

FAQs

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a means of offering support to get someone's voice heard. If you feel unable to achieve what you feel you need because the process is too complicated, or the organisation is too powerful, and you feel confused or scared by the prospect then an advocate can help you to get your views across. They may find out how the system works, offer their skills and stand by your side.

Will you be able to work with me?

We have seven projects;

Mental Health

IMHA

CPA

Drugs and Alcohol

IMCA

DOLS

Spot Purchase

The CPA project will be able to work with you if you wish to make a complaint about Social Services within the Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset areas. We may also be able to work with you if your complaint concerns North Somerset. Usually, your complaint should concern something that has taken place within the past 12 months. Social Services are unlikely to accept your complaint if it is on behalf of someone else and they do not want you to complain.

The Mental Advocacy project will be able to work with you if you live within South Gloucestershire and you are a service user of a Community Mental Health Team or you are in hospital due to your mental ill health. We do not work with the carers of mental health service users.

If you do not match these descriptions, please look at our [signposting page](#) to find a more suitable alternative.

How will an advocate help me?

How an advocate works with each client differs according to each clients needs. An advocate could:

- Meet with you to discuss your issue
- Identify possible ways forward with you
- Research information on your behalf, for instance who could offer advice about benefits in your local area.
- Write a letter with you
- Attend a meeting with you

An advocate will not:

- Take over from you; they will only do what you feel you cannot do.
- Act or pass on your information without your consent.
- Offer specialist advice, for instance on the law or benefits.

Will I get an advocate?

We work with our clients in different ways because we find that while some people need an advocate, some clients simply need information or guidance to advocate for themselves. Therefore, we can also offer a [self-help pack](#) or telephone support.

Is everything I tell you confidential?

We have a confidentiality policy which states that everything a client tells us is confidential unless:

- there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk or has been at risk,
- there is a concern that someone, including the client, is or may be at risk of harm,
- information has been revealed about terrorist activities, or
- information about a criminal activity has been exposed.

How long will it take to get an answer to my complaint?

The Social Services' Complaints Procedure follow a time frame within which they should answer your complaint, although there are sometimes delays due to various reasons. To see these timeframes, please consult the web pages of the local authority you are complaining to; [Bristol](#), [Bath](#) and [South Gloucestershire](#).