

Types of advocacy

There are times and circumstances in people's lives when different types of advocacy may be appropriate, such as:

- Crisis
- Task or issue
- Representational
- Short-term or
- Long-term
- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)

Crisis advocacy is provided as an immediate response to an urgent situation, for example when someone experiencing mental health problems has been "sectioned" overnight or when someone has been assaulted in the home where they live.

Such crisis advocacy support would be provided as quickly as possible and continue while the circumstances were critical. It would stop when the crisis was over or had been resolved.

Task or issue advocacy is provided to deal with a single, one-off need, for example when someone wants to get a new home help or to make a formal complaint about a service.

Representational advocacy is more formal, provided for example when someone needs to attend a tribunal. The advocate would go to a hearing, and when asked, would speak on someone's behalf, putting forward their views and wishes. The advocacy would stop as soon as the formal procedures ended.

Short-term advocacy is similar to crisis, task or issue-based advocacy. An advocate would be assigned to deal with a single issue and stop work when the problem was resolved.

Long-term advocacy is a continuing service, dealing with many different issues over several months or even years and is not withdrawn once any particular issue is dealt with. There may be times when advocacy may not be needed, but the service remains available, on-call.

IMCA -This type of advocacy came into being with the Mental Capacity Act, April 2007.

A person who is assessed as 'lacking capacity' is entitled to an independent advocate in certain circumstances:

- Changing long term accommodation
(e.g. into or from nursing care)
- Needing serious medical treatment

The role of the 'IMCA' is to represent the person's rights and, where possible, their wishes.

Who and when

Each type of advocacy may be provided by each type of advocate. However, it is most common in England and Wales for crisis, task, issue or representational and short-term advocacy to be provided by specially-trained paid or volunteer citizen advocates. Long-term advocacy is most often provided by volunteer citizen advocates, peer, self or group advocates.