

QUALITY STANDARDS FOR ADVOCACY SCHEMES

charter
in action



BASED ON
THE ADVOCACY CHARTER

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ABOUT ACTION FOR ADVOCACY

Action for Advocacy is a support and resource agency for the advocacy sector. We provide a range of information, training and capacity building services. Our vision is for a well resourced and supported sector that delivers effective and quality services to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups in England and Wales. Our broad aims are: to support the development of independent advocacy schemes; to promote good practice and information sharing across the advocacy sector; to facilitate effective networking between advocates and advocacy schemes; and to 'advocate for advocacy' at a strategic policy level.

INTRODUCTION

People are entitled to be in control of their own lives but sometimes, whether through frailty, disability, financial circumstances or social attitudes, they may find themselves in a position where their ability to exercise choice or represent their own interests is limited. In these circumstances advocacy can help ensure that an individual's views and needs are heard, respected and acted upon.

Advocacy has existed in the UK for over 25 years and during this time a wide range of advocacy models and schemes have emerged. It is estimated that there are between 500-800 advocacy schemes in England and Wales. In addition, a number of national and regional networks have been established to promote best practice in advocacy provision and to give advocacy schemes a voice in central and local Government policy developments. **The Advocacy Charter**, developed by **Action for Advocacy (A4A)**, was an attempt to establish a common set of guiding principles for all advocacy schemes regardless of which model of advocacy they adopted or which geographical area they served.

The Advocacy Charter was launched in 2002 and has been widely accepted throughout England and Wales as a document that defines and promotes those key advocacy principles. Thousands of copies have been circulated to advocacy schemes which share in the desire to ensure that the fundamental principles of advocacy are communicated and advanced through the work of advocates and advocacy organisations.

Quality Standards for Advocacy Schemes is a product of the **Charter in Action** programme initiated in early 2005. This programme provides the critical tools for advocacy organisations and their commissioners to put the Advocacy Charter principles into practice. **Charter in Action** sets out to promote best practice in advocacy provision and can help to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of existing advocacy services.

There are two main elements to **Quality Standards for Advocacy Schemes**: firstly, a series of evidence-based **quality standards for advocacy organisations** and secondly, **a code of practice for advocates** (also available as a separate document). Each principle is divided into four sections: a **Definition** taken from the Advocacy Charter; the **Rationale** for the principle; the **Standards and Examples of Evidence**; and the **Code of Practice for Advocates**. At the end of this document are a series of training exercises designed to support groups in thinking through the issues involved in adopting the standards.

THE ADVOCACY CHARTER

DEFINING AND PROMOTING KEY ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES

CLARITY OF PURPOSE

The advocacy scheme will have clearly stated aims and objectives and be able to demonstrate how it meets the principles contained in this Charter. Advocacy schemes will ensure that people they advocate for, service providers and funding agencies have information on the scope and limitations of the schemes' role.

INDEPENDENCE

The advocacy scheme will be structurally independent from statutory organisations and preferably from all service provider agencies. The advocacy scheme will be as free from conflict of interest as possible both in design and operation, and actively seek to reduce conflicting interests.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

The advocacy scheme will ensure that the wishes and interests of the people they advocate for direct advocates' work. Advocates should be non-judgmental and respectful of peoples' needs, views and experiences. Advocates will ensure that information concerning the people they advocate for is shared with these individuals.

EMPOWERMENT

The advocacy scheme will support self-advocacy and empowerment through its work. People who use the scheme should have a say in the level of involvement and style of advocacy support they want. Schemes will ensure that people who want to, can influence and be involved in the running and management of the scheme.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The advocacy scheme will have a written equal opportunities policy that recognises the need to be pro-active in tackling all forms of inequality, discrimination and social exclusion. The scheme will have in place systems for the fair and equitable allocation of advocates' time.

“Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. Advocates and advocacy schemes work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.”

ACCESSIBILITY

Advocacy will be provided free of charge to eligible people. The advocacy scheme will aim to ensure that its premises, policies, procedures and publicity materials promote access for the whole community.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The advocacy scheme will have in place systems for the effective monitoring and evaluation of its work. All those who use the scheme will have a named advocate and a means of contacting them.

SUPPORTING ADVOCATES

The advocacy scheme will ensure advocates are prepared, trained and supported in their role and provided with opportunities to develop their skills and experience.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The advocacy scheme will have a written policy on confidentiality, stating that information known about a person using the scheme is confidential to the scheme and any circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached.

COMPLAINTS

The advocacy scheme will have a written policy describing how to make complaints or give feedback about the scheme or about individual advocates. Where necessary, the scheme will enable people who use its services to access external independent support to make or pursue a complaint.

CLARITY OF PURPOSE

RATIONALE

Whilst understanding of the role of advocacy is growing, it is still often confused with other forms of support such as advice or befriending. It is therefore vital that schemes and advocates are explicit about exactly what they offer to service users. This 'clarity of purpose' helps service users to evaluate the support they receive, reduces the number of inappropriate referrals and helps funders to know what they are getting for their money. The key aims and objectives of the scheme should be clearly stated in all written documents (and in other formats such as pictures, large print and audiotape). They should be understood internally by the advocacy scheme and communicated effectively to relevant people outside the organisation. Staff, volunteers, Trustees and service users should feel able to contribute to the vision and aims of the scheme and the written statement of aims and objectives should be reviewed regularly.

