery of services. He or she will endeavour to ensure that any information known about the client's wishes and needs has been considered, respected and taken into account as far as possible, and that the person's basic human rights have not been infringed. The advocate will clarify their role and explain they are not instructed by the client.
- An advocate should seek to be involved in relevant reviews and other meetings to discuss issues relating to the client, unless the client gives clear indications or reasons why he or she does not wish the advocate to be there on that occasion. Involvement at such meetings will be limited to the guidelines set out in the previous paragraph.

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- The advocate will continue to work with the client until the situation appears to be resolved or until no further action can be taken at that time, and no further issues have been identified. One or more review visits will take place after a pre-arranged time – the number of visits and the interval between them may vary in specific circumstances and will be agreed in consultation with appropriate ASA staff. If the advocate has concerns that the original issue was not resolved appropriately, these review visits may be set more frequently. If, after the agreed number of review meetings, no further issues have been identified, the relationship with that client will be deemed to have ceased until a further referral is made.
- If a client's rights and known wishes are being ignored in a manner which is judged to be indefensible, ASA will reserve the right to contact senior members of staff of the relevant organisation in an attempt to achieve resolution. If this fails, ASA may decide to register a formal complaint in which it will be made clear that this complaint is being lodged by ASA in relation to a particular client, and not on his or her instruction. This will not extend to ASA contacting a solicitor or initiating legal action on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent of the client in any way.
- Any work with a client will cease upon his or her death and an advocate should not be involved in seeking to implement any presumed wishes after death.

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