

How independent advocacy benefits and empowers older people

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'Just think, if we had been drinkers and smokers we'd have missed all this!'

Definition of independent advocacy

“ a one-to-one partnership between a trained, independent advocate and an [older] person who needs support in order to secure or exercise their rights, choices and interests “

Dunning, 1995; OPAAL, 2001

Principles of advocacy

- *Independence – free from conflicts of interest, interests of the older person are paramount*
- *Empowerment – awareness, autonomy, control*
- *Inclusion – involvement and accessibility*
- *Citizenship – substantive and procedural rights*

Roles of advocate

Instrumental

– representative, spokesperson, appointee, guardian, power of attorney

Expressive

– “being”, confidante, witness, enabler

Focus and benefits of advocacy

The advocate works with their partner to ensure that they are:

- *getting and using information*
- *being heard and making decisions*
- *being protected from abuse*
- *able to challenge discrimination*

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Context & Demographics

- Borough of Sefton – Pop; 282,958 of which 69600 are persons aged over 60 (24.6%). 98.4% are of white ethnic extraction. There are 116,847 households in Sefton of which 32844 (27.8%) are pensioner households. All of these statistics are considerably higher than the national average for England and Wales.
- SPAC is a thriving small charity providing one to one casework advocacy and self-advocacy services to older people (aged 60+)
- Our purpose is to support older people in Sefton to get their voices heard in decisions affecting their lives. We provide free, independent and confidential advocacy services and promote self-advocacy through our Older People's Forum

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The Strategic Approach

- Voluntary Sector – Health & Social Care Forum, Advocacy Forum, Working with Older People Group
- Statutory Sector – NSF for Older People LIT, DARe Group, Housing Strategy Group
- Partnership – Borough Partnership (LSP), Southport Partnership

Time to talk: empowerment

The advocate will

- help the person develop alternatives
- help the person build alliances
- help the person articulate their case
- help the person build on their strengths and probe for others weaknesses
- firm up emotional and moral resolve

Advocacy and human rights

Three most relevant elements of the Act:

- the right not to be tortured or treated in an inhuman or degrading way
- the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence
- the right to life

Black, Minority Ethnic, and Asian issues

- Underdevelopment, low resources mean few dedicated service projects (eg, Nubian Life in Hammersmith, Subco in Newham)
- service-based or community-based?
- Inclusiveness: individual access or culturally-specific services?
- access issues paramount: research points to importance of semi-statutory health advocacy re BME health care

'Building Bridges for Health' Baljinder Heer, Kings Fund, 2004

'Health Advocacy views of workers and volunteers in London' KE, 2006

Positive relationships between advocacy and service agencies

- advocacy recognised in strategic planning and single assessment process
- protocols re advocacy within service organisation procedures
- raising awareness of advocacy among service staff (inc. joint-training)
- acceptance and active support for advocates' independence
- agreement to share expertise, advice and information

Finding out about advocacy

- Many local authority websites
- Action for Advocacy's advocacy map
www.actionforadvocacy.org.uk
- 'Mapping Independent Advocacy for Older People in the English Regions' at
www.opaal.org.uk

Publications & Contacts

- SPAC – “The Social Care needs of older Gay Men & Lesbians on Merseyside”
- OPAAL – “Making a Real Difference”, “Mapping Older People’s Advocacy in the English Regions”, “A Voice that Wasn’t Speaking”
- SPAC – andrew@spacadvocacy.org.uk
- OPAAL – www.opaal.org.uk kath@opaal.org.uk