However, clarity of purpose should not be interpreted as requiring tightly prescribed, non-flexible approaches to working with service users. There is a need for *diversity of practice* which reflects and responds to the unique needs of service users and allows scope for advocates to work in a genuinely person centred way.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

- a** The provision of advocacy is the scheme's only activity;
OR
the advocacy service (within a larger organisation) has its own, clearly separate identity and role.
- b** The advocacy scheme has an explicit statement of aims and objectives reviewed regularly.
- c** The advocacy scheme has a Code of Practice which defines the advocacy role.
- d** The advocacy scheme is signed up to the Advocacy Charter and displays it in its offices.
- e** The advocacy scheme is able to clearly describe (both verbally and in written information):
- the client group served;
 - the geographical area covered;
 - the nature of issues addressed;
 - the advocacy models used;
 - the limitations of the service (ie what the scheme does not do);
 - the means of contacting the scheme.
- f** Local service provider agencies receive regular (at least annual) information updates about the advocacy scheme's activities and outcomes.
- g** The advocacy scheme has a procedure for referring on to other agencies and keeps an up to date list of potential services to refer people on to if it is unable to help.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Governing document (Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association)

Annual report, publicity materials

Code of Practice

Copies of Charter available from the scheme

Project leaflets, interviews with advocates and service users

Copies of any materials, feedback from providers

Referral procedure and list of local services

The advocacy scheme will have clearly stated aims and objectives and be able to demonstrate how it meets the principles contained in the Advocacy Charter. Advocacy schemes will ensure that people they advocate for, service providers and funding agencies have information on the scope and limitations of the schemes' role.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT CLARITY OF PURPOSE:

- a** Advocates should be clear about the nature and extent of their role. They should understand the boundaries of their own advocacy role and non-advocacy roles such as mediation and advice giving.
- b** Advocates should not act outside of these boundaries. Advocates should seek permission to refer people on to other agencies where appropriate.
- c** Advocates should be able to explain, in straightforward language, what advocacy is and isn't, why some people need advocacy, and the benefits advocacy can bring. They should be equipped to answer questions and deal with enquiries about advocacy.
- d** Advocates must not engage in any sexual or otherwise inappropriate relationships with service users.
- e** Advocates should be responsible for providing service users with a clear explanation of their role at the start of any new relationship.
- f** The advocate should provide written information about their organisation plus a copy of the Code of Practice to other professionals, carers and service users if requested.

The advocacy scheme will be structurally independent from statutory organisations and preferably from all service provider agencies. The advocacy scheme will be as free from conflict of interest as possible, both in design and operation, and actively seek to reduce conflicting interests.

INDEPENDENCE

RATIONALE

Advocates must not find themselves compromised by conflicts of interest which prevent them from acting on behalf of service users. Advocacy schemes should take all practicable steps to avoid such conflicts of interest and will need to consider how they will 'protect' advocates from external pressures. This may prove easier to achieve in schemes which are **structurally independent** (ie separate) from service provider organisations. It is also important that schemes do not become too dependent on a single source of funding, and do not agree to funding criteria or performance measures which compromise their independence or integrity.

Where advocacy services are provided by organisations which are not structurally independent (ie those that also provide day care, residential care, counselling or other services), attention needs to be paid to ensuring that their advocacy services are at least **operationally independent**. In practice this means that the service is not required to adhere to policies and procedures which could compromise its ability to provide independent support to service users. Operational independence is also reflected in line management arrangements, the culture and ethos of the scheme and local working protocols. It means that advocates are able to adopt advocacy principles in their work without compromise. One useful way of reflecting this independence is via a Code of Practice or engagement protocol for advocates.

A third and crucial form of independence is what has become known as **psychological independence**. This means that whatever relationships exist within and between advocacy schemes, individual advocates are expected and positively supported to act on behalf of and stay loyal to service users.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

a The advocacy scheme is structurally independent from local care providers; OR

the advocacy service (within a larger organisation) is protected from internal conflicts of interest through its operational management arrangements.

b The advocacy scheme's governing document promotes and protects its independence.

c The advocacy scheme actively seeks funding from more than one source.

d Representatives of funding bodies and/or care providers should only attend Trustee meetings at the invitation of the advocacy scheme and should not have voting rights.

e The advocacy scheme ensures that the means of safeguarding independence are written into funding agreements and contracts.

f The advocacy scheme actively seeks to recruit Trustees who are reflective of the local community and the client group served.

g The Management Committee receives training in advocacy and is aware of the need to preserve independence.

h The advocacy scheme has in place procedures for addressing and avoiding conflicts of interest.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Governing document, organisational management structure, protocols, arrangements for external supervision, Conflict of Interest policy

Governing document

Copies of funding bids, audited accounts

Organisational structure chart, annual report

Copies of funding bids, service level agreements

Recruitment adverts/ publicity materials

List of training opportunities, training plan, feedback from Trustees

Conflict of Interest policy, minutes of meetings where conflicts of interest have been declared and noted

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT INDEPENDENCE:

a Advocates should take all appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest occurring in their work with service users. Where a conflict of interest does arise, it should be declared to the line manager and advice sought as to how to proceed.

b Advocates should be free to act according to the wishes and needs of service users. They should not be threatened, compromised or harassed whilst carrying out their duties within agreed boundaries set out in the Code of Practice. Where such harassment does occur, this should be reported to the line manager at the earliest opportunity.

