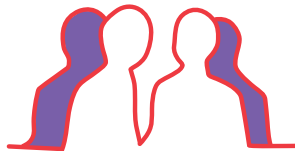


Edinburgh Carers Council



for those supporting people with mental health difficulties

Carers' Advocacy Service

A free, independent and confidential service for carers supporting someone with mental health difficulties or using mental health services



Advocacy - what is it?

Advocacy is

About having somebody to help you be heard and help represent your needs and views as effectively as possible. For example you may need:

- help with finding ongoing support for yourself as a carer
- assistance and support at meetings with medical and other mental health staff
- help with letters and forms
- information about what your rights are
- advocacy support in your role as named person

Advocacy is not

- someone making decisions for you
- mediation
- care and support work
- counselling
- getting advice

An advocacy worker will:

- **Listen** Arrange to meet with you and give you the opportunity to talk through about the things that are concerning you. Try to understand the situation from your viewpoint.
- **Give information** Access any information you might need to help make your situation clearer and help you make a more informed decision.
- **Look at your options** Talk through your options and choices and what the outcomes may be.
- **Support you** To write letters, prepare for and attend meetings and tribunals or make phone calls. An advocacy worker can represent your views if you feel unable to this yourself.

An advocacy worker will not tell you what to do; they are there to support you in your choices and decisions. An advocacy worker can lend weight to your views. They will support people in dealing with specific issues and work with them to try to get the issue resolved. An advocacy worker is not there to judge you or tell you if you are wrong or right, they are there to support you and only you.

We believe that carers need:

- To be respected, to be taken seriously and to be valued
- Our views and opinions to be heard
- Recognition of the importance of our contribution
- Opportunities for breaks from caring
- Practical support
- Information on things which will assist us to care effectively while maintaining our own health and quality of life
- Information about services for those we support
- Access to services which reflect cultural, religious and racial differences and values
- To be consulted at all levels of planning and implementation of services

If you think that you could benefit from using our advocacy service, please contact us on (0131) 270 6087/6089

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