



Information for Service Providers

Introduction

Advocacy is about helping people speak up about what is important to them in all aspects of their life. It can be carried out by anyone a person wants to speak up for them or help them speak up for themselves. This could be a friend, family member or support worker.

Some people, however, have no-one in their lives to help them speak up.

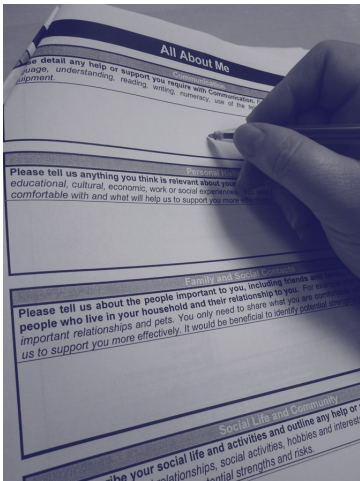
They may feel isolated and alone, or may be surrounded by people who help but who all have conflicting interests.

Independent advocacy services bring together people who can act as advocates with people who require them. The services have advocacy as their main or only function. The advocates have their first accountability to the people they advocate for.

Background of the Organisation

Advocacy Information and Management Services Ltd (AIMS Ltd) is an independent advocacy organisation established as a company limited by guarantee and registered as a Scottish charity.

The organisation aims to:



- Provide a range of independent advocacy supports for citizens of North Ayrshire;
- Help people develop the skills required to take an active part in resolving the major issues that affect their lives;
- Provide information and support to people who are already advocating for others;
- Provide training in the field of independent advocacy.

AIMS Ltd is managed by a Board of Directors who are all volunteers. Due to requests from people who use the service, in 2005 the organisation adopted the working name 'AIMS Advocacy'.

Funding for the organisation comes from a range of agencies. This emphasises the independence of the organisation as it is not dependent on one funder. The support of our funders allows us to employ a team of fifteen, mainly part time, staff and to provide a range of advocacy services.

Further Information

We always welcome opportunities to speak to groups of people about our work.

This can be arranged by contacting our office.

Contact Details

AIMS Advocacy
70 New Street
Stevenston
KA20 3HG

Phone : 01294 608663

Freephone : 0800 652 2986
(for people using the service)

e-mail : info@aimsadvocacy.org.uk

website : www.aimsadvocacy.org.uk



Making Comments or Complaints

AIMS Advocacy Service encourages comments from everyone who comes into contact with the Service. We always try to provide the best service we can but know we may not always get it right.

It helps us a lot if you tell us the things we get right and also where we could do better. If we have made a mistake we always try to learn from it.

All comments and complaints will be dealt with in the same way whether you tell us about them verbally or put them in writing.

Comments will be acknowledged when they are received

If you make a complaint you will be sent a letter acknowledging receipt and indicating the name of the person who will investigate the issue within 5 working days.

Complaints are dealt with, in the first instance, by the Service Manager or someone delegated the task by them, and are considered within the context of the principles and standards to which we work. If the complaint is about the Service Manager it will be dealt with by the Board of Directors.

Any complaint will be investigated and the outcome notified to you within 28 days of the complaint being received.

If you are unhappy with the reply you are given you may ask for your complaint to be looked at by the Board of Directors. They will contact you to discuss matters with you. They will then give you a response within 28 days of your discussion with them.

We also undertake additional specific pieces of work related to advocacy, the income generated being re-invested in the core work of the organisation.

AIMS Advocacy is a full member of the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance and work to the principles, standards and codes of practice adopted by this Alliance.

Overview of Present Services

At present our work is with people from North Ayrshire over the age of 16 years who require independent advocacy and who are eligible to receive a community care service. We offer advocacy support in the community as well as within hospital settings. Advocates work with people on a one to one basis as well as in group settings.

Referrals can be made by the person themselves or by a third party. More details on the referral process is found later in this document.

Throughout our work, we constantly encourage people to develop the capacity to advocate for themselves at the rate that is right for them.

Most of our work involves us in being out and about within the community. In order to maximise the time available for advocacy, our office is not staffed all the time. Our regular main office opening hours are between 10am and 2pm from Monday—Friday, although the advocates also work outwith these times.

The exceptions to this are for public holidays and occasional staff training activities. An answering machine takes messages when there is no-one in the office. The answering machine also handles messages when staff are already responding to other calls. Additionally, we can be contacted by using the form on our website. If you leave or send a message we will get back to you

Individual Advocacy

Community Based

We have advocates who work with people on a one to one basis on a short term or longer term basis dependent on individual need. Most appointments are arranged in our office but where necessary we can meet people in a mutually convenient location, including a person's home.