NB: *Conflict of interest is defined as: "a situation in which someone in a position of trust...has competing professional and/or personal interests. Such competing interests can make it difficult to fulfill his or her duties fairly. Even if there is no evidence of improper actions, a conflict of interest can create an appearance of impropriety that can undermine confidence in the ability of that person to act properly."*

Source: Wikipedia - In the context of advocacy services, conflict of interest includes but is not limited to: breach of confidentiality; abuse of trust; personal gain; divided loyalty (eg providing personal care and advocacy to the same person).

RATIONALE

A central function of advocacy is to ensure that people are supported to speak for themselves and where necessary have someone 'on their side' who can represent their views, wishes and concerns. Wherever possible, advocates should take their instruction from the service user and ensure that they do not take action without the service users' express permission. However, many people are unable to offer such clear instruction due to a lack of confidence or experience, because they lack capacity or because they have limited communication. In such instances the advocate can take steps to ensure the person's basic human and civil rights are protected and develop a relationship with the person that may lead to a greater understanding of their wishes, needs and perspectives. This may require a longer-term relationship between the advocate and service user.

Advocates should remain open-minded and non-judgmental about the people they support. This differs from a traditional 'assessment' approach to supporting people, where judgements are made about what people need or what is in their 'best interests'. Advocacy is about promoting what the service user wants for themselves, not what other people think they should have or not have. This is also true in relation to information. Advocates do not keep secrets from their service users and will not accept unsolicited information about a person from a service provider or other external source.

The advocacy scheme will ensure that the wishes and interests of the people they advocate for direct advocates' work. Advocates should be non-judgmental and respectful of peoples' needs, views and experiences. Advocates will ensure that information concerning the people they advocate for is shared with these individuals.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

a The referral procedure should allow for service users to express a preference for advocates with particular skills, knowledge or attributes.

b Copies of all correspondence relating to the service user should be shared with the person and explained to them.

c The advocacy scheme should have systems for regularly reviewing all advocacy relationships (at least every four months).

d The advocacy scheme should have in place clear procedures for closing cases and obtaining users' views on the impact of the advocacy process.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Copy of referral procedure

Feedback from advocates and service users

Evidence of reviews (eg in case files)

Case closure policy, user feedback forms

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST:

a Advocates should ensure advocacy support is appropriate to the service users' needs and/or expressed wishes.

b Advocates should take instruction from service users wherever possible. Advocates should base their actions on mutually agreed plans and preferred outcomes, and work in partnership with service users to achieve this. The advocacy role may include:

(i) Instructed advocacy:

- Gathering and presenting up to date and accurate information to help service users make informed choices but NOT giving advice.
- Listening to service users and discussing options but NOT imposing views or opinions.
- Talking to, and corresponding with, family members or other professionals with the service user's permission but NOT making decisions or choices on behalf of service users.
- Representing the person's expressed views and wishes but NOT taking action independently of the service user.
- Agreeing a plan of action and identifying initial outcomes and timescales with service users but NOT being prescriptive or inflexible.

(ii) Non-instructed advocacy:

- Where a service user cannot give clear instruction, taking time to get to know them and building a picture of their preferences and lifestyle including their cultural background.
- Seeking appropriate alternative forms of communication which enable the service user to express views and choices.
- Ensuring the person's fundamental human rights are respected and upheld at all times.
- Challenging service providers and decision makers in order to promote a person-centred approach.
- Acting as a 'witness' or observer in the settings in which the service user spends time.

EMPOWERMENT

RATIONALE

One person cannot empower another. Empowerment is something that people must achieve for themselves, but advocacy can play a crucial role in promoting empowerment by supporting people to speak for themselves. In this way, self-advocacy is the foundation upon which true empowerment can be built. Advocacy schemes should consider how they are able to support this kind of empowerment through their work. At the most fundamental level, service users should be encouraged to take control of the advocacy process and, where possible, be involved in the service through:

- recruitment of staff and volunteers;
- advocate induction, training and appraisal;
- joining Management Committees;
- acting as advisors to the advocacy scheme;
- production of publicity and information materials;
- joining consultation groups on policy, planning and fundraising;
- giving feedback, evaluating and monitoring the service.

