

# Getting an Independent Advocate

## What will an advocate do?

The advocate will:

- help a person to understand what is happening when the council is looking at their care and support;
- help them to communicate what they feel and want, eg. support them to write letters, make phone calls, prepare for meetings and go to meetings with them;
- help them to understand the options available, make decisions and challenge decisions (if they want this);
- help them to understand their rights;
- find information to help them to make choices.

## How to get an advocate

Referrals can be made by individuals themselves, their friends, relatives or by professionals.

To make a referral:

Phone: 01257 472900

Email: [advocacy@my-life.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@my-life.org.uk)

Online: [www.my-life.org.uk/advocacy](http://www.my-life.org.uk/advocacy)

**Face-to-face:** Phone or email My Life to arrange an appointment to discuss a referral face-to-face at either of its two sites:

- **Standish site**  
Thompson House Equestrian Centre,  
off Pepper Lane, Standish, Wigan, WN6 0PP
- **Leigh site**  
Leigh Sports Village, Sale Way, Leigh, Lancs,  
WN7 4JY

Office hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm.

Alternatively, face-to-face appointments can be arranged at mutually convenient venues.



From 1 April 2015, the Care Act placed a duty on local councils to provide independent advocacy for people who find it difficult to have a say in their own care and support, and don't have someone to help them to do this.

### What is independent advocacy?

It is about giving people as much control as possible in their own lives. It includes:

- help to speak up about things that concern them;
- help to understand, remember and use information about their care and support;
- having someone speak on their behalf in order to protect their rights and interests when they are unable, for whatever reason, to do this for themselves.

'Independent' means that the advocacy is provided by an organisation that is totally separate from the local council. The advocate is not there to judge someone or their situation. They will work with them as a partner and will always be on their side.

My Life is Wigan Council's independent advocacy provider for people needing support under the Care Act 2014.

My Life is a social enterprise, based at Thompson House Equestrian Centre in Standish and at Leigh Sports Village, and is there to support local people

to get a good life. My Life has a wide range of experienced advocates who can work with people with a wide range of support needs, including older people and those with learning disabilities and mental health issues.

### When should advocacy be provided?

Councils have to involve people in assessments about their care and support and in planning and checking care and support. An assessment looks at how someone is managing every day activities such as looking after themselves, household tasks and getting out and about.

The Care Act says that councils must think about if a person needs independent advocacy to support them to be involved when councils are:

- carrying out an assessment of an adult to see what care and support they might need (this is called an adult's needs assessment);
- carrying out an assessment to see if someone who provides care for someone else needs support (this is called a carer's assessment);
- carrying out an assessment of a young person who is becoming an adult, to see what care and support they might need (this is called a child's needs assessment);
- writing what is in an adult's care plan or checking what's in it;
- carrying out a safeguarding enquiry or a safeguarding adults review.

The council will look first at whether or not there is a family member or a friend who can help a person to be involved (called 'an appropriate individual'). An appropriate individual cannot be someone who is already providing care and support to that person as a professional or paid to do so.

If a person does not have an appropriate individual, then the council must arrange for an independent advocate to support them.

### Other independent advocacy

There are already laws that say some people have the right to be given an independent advocate. This includes independent mental capacity advocacy, independent mental health advocacy and NHS complaints advocacy.

The Care Act does not change this right. What it does do is make getting an independent advocate easier for some people who would not get one under the above laws.

In lots of areas there is also some advocacy which is not just there because the law says it has to be. It is there because local people and local councils know that it helps people to have a voice and rights. This includes self-advocacy.