

Confidentiality

All matters discussed with an advocate will remain confidential, except in exceptional circumstances such as if you or anyone else is at risk of harm, and the policy will be explained at the outset. Any records kept will be available to you.

How do I contact the service?

If you have a mental health issue and would like the support of an advocate please contact Bethan Fisher on Tel: 01823 334906 or Email: BethanF@mindtws.org.uk Website: www.mindtws.org.uk

You need to be aged 18-65 and living in Taunton Deane or West Somerset to access the service.

If you are under 18 years please contact **Maze** on Tel: 01823 491033, or if you are over 65 years please contact **Age Concern** on Tel: 0845 673 4701

Please ask if you would like this information available in another language or alternative format such as large print, CD or Braille.

You can find us at:

Mind in Taunton & West Somerset
The Market Building
Canal Road
Taunton
TA1 1PN



For better
mental health



Advocacy in Mind



PHONE: 01823 334906

Reg Charity Number: 1109626

Company Number: 5148414

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is about making sure your voice gets heard in any decisions that affect your day-to-day life, helping you to speak up for yourself, and ensuring that your views and opinions are listened to, understood and respected. It is a process to enable you to say what you want, obtain your rights and access services.

If you have a mental health issue or experience emotional distress, it can be difficult to express your wishes and represent your own interests to people who provide your care and treatment. This may be due to feeling anxious, depressed or confused, or worried that you will not be understood or treated with respect.

Historically people with mental health issues have been marginalised in society and faced discrimination and exclusion from opportunities to participate fully in life, which can result in feeling disempowered.

FACT:

1 in 4 people will experience mental ill health or distress at some point in their lives

Advocacy aims to promote equality and make services more inclusive and accessible. It can involve supporting you to express yourself, and your needs, or if you wish and with your consent, communicating your opinions on your behalf.

What is an advocate?

An advocate is independent and impartial.

They are there solely for you and will not give a personal opinion on what they think is best for you. They will listen to you and find out what you think and feel about your treatment and care and what you would like to happen.

An advocate will not judge you and will treat you with respect whatever your age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, and will defend and promote your rights.

They will help you talk through your concerns, identify what choices are available to you and provide information on mental health issues and services and how to access them. They will provide support for as long as necessary to address your issues. The service is free of charge.

FACT: At any one time, 10% of the population are experiencing some form of mental ill health or emotional distress.

What can an advocate do?...

There are lots of specific ways an advocate can support you. Some examples...

- ✓ Listen to you so they can understand your concerns
- ✓ Speak for you about your worries or about a particular issue
- ✓ Go with you to meetings or appointments, as a supportive presence
- ✓ Represent you in situations where you don't feel able to represent yourself
- ✓ Help you write letters or emails
- ✓ Make a phone call for you
- ✓ Help you find out information and access services