Not everyone has the time, interest or ability to be involved in the ways outlined above. Nevertheless, the advocacy scheme should aspire to be an example to others in the ways of service user involvement and empowerment. It should also be remembered that self-advocacy is not the 'be-all and end-all' of empowerment. It can be just as empowering for some people to know they have access to a skilled and trusted advocate when required.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

a The advocacy scheme organises or has operational links with local service users or a self advocacy group.

b Service users are meaningfully involved in the advocacy scheme's Management Committee.

c Training is offered to service users on a range of relevant issues (eg understanding your rights, assertiveness skills).

d The advocacy scheme produces a regular newsletter for service users and supporters.

e Service users are able to access training materials, equipment and resources owned by the advocacy scheme.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Feedback from advocates

Structure chart, annual report, feedback from Trustees

List of training opportunities, training plan, feedback from service users

Copies of newsletters

Feedback from service users

The advocacy scheme will support self-advocacy and empowerment through its work. People who use the scheme should have a say in the level of involvement and style of advocacy support they want. Schemes will ensure that people who want to, can influence and be involved in the running and management of the scheme.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT

EMPOWERMENT:

a Advocates should ensure that service users are aware of when and how they can be contacted and any limitations to this contact (eg not at weekends).

b Advocates should inform service users of their right to request a change of advocate (within the constraints of the scheme), or terminate contact with the advocate at any time. If a service user is unhappy with the advocate's approach to a particular issue, the advocate should consider adapting their approach as appropriate within the terms of the Code of Practice.

c Advocates should be open and transparent about their methods of advocating with service users. Advocates should recognise the existing skills of service users, and support people to develop new skills and the confidence to speak for themselves.

d Advocates should provide service users with information about how they can give feedback to the advocacy scheme about its work and how to get involved in the wider activities of the organisation if they wish.

RATIONALE

Equality of opportunity is fundamental to effective advocacy. Advocates are often working with some of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups in society. The advocacy movement has a proud history of tackling inequality and discrimination, but cannot afford to be complacent in terms of its own policies and practice. At the very least, advocacy schemes will be required to have a written equal opportunities policy which addresses issues of equality and anti-discriminatory practice. This policy should apply equally to service users, staff and volunteers. It is also important to ensure that any local policies comply with the relevant anti-discriminatory legislation.

An effective advocacy scheme will also be keen to demonstrate how it meets the needs of a diverse local population. This usually involves the collection and analysis of statistical information about, amongst other things, the gender and ethnicity of their staff, volunteers and service users. This can be useful for fundraising purposes but also plays a more important role - to ensure the advocacy scheme is reaching out to all sections of the local population.

The advocacy scheme will have a written equal opportunities policy that recognises the need to be pro-active in tackling all forms of inequality, discrimination and social exclusion. The scheme will have in place systems for the fair and equitable allocation of advocates' time.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

a The advocacy scheme has a written Equal Opportunities policy which is freely available.

b The policy is reviewed and updated annually.

c Trustee/advocate recruitment procedures promote diversity and equality of opportunity.

d The advocacy scheme takes action to ensure that local minority communities and those unable to self-refer can access the service.

e The advocacy scheme has systems for accessing community language/sign language interpreters and/or advocates.

f Disability equality/race equality training is offered to all advocates.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Copy of policy

Check date on policy

Copies of job adverts, publicity materials

Records of presentations/meetings attended, leaflets in other languages, outreach sessions

Knowledge of local interpreters, evidence of usage (contracts, invoices)

List of training opportunities, training plan

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT EQUAL OPPORTUNITY:

a Advocates should be fully conversant with their organisation's equal opportunities policy and be able to explain it to others in straightforward language. Advocates should adhere to this policy at all times.

b Advocates should be respectful of service users' religious, cultural and spiritual needs and proactive in ensuring these are met. Where a service user expresses a preference for advocates with particular skills, knowledge or attributes, this should be referred to the line manager.

Advocacy will be provided free of charge to eligible people. The advocacy scheme will aim to ensure that its premises, policies, procedures and publicity materials promote access for the whole community.

ACCESSIBILITY

RATIONALE

It is essential that the advocacy scheme is accessible to the widest possible range of service users. This means making sure that potential service users know about the scheme, know what it provides and where it is located. Referral procedures should be clear, simple and widely publicised. Wherever possible, an outreach approach should be adopted which ensures that advocates are available and visible in the places where service users spend time such as libraries, shopping and leisure centres, day centres, residential homes and GP surgeries. For some people, being accessible will mean arranging home visits or seeing them outside of traditional office hours.

Being accessible also means taking a responsible attitude towards risk management. The more accessible an advocacy scheme makes itself, the more that it is prone to the risks associated with providing any public service. Hence, a clear risk management policy should be seen as an integral part of the accessibility principle.

Achieving true accessibility costs money. Accessible premises tend to command higher rents, publicity materials in accessible formats (including large print, Braille, audiotape and community languages) can be expensive to produce and regular home visits may also incur high travel expenses for advocates. Advocacy schemes should ensure that these costs are factored into any funding applications.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

a The advocacy scheme is situated in wheelchair accessible premises;
OR
has access to accessible meeting space or undertakes home visits.

b The advocacy scheme's offices are friendly and welcoming to service users.

c The advocacy scheme makes all reasonable efforts to ensure that service users can receive support including meeting people at venues that are accessible and convenient.

d The advocacy scheme has a range of publicity materials appropriate to the client group served.

e The advocacy scheme has a risk assessment policy.

f The advocacy scheme is well known to potential referral agencies.

g The scheme organises regular outreach work to identify potential new service users.

h The advocacy scheme has well-established networks and contacts to reach eligible people who cannot request advocacy themselves.

