

What to expect from...

Advocacy Services



What is Advocacy?

Caring for someone with a neurological condition can at times be stressful. However, support is out there for people with a neurological condition and their carers through advocacy services.

Advocacy services exist to support people to have their wishes heard, to give them a stronger voice and to give them as much control as possible over their own lives.

Patient advocates will ask the right questions on someone's behalf and are therefore very useful when navigating complex situations involving another person's care.

Who can be an Advocate?

As a carer, you very likely act as an informal advocate for the person you care for. Any friends and family can also act as an advocate – sometimes having someone else in the room with you to take notes and ask questions is all you may need.

There are also formal advocates and choosing which one you need will depend on your own circumstances.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

Under the Carers (Scotland) Act, all people who provide unpaid care for another person now have the right to a personalised plan. For adult carers this is called an adult carer support plan. For young carers this is called a young carer statement.

The Carers (Scotland) Act includes:

- **A power to support carers and a duty to support carers who have needs that meet the local eligibility criteria**
- **A duty to provide an information and advice service to carers**
- **A duty to publish a Short Breaks Services Statement**

Local Health Boards have a duty to involve carers in discharge planning for the person they care for when they are admitted to hospital and a duty to prepare a local carer strategy with the relevant authority.

When might Carers need advocacy?

Advocacy support can be needed at any time, whether you are new to caring or not. When new to caring, independent advocates will help you to navigate the care system, help you to know your rights and to understand the care and support process.

With progressive neurological conditions your circumstances will change and an independent advocate can help, advise and support you at each stage

If your circumstances have changed and you are not receiving the help you need, or you do not agree with any decisions which have been made, an advocate will support you to challenge any such decisions to ensure you receive the help you need.

What will my Advocate do for me?

An advocate will act in your best interests, listening to what you need and want, and can help you solve issues, problems and situations that arise from your caring role. Your advocate will provide you with information about your rights, about the rights of the person you care for and will help you access financial support if you are eligible.

- Your advocate may attend meetings with you such as medical appointments, care and support planning meetings, or when dealing with your employer; they will support you through them. They can speak on your behalf and raise questions that you may not have considered
- Your advocate will write letters on your behalf or on behalf of the person you care for
- By acting on your behalf, they can reduce the stress of dealing with statutory bodies. Having information and support from an advocate will give you confidence as you navigate the care system which may be new or unfamiliar to you
- While an advocate will work on your behalf to support your wishes, it's important to remember a successful outcome isn't always guaranteed



Who provides Advocacy services?

Some options for advocacy services in Scotland include:

- Charities: most single condition charities will have information lines and offer advocacy services.
- Your Options Understood (Y.O.U)
<https://youoptionsunderst.wixsite.com/y-o-u>
- Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance: www.siaa.org.uk
- Carers Scotland regularly run self-help Advocacy for Carers
<https://www.carersuk.org/scotland>
- Being Heard: a self-advocacy guide for carers
http://www.carersuk.org/images/Help_Advice/CUK_Self_Advocacy_Guide_2020_Scotland_WEB.pdf
- Citizens Advice Bureau:
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/>