Hospital Based

Advocates visit patients in hospital who are eligible to use the service. Visits are arranged on request.

Non-instructed Advocacy

This is where a person who needs an advocate cannot tell their advocate what they want. This may be because the person has complex communication needs or has a condition that prevents them from clearly stating their wishes or desires. In such situations the advocate has a role in safeguarding the person's interests and will follow the guidelines published by the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

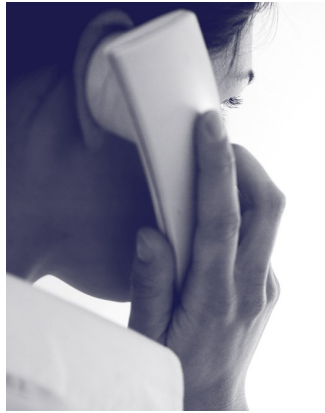
What happens after a referral is made

We cannot guarantee that a suitable advocacy worker will be available right away. AIMS Advocacy service prioritises referrals according to the person's need for independent advocacy. Issues that are considered include if there is any legislation involved, if any formal meetings are planned, what other supports are available to the person.

It should be remembered by service providers that AIMS Advocacy is an independent advocacy provider. This means our first accountability is to the person we are advocating for. We need to be separate from other care provision in order to carry out our role. This may mean, at times, that we will not give information to other agencies about a person without checking it out with the person first. It may also mean at times that the issues being supported by the advocate may not be those seen as a priority by a key worker or case manager, but are the issues that the person being advocated for wishes to work on. In all cases the advocate's role is to explore options with their advocacy partner and support them to make an informed choice, however, the direction chosen will be that indicated by the advocacy partner.

In cases where there is no longer a need for independent advocacy, or where the person no longer wants to use the service the advocacy worker will withdraw. This will be done in discussion with the person.

Group Advocacy



How to make referrals to the service

Referrals can be made by the person themselves or by a third party. Where the referral is made by a third party, we must first ascertain if the person knows that the referral is being made.

Where this is not the case, before taking the referral, we ask the referrer if the person has been asked if they want advocacy involvement, or ask them to check this out with the person if they haven't already done so.

Referrals can be taken in person or on the phone. We try to make the process as straightforward as possible. Although the process has three stages it is always done by the person in the office at the time of referral who can take the referral furthest forward. This is an attempt to avoid people having to repeat their story a number of times.

Stage 1 is a check that the person being referred is technically able to use the service. Where the person is unable to access our service we will try to signpost on to a more appropriate agency wherever possible.

Stage 2 assesses if there is a need for an independent advocate. If not we will again try to signpost on to a more appropriate agency wherever possible.

Stage 3 is where the case manager arranges appropriate advocacy input.



We offer a range of advocacy group activities, although not all types of activity are available at the same point in time, as groups are convened to suit the needs of the participants.

There are times when a group of people want to work together to speak up about a particular issue that interests or concerns them and want to have someone independent to help them do so. We have group advocacy workers who support groups on a short term basis to do this.

We also run self advocacy development workshops at different points throughout the year. Details can be found on our website.

Our group workers also can convene consultative groups for other agencies. This is done on a fee paying basis.

Principles we work to

Regardless of what type of advocacy that is being provided, the advocates will follow the following principles in what they do. The list below is a summary of the principles and standards adopted by the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance. The expanded version can be found on their website at www.siaa.org.uk.

Principle 1:

Independent advocacy puts the people who use it first

- 1.1 Independent advocacy is directed by the needs, interests, views and wishes of the people who use it.
- 1.2 Independent advocacy helps people have control over their lives and be fully involved in decisions that affect them.
- 1.3 Independent advocacy tries to make sure that people's basic rights are protected
- 1.4 Independent advocacy values the people who use it and always treats people with respect and dignity

Principle 2:

Independent advocacy is accountable

- 2.1 Independent advocacy is accountable to the people who use it
- 2.2 Independent advocacy is accountable under the law
- 2.3 Independent advocacy is effectively managed

Principle 3:

Independent advocacy is as free as it can be from conflicts of interest

- 3.1 Independent advocacy cannot be controlled by a service provider
- 3.2 Independent advocacy and promoting independent advocacy are the only thing that independent advocacy organisations do
- 3.3 Independent advocacy looks out for and minimises conflicts of interest

Principle 4:

Independent advocacy is accessible

- 4.1 Independent advocacy reaches out to the widest possible range of people, regardless of ability or life circumstances

Additional safeguards relate to non-instructed advocacy.