i There are opportunities for the local community to engage with the advocacy scheme as volunteers, Trustees or supporters.

j The advocacy service is provided free of charge to end service users.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Inspection of premises, list of venues used

Feedback from service users

Feedback from advocates and service users

Copies of publicity materials

Copy of policy

Feedback from local service agencies

Dates of meetings attended, presentations given

List of contacts, feedback from referrers and service users

Copies of press releases/articles, annual report

Feedback from service users

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY:

a Advocates should not make a charge to service users for their services.

b Advocates should respond positively to requests from service users to meet in places and at times which are mutually convenient. Where necessary, the advocate should make arrangements for accessible meeting places which are acceptable to the service user.

c Advocates should adhere to their organisation's risk management and health and safety policies and report any breaches of policy to their line manager at the earliest opportunity.

d Advocates should make every effort to ensure that information they have gathered on behalf of the service user is accessible and understandable to them.

ACCOUNTABILITY

RATIONALE

All advocacy schemes should be accountable for what they do. This accountability can be demonstrated via effective monitoring and evaluation systems. The challenge for advocacy schemes is to devise accountability systems which do not compromise advocacy principles. A traditional 'inputs and outputs' monitoring system will struggle to record and reflect the more subtle elements of advocacy practice, such as the time and effort spent getting to know someone, building up trust and establishing effective communication mechanisms. There is also the danger that monitoring can become too output focused, and exclude vital advocacy processes. In advocacy there is no simple relationship between process and outcomes which makes monitoring and evaluation much more difficult.

An effective monitoring system for advocacy schemes will need to encompass, in equal measure, the following four elements:

- 1 Basic service standards:** do the scheme's administrative, referral, finance, health and safety and other procedures meet basic standards that would apply to any public service?
- 2 Advocacy processes:** this refers to the relationship between the advocate and service user. Is the advocate approachable, a good listener, reliable, honest; do they do what they say they will, within an agreed timescale? Does the advocate work in partnership with the service users, and keep them informed and involved?
- 3 Advocacy outcomes:** did the service user get what they wanted? Were there measurable outcomes for the service users? Were targets met or has the person's situation changed? Do the original goals need to be redefined?
- 4 Empowerment:** does the service user feel empowered as a result of their contact with the advocacy scheme? Have they learned new skills, gained access to information or made useful contacts? Do they feel more able to advocate for themselves in future?

The advocacy scheme will have in place systems for the effective monitoring and evaluation of its work. All those who use the scheme will have a named advocate and a means of contacting them.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

a Client data is recorded and analysed at regular intervals set by the advocacy scheme (eg quarterly or six-monthly).

This includes:

- number of people supported, age, gender, ethnic origin, disability, postcode;
- nature of advocacy issues, duration of advocacy relationship and amount of time spent on each case;
- outcomes of advocacy work, user satisfaction feedback.

b The advocacy scheme's funding bodies are provided with relevant written monitoring information.

c A summary of work done each year is publicised by the advocacy scheme, for example in the form of an annual review of activities.

d The advocacy scheme is insured against both employers and public liability.

e The advocacy scheme produces an annual budget linked to the aims and objectives of the scheme, agreed by Trustees, and annual, independently audited accounts that are SORP compliant where required.

f The advocacy scheme has a written health and safety policy which is freely available and reviewed annually.

g The advocacy scheme complies with the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation.

h All service users accepted for referral have a named advocate who they can contact.

i The advocacy scheme has a written policy on receiving gifts from service users.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Copies of monitoring reports, client database

Copies of monitoring reports

Annual report

Copy of insurance certificate

Copy of budget, annual report and accounts

Copy of policy, date last reviewed

Data Protection policy

Feedback from advocates and service users, case files

Copy of policy

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT

ACCOUNTABILITY:

a Advocates should operate within the law at all times, and ensure they adhere to their organisation's Code of Practice. Advocates are accountable on different levels, including to their organisation and the service user. In practice this means that:

(i) Advocates should keep accurate and up to date written records of action taken and progress made with their work. Service users should be kept informed of and involved in all aspects of the advocacy process.

(ii) Advocates should comply with the organisation's data collection policy and the Data Protection Act and ensure service user monitoring information is routinely collected and fed back to the organisation.

(iii) Advocates should not hold money or possessions belonging to a service user. In the exceptional circumstances where there is no alternative but for the advocate to do so, proper records and receipts should be kept and the line manager must be notified of any such transactions at the earliest opportunity.

(iv) Advocates should not accept gifts other than one-off, inexpensive items, which should be declared to the line manager. Further gifts should be declined and an explanation given to the service user.

(v) Advocates should not make promises to service users or make claims for themselves which they cannot substantiate.

(vi) Advocates should conduct themselves in a professional and responsible manner in all dealings with service users, carers and other service workers. Where disputes do arise, these should be referred to the line manager at the earliest opportunity.

SUPPORTING ADVOCATES

RATIONALE

Support, training, and where appropriate, supervision of advocates are all essential elements of providing effective advocacy support. It is vital that advocates feel supported in their role and have opportunities to develop their skills and experience. The challenge in an advocacy context is to make arrangements for such support to be available to advocates without falling into the trap of 'over-professionalising' advocacy. It is difficult to be prescriptive in relation to this principle as different advocacy models adopt different approaches to the issue of training and supervision.

