

What is advocacy?

How we can help

As a part of the Community Support Team we can work as your advocate.

What does this mean?

As an advocate, the EB Community Support Team will help you express your views and make informed decisions. The Community Support Team will work with you and help find out the information you require, explore the different options and allow you to decide for yourself what you want.

When you feel your voice hasn't been heard or you have lost energy to pursue a goal, such as entering education or living independently we can work with you to explain your needs and views to other organisations including housing departments, a child's school or a workplace or social services. We can also provide advocacy over the phone or by writing letters of support.

As your advocate we will never tell you what to do, or allow our own opinions to affect the support we provide. Advocacy is designed to increase confidence and assertiveness so that you feel able to speak out for yourself.

Advocacy is...

- Enabling you to have control over your life but taking up issues on your behalf if you feel a helping hand is needed.
- Listening to you and your point of view and helping you (if needed) to articulate this to others
- Understanding the situation and what may be stopping you from getting what you are looking for
- Outlining the choices available and the possible consequences of these choices
- Signposting you to others who may be able to help.

Advocacy is not...

- Making decisions for someone
- Mediation
- Counselling
- Telling someone what they should do
- Speaking for someone when they are able to express their own point of view
- Agreeing with everything a person says and doing anything they ask.

One example of advocacy in action

EB Community Support Managers can accompany members to tribunals to represent their point of view. In this case, Employment Support Allowance was granted to the member but they were still expected to attend work focused interviews. With support from their EB Community Support Manager they appealed against the decision. On request, the EB Community Support Manager accompanied the member as a representative.

They were able to voice their own opinions, but they knew the EB Community Support Manager was there if more explanation or clarification was required. They won their appeal.

Works cited

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance. (2008). *Code Of Practice for Independent Advocacy*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Independent Alliance.

If you need someone to work with you as your advocate contact your EB community support manager using the numbers on the back of this magazine.

If you are unsure who your EB community support manager is please email membership@debra.org.uk or call 01344 771961.