Code of Practice for Independent Advocates

Advocacy Network Northern Ireland
An easy read version of this booklet is currently being written

June 2014
On behalf of the Health and Social Care Board I am delighted to endorse this Code of Practice for Independent Advocates produced by the Advocacy Network Northern Ireland.

Independent Advocacy can support people who use health and social care services to articulate their views and wishes; secure their rights; have their interests represented and influence the services they receive to reflect their own interests and preferences.

The organisations and practitioners in the field have worked hard to develop this comprehensive guide to individual practice and conduct for independent advocates, whether paid or working in a voluntary capacity.

The development of this Code of Practice is an important step in raising the standards, profile and professionalism of Independent Advocacy in Northern Ireland.

Fionnuala McAndrew
Interim Chief Executive
Health and Social Care Board
28 May 2014
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INTRODUCTION

The Advocacy Network Northern Ireland, ANNI, came into being in August 2012 with the aim of providing opportunities for independent advocacy organisations to:

- Share expertise, best practice and experience
- Provide shared training and development opportunities
- Promote independent advocacy
- Identify and follow up opportunities to develop the advocacy services sector

The Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board linked in with ANNI from its inaugural meeting, as a means of engaging with the advocacy sector. This relationship led to ANNI being commissioned to develop this Code of Practice for Independent Advocates, along with a Standards Framework and a Core Induction Checklist. The Health and Social Care Board provided funding and a Project Manager was appointed to co-ordinate the work of ANNI.

The overall aim is to raise the quality of experience for those who engage with advocacy services and to provide clarity around the roles and expectations for all those who come into contact with independent advocacy services in Northern Ireland.

In developing the Code, ANNI has sought the engagement of the wide range of advocacy practitioners throughout Northern Ireland, whether or not their organisations are members of ANNI. Engagement has been through workshops, email and one-to-one visits. This Code of Practice is a product of this work. Members of the Steering Group are delighted to commend this Code of Practice to the advocacy sector. It is expected that advocacy organisations will require their advocates to sign up to and adhere to the Code.

Paul McFall
Chair
Advocacy Network Northern Ireland

Code of Practice for Independent Advocates
“As an Independent Advocate, I agree to....”
Be open, fair and trustworthy

- I will work in a way that is open, honest and reliable;
- I will establish appropriate boundaries for my role with the person I am supporting as an advocate and work within these;
- I will act within the limits of my knowledge and skills.
Put the views of people for whom I advocate first

✔ I will support and encourage people for whom I advocate to speak for themselves if they are able and wish to do so;

✔ I will represent the views and wishes of the people for whom I advocate;

✔ I will represent the views and wishes of people for whom I advocate, whether I agree with them or not;

✔ I will not seek to influence or direct the views of the people for whom I advocate;

✔ I will do everything I reasonably can to obtain the views and wishes of the people for whom I advocate.
Help people with whom I work to participate as fully as possible when decisions are made about their lives

✓ I will provide people for whom I advocate with the information they need to make informed choices;

✓ I will support the people for whom I advocate to explore the implications of the options they are considering;

✓ I will do everything possible to ensure that the people for whom I advocate have time and opportunities to consider their options and make choices.
Work with the agreement of the people for whom I advocate

✔ I will ensure that the people for whom I advocate understand my role, what I am planning to say on their behalf and to whom I will say this. I will not proceed with this unless I am sure that this is what they wish me to do;

✔ I will do everything possible to ensure that the people for whom I advocate are aware of implications of me passing on their views;

✔ I will recognise that the people for whom I advocate have a right to change their minds and will ensure that the wishes and views that I communicate on their behalf are current;

✔ I will seek to gain the agreement of the people for whom I am advocating in whatever way is most suitable for them. Where agreement cannot be made in writing, I will record the details of how their agreement was and is communicated.
Respect boundaries of confidentiality

✔ I will not pass on information about the people for whom I advocate unless they want me to, except where there is a legal requirement or justification for me to do so;

✔ I will regard confidentiality as being between the people for whom I advocate and the organisation providing the advocacy service, and will share information with my manager where appropriate in order to facilitate safe and reflective practice;

✔ I will pass on concerns about the safety of vulnerable adults and children and young people in accordance with the law and with the policy requirements of the organisation with whom I am working;

✔ I will explain the limits of confidentiality to the people for whom I advocate.
Be accountable and seek support

✓ I will be accountable to the people for whom I advocate in relation to any action I take on their behalf and any wishes and views I communicate to others;

✓ I will actively participate in supervision and support offered by the advocacy organisation for whom I am working in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the people for whom I advocate;

✓ I will be accountable to the advocacy organisation for whom I work in relation to the advocacy work that I do;

✓ If people for whom I am advocating need support that is beyond the boundaries of my role I will signpost them appropriately and establish links with further support if that is what they want;

✓ I will keep case records as required by the advocacy organisation with whom I work and statistical records as required by or for those who fund the work.
Challenge others

✓ I will challenge others to ensure that the wishes and views of the people for whom I advocate are heard and considered;

✓ I will challenge in a constructive manner, recognising and respecting the roles and views of others.
Respect and promote the Human Rights of those with whom I work

✓ I will ensure I have current knowledge and understanding of Human Rights and equality legislation, policy and service frameworks and developments;

✓ I will respect the Human Rights, dignity, diversity and autonomy of people for whom I advocate;

✓ I will promote the Human Rights of those with whom I work to others with whom they come into contact;

✓ I will challenge others when I become aware that someone’s Human Rights are not being respected.
Show respect for others

✓ I will treat the people for whom I advocate with respect and dignity at all times;

✓ I will uphold the principle that advocacy should be made available to those who would benefit irrespective of their history and circumstances;

✓ I will treat all other professionals, carers and family members in the life of the people for whom I advocate with respect and will value the differences between their role and mine.
Practice self-care

- I will seek appropriate support and ensure that I avail of support opportunities offered;
- I will use supervision opportunities to reflect on my advocacy case work;
- I will not accept advocacy work that is beyond my competence as an advocate.
Continue my professional development

✔ I will keep up to date with developments in advocacy and other areas that may impact on the people for whom I advocate;

✔ I will avail of learning and development opportunities relevant to my role that are offered to me;

✔ I will identify my own learning needs in relation to my role and seek to address these in conjunction with my manager.
Sample Individual statement of commitment

As an Independent Advocate I agree to follow the Code of Practice for Independent Advocates.

Name: __________________________
Organisation: ______________________

Signed:__________________________ Date: ____________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not have been possible to produce this Code of Practice without the help of a number of people.

Firstly, I want to thank all the independent advocates and advocacy managers who fed into the production of this Code. Thank you for all the support, challenges and affirmation. This is your Code of Practice and it would not have worked without you. I am also grateful to the organisations for which you work for generously allowing your time to contribute to the project.

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Marian Cinnamond
Project Manager
Advocacy Network Northern Ireland
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- Age Concern
- Alzheimer’s Society
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- BIEF (Ballymena Inter-ethnic Forum)
- BDA (British Deaf Association)
- Bryson Care
- Cause
- CAN (Compass Advocacy Network)
- Derg Valley Care
- Disability Action
- Humanitas
- Irish Advocacy Network
- Lamp Group
- Leonard Cheshire NI
- Mencap
- MindWise
- Mind Yourself
- NAPA
- Niamh
- NICEM
Patient and Client Council
Positive Futures
Positive Life
South East Trust
The Rainbow Project
Third Age National Advocacy Programme
True Voice Trust
Victim Support NI
VOCAL
VOYPIC
ANNI Steering Group

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