The important issue here is that advocates receive the help they need to effectively undertake their role on behalf of clients and that there are quality safeguards for service users. Different schemes will take different approaches to this principle, but simply 'doing nothing' is not an option. The level of support and training offered should be appropriate to the particular advocacy role, whether that be caseworker, citizen advocate or peer advocate. The resource implications of an effective support package for advocates should be considered at an early stage.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARD

a The advocacy scheme arranges for a comprehensive induction training programme for all new advocates within their first month.

b Advocates receive group or one to one supervision/support at regular agreed intervals.

c All advocates are subject to enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks and are required to provide two references.

d All advocates are given access to relevant ongoing training opportunities.

e The advocacy scheme has a dedicated training budget and an organisational training plan.

f The advocacy scheme holds regular team meetings/volunteer meetings.

g The advocacy scheme has a system for claiming reasonable work-related expenses.

h Salary scales and terms and conditions for paid staff are appropriate for the level of responsibility and in keeping with other similar roles.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Copy of induction training programme, feedback from advocates

Dates/notes of supervision sessions, feedback from advocates

Copies of relevant correspondence

Training plan, details of courses attended

Copy of budget, annual report and accounts

Notes/dates of meetings

Expenses policy/copies of claim forms

Copy of terms and conditions, copies of job adverts

STANDARD

i Supervisors are suitably knowledgeable and experienced in advocacy, and themselves receive supervision from a third party.

j All paid staff have job descriptions, and volunteers have a role description.

k The advocacy scheme has a system which regularly reviews individual performance against targets and key objectives.

l Staff and volunteers have regular opportunities to meet directly with the Management Committee.

m The advocacy scheme has a whistle-blowing policy which is freely available and reviewed regularly.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Feedback from supervisor, dates/notes of supervision meetings

Copy of job descriptions

Notes/dates of appraisal meetings

Committee agendas, dates of meetings, feedback from advocates

Copy of policy

The advocacy scheme will ensure advocates are prepared, trained and supported in their role and provided with opportunities to develop their skills and experience

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT SUPPORTING ADVOCATES:

- a** Advocates should make full use of and contribute to:
- ongoing training and personal development opportunities;
 - one to one supervision with the line manager;
 - annual appraisal against agreed targets;
 - group support and networking opportunities with other advocates;
 - opportunities for reflection and analysis of their own practice;
 - specialist support such as counselling, as may be required and available.
- b** Advocates should ensure they have access to, and know how to use, a wide range of information resources such as books, journals and the Internet which are accurate and up to date.
- c** Advocates should be aware of their organisation's whistle-blowing policy and be supported to make use of this where appropriate.

CONFIDENTIALITY

RATIONALE

Given the nature of advocacy relationships, confidentiality is clearly important. Many people who approach advocacy schemes do so because they have experienced problems with other service providers and are looking for independent support to resolve issues or disputes. In order to establish a trusting relationship, advocates must be able to guarantee a level of confidentiality which allows service users to tell their stories. Confidentiality in this respect usually means that any information passed between the service user and their advocate is private, other than if the advocate discusses issues with their supervisor or team. However, there may be situations where confidentiality can be breached, for example if the service user is threatening harm to themselves or others or discloses abuse. The advocacy scheme's written policy should specify the circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached and the procedures used to decide this.

Confidentiality also means that written information kept by the advocacy scheme about a service user will not be shared with another party without the service user's permission. This is relevant in relation to service monitoring where funders or commissioners may request to see confidential client records. This would clearly contravene the confidentiality principle.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARDS

- a** The advocacy scheme has a written confidentiality policy which is freely available and reviewed annually.
- b** Issues of confidentiality are addressed in training and supervision, both one-to-one and as a team.
- c** The policy contains a clear rationale and procedure for breaching confidentiality.
- d** Any such breaches are reported to senior managers or Trustees in line with the organisation's policies and procedures at the earliest opportunity.
- e** All client records, either written or electronic, are stored securely and according to Data Protection Act regulations.
- g** Service users are supported to have access to their own records

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

- Copy of policy, date last reviewed
- Training plan, induction programme, supervision notes, team meeting notes
- Copy of policy
- Notes of Trustee meetings where breaches have been discussed
- Data Protection policy, evidence of secure storage (eg locked filing cabinets, password protected computers)
- Service user feedback

The advocacy scheme will have a written policy on confidentiality stating that information known about a person using the scheme is confidential to the scheme and any circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY:

- a** Advocates should be fully conversant with their organisation's confidentiality policy and be able to explain it in straightforward language.
- b** Advocates should at all times observe and respect the right to confidentiality of service users within the policy of the organisation. In line with best practice, this will generally mean that:
- (i) Advocates should be honest with the service user about the level of confidentiality they can realistically guarantee. This means explaining any conditions under which confidentiality may be breached (eg harm to self or others, abuse) and the means by which this may occur.
 - (ii) Advocates should be clear that they receive supervision and will be required to discuss their work with their line manager on a regular basis.
 - (iii) Notwithstanding the above exceptions, advocates should not share information about a service user with others without that individual's permission. Where permission cannot be obtained, information should only be shared to promote the person's views, wishes and concerns.
 - (iv) Advocates should inform the service user about all actions taken on their behalf.
 - (v) Advocates should avoid colluding with hearsay and speculation about a service user.
- c** Advocates should ensure that all written information kept on a service user is securely stored and routinely updated and checked for accuracy. Service users should have access to this information as requested.

The advocacy scheme will have a written policy describing how to make complaints or give feedback about the scheme or about individual advocates. Where necessary, the scheme will enable people who use its services to access external independent support to make or pursue a complaint.

COMPLAINTS

RATIONALE

As with any service, there will be times when things go wrong or where the service does not meet peoples' expectations. It is important that complaints procedures within advocacy schemes are as simple and straightforward as possible. The scheme's complaints policy should be well publicised and accessible, with details of who to contact and the various stages of the complaints process. Where the complainant is a service user, it may be necessary to arrange for independent support for them. This could be done via another advocacy scheme or other voluntary organisations.

The scheme needs to give thought to how they define a complaint; how the complaints process is triggered; and be sensitive to the needs of service users who may express their dissatisfaction in a variety of ways, including non-verbally.

The other key issue here is how the scheme can learn from complaints. Does an individual complaint demonstrate a wider deficiency in the scheme? What steps can be taken to ensure the problem does not arise again? There should be clear links between the complaints process and the service planning process.

STANDARDS AND EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

STANDARDS

- a** The advocacy scheme has a written complaints policy which is freely available and reviewed annually.
- b** The advocacy scheme will arrange for independent support for complainants if required and within available resources.
- d** Trustees and funding bodies receive regular reports of complaints and action taken.
- e** There is evidence of organisational learning from mistakes.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

- Copy of policy, date last reviewed
- Partnership agreement with independent agency, copies of complaints investigation reports
- Copies of relevant reports
- Notes of meetings where complaints have been discussed

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES

WHAT OUR CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVOCATES SAYS ABOUT COMPLAINTS

- a** Advocates should be fully conversant with their organisation's complaints procedure and be able to explain it in straightforward language.
- b** Advocates should ensure that service users are made aware of their right to make a complaint about the advocate or advocacy service. This may involve giving service users a copy of the scheme's complaints leaflet; explaining the various stages of the complaints process to them at the start and during the course of the relationship; and being open to criticism and suggestions without becoming defensive.
- c** Where the complaint is from another service worker (eg social worker, care home manager) or a relative of the service user, the same high standards of professional conduct should apply.
- d** All complaints received by the advocate in the course of their work, whether verbal or written, should be passed on to their line manager at the earliest opportunity.

APPENDIX ONE

POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO MEET THE STANDARDS

There are a number of written policies, procedures and other materials which your scheme will need in order to meet some of the Charter in Action standards. Use the following checklist for those you already have and those which need to be developed.

WRITTEN EVIDENCE	YES/NO	BY WHEN
<p>GOVERNING DOCUMENTS</p> <p>Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association</p> <p>Mission statement or statement of values</p> <p>Aims and objectives document</p> <p>Business plan</p> <p>Fundraising strategy</p>		
<p>OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES</p> <p>Referral procedure</p> <p>List of agencies to refer on to</p> <p>Code of Practice for advocates</p> <p>Risk assessment procedures</p> <p>Organisational structure chart and decision making procedures</p> <p>Induction training programme for new advocates</p> <p>Annual training plan with identified resources</p>		
<p>POLICIES</p> <p>Equal opportunities policy</p> <p>Complaints and confidentiality policies</p> <p>Health and safety and risk assessment policies</p> <p>Disciplinary and grievance procedures</p> <p>Supervision policy</p> <p>Whistle-blowing policy</p> <p>Data Protection policy</p>		
<p>PUBLICITY</p> <p>Publicity materials in a range of formats (eg large print, Braille, tape, community languages, pictures and symbols, video)</p> <p>Advocacy Charter or similar summary of values/principles</p>		
<p>ACCOUNTABILITY</p> <p>Reports of complaints investigations and action taken</p> <p>Summary reports of all complaints received and lessons learned</p> <p>Annual report and accounts</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation reports</p> <p>User feedback reports</p>		

APPENDIX TWO

GROUP DISCUSSION/ TRAINING EXERCISES

This section is designed to provide advocacy schemes with a set of exercises which can bring the Advocacy Charter to life. Each exercise is designed to challenge and stimulate debate within teams about the meaning of each of the ten Charter principles. In this way, teams will gain a greater understanding of what the principles mean for their work.

CLARITY OF PURPOSE

a Design a 'frequently asked questions' information leaflet which explains exactly what advocacy is; what your scheme can and cannot provide; how advocacy differs from advice, social work, etc. Use accessible language throughout.

b For one month, keep a record of all inappropriate referrals you receive.

Think about:

- Where did they come from?
- Who did you refer people on to?
- What could be done to reduce the number of such referrals?

Draw up a plan of action for reducing the number of inappropriate referrals and increasing the number of appropriate ones.

INDEPENDENCE

a Your local Primary Care Trust (who also funds you) objects to you working with a particular service user or tries to prevent you from going into a particular day centre or ward. How would you demonstrate your independence in this instance? Think about structural, operational and psychological independence.

b You receive an application from someone wishing to become an advocate who also works part time in your local day centre. How do you respond?

c You are approached by a private care facility which offers to pay you to provide advocacy to their service users. How do you assess any conflicts of interest this may pose?

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Try to put yourself in the shoes of one of your service users; how would you get access to your advocate? How could you tell the scheme what you thought of them? How would you access your records?

This exercise could be repeated for someone who can speak for themselves and for someone who cannot speak for themselves; what difference will this make to the service user's experience of using the advocacy scheme?

EMPOWERMENT

List as many ways as possible in which users can be involved in:

- the day to day operation of your scheme,
- the overall management of your scheme,
- the broader planning and monitoring of local services,
- campaigning and lobbying for rights and services.

What can your scheme do to support these activities? What are the benefits and drawbacks, including resource issues?

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

What factors might prevent people from black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, gay men and lesbians and other minority groups, from accessing advocacy services? What steps might you take to facilitate easy access to your service for people from these communities?

ACCESSIBILITY

Can you think of six things you could do to make your scheme more accessible to the widest range of people? Such as:

- 1 Physical location/ space
- 2 Publicity
- 3 Policies
- 4 Personnel
- 5 Training
- 6 Funding

What are the resource implications of each of these?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Put yourself in the shoes of one of your funders.

Think about:

- What information you could use to show the scheme is effective?
- That it provides value for money?
- That users are satisfied with the services?
- That the money would not be better spent on another advocacy scheme?

Think about the evidence you currently provide:

- Is it sufficient or could you produce more?

SUPPORTING ADVOCATES

Draw a diagram with the advocate at the centre. Now map out a package of support, supervision and training which ensures the advocate is fully supported in their role. Does this accurately reflect the arrangements in your own scheme?

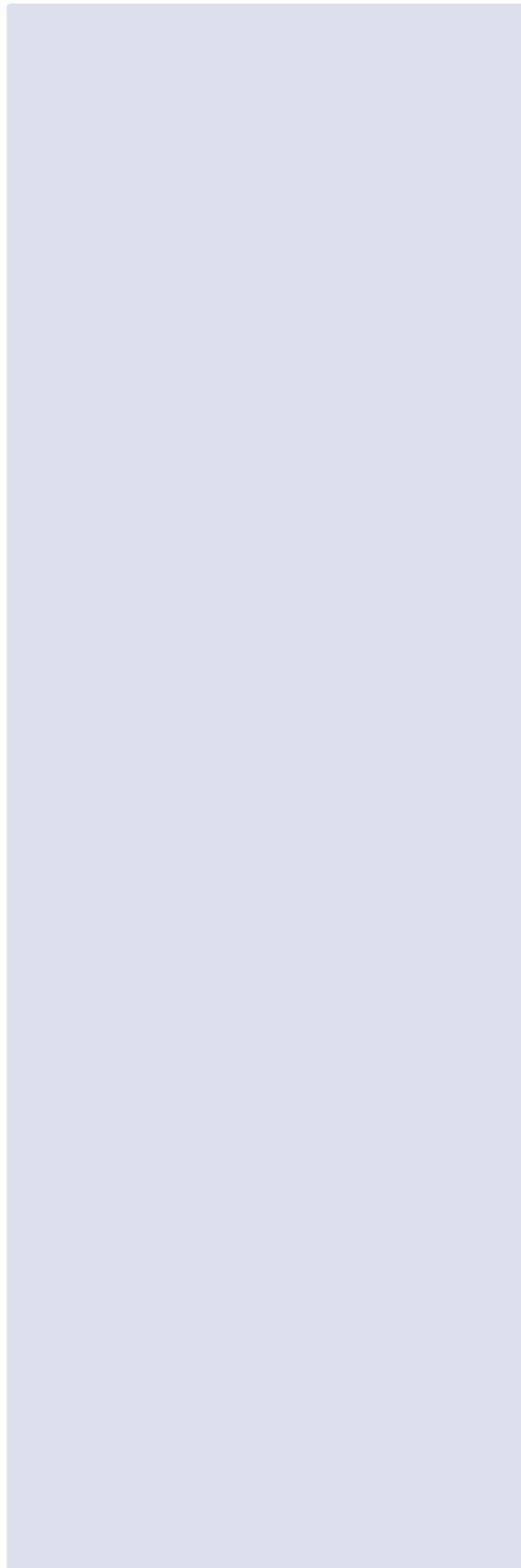
CONFIDENTIALITY

How would you respond if your local commissioners demanded access to your client records, for monitoring purposes? What does your confidentiality policy say about this? What would happen if you refused?

COMPLAINTS

Work through an imaginary complaint focusing on the various stages of the complaints process and how lessons might be learned from the experience. Try it from the point of view of the complainant; the person being complained about; and the investigating officer.

NOTES



© Action for Advocacy May 2006
Tel 020 7820 7868
info@actionforadvocacy.org.uk
www.actionforadvocacy.org.uk
Charity Number 1103575



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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