

Carer's Advocacy Service Information Pack

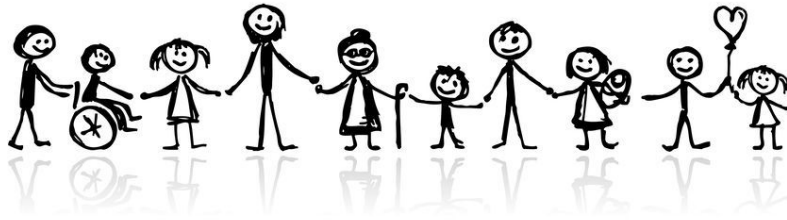
Are you a carer whose loved one is staying in a Cygnet hospital? If you would like information on your rights, support in speaking up and being heard, help to raise a concern or just an opportunity to talk to someone independent of the hospital - then get in touch with one of our advocates today.

This is a free service designed to help you to be involved in the care of your loved one.

Phone line: 0808 175 0787 (freephone)

Email: carers@katemercer-training.com

Experienced advocates available to listen, inform and support you



Dear Carer

Welcome to your Independent Advocacy service.

We are here to be on your side and help you to be heard and get involved in the processes and decisions affecting your loved one.

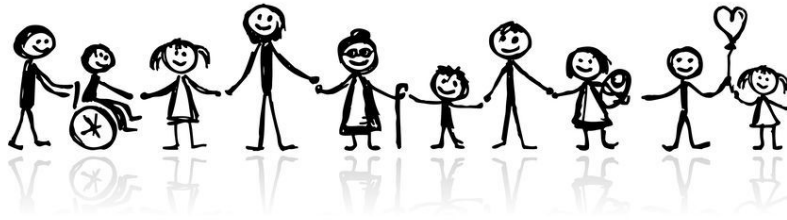
We appreciate that caring for a family member who is in hospital can be a strange experience and involve lots of different feelings. For lots of carers, the mental health system can sometimes feel overwhelming and confusing. We know that many carers can also feel excluded from decision making and helpless in supporting their loved one. Advocacy can be a useful way to navigate the system and understand what is happening, when and why.

This information pack will explain what you can expect from the advocacy service and how to get in touch.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Kate Mercer

Black Belt Advocacy



What is Advocacy?

Advocacy helps a person to express their views and makes sure their voice, opinion and experiences are properly heard by health or care services.

An advocate will listen to you and understand what you are going through. They will help you to work out what you want to say or what you want to happen

Advocates do this by providing confidential support that is independent from the health or care services you and your loved one might access.

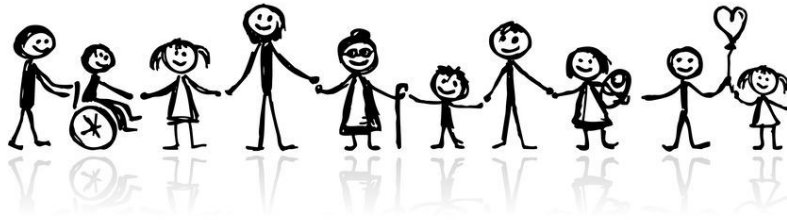
It often involves supporting carers to understand

- their rights, as well as the rights their loved one has
- the processes their loved one is going through (including legal processes)
- how to navigate systems.

Advocates also give support to carers who want to express their voice, explore options, communicate their views and raise concerns or complaints. This is particularly important when the carer feels they are not being listened to or don't know where to go.

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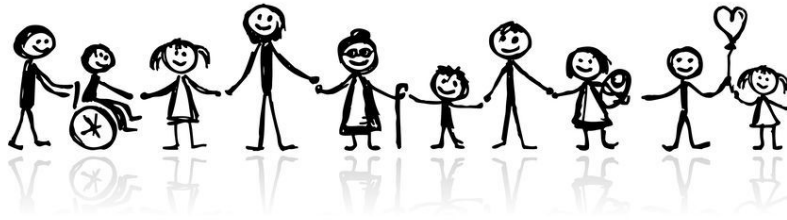


Why might you want Advocacy?

At times, the mental health system can feel overwhelming and confusing. Independent advocacy can be an important and useful way to support carers to navigate the system and understand what is happening and when.

Specifically advocacy ensures that carers:

- **Access information** - this might be going through information about legal frameworks, what different meetings are, rights, coming out of hospital or simply understanding what you can expect whilst your loved one is in hospital.
- **Feeling involved** - carers can feel unheard, ignored, blamed and even scapegoated in many of their interactions with health and care services. Advocacy can help you by working alongside you and making sure you are taken seriously.
- **Contribute to a system that safeguards people** - you know your loved one better than anyone else and you are the first person to know when something isn't quite right. Advocacy will help you to raise any concerns or complaints.
- **Access rights you have** - an advocate can support you access rights you already have (like rights to information, rights to a carers assessment, rights to be involved)



Things an advocate can do

An advocate will listen to you and understand what you are going through. They will help you to work out what you want to say or what you want to happen.

This might mean helping you to access information, write emails or letters or talk to the hospital. It might also mean talking to the local authority to make sure you have the right level of support.

An advocate will keep what you say confidential unless you want things to be shared or unless someone is at risk of harm.

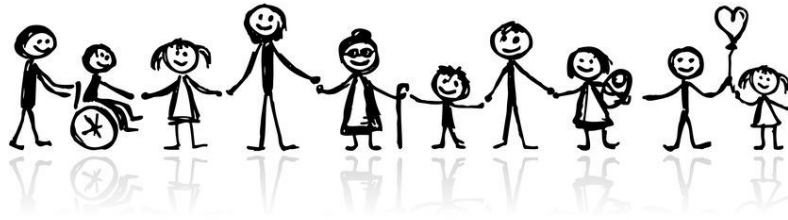
An advocate can help you access other services (like carers support), talk to the hospital or speak with third parties.

An advocate can help you to prepare for meetings

Things an advocate cannot do

As your advocate we cannot;

- give you advice or tell you what to do
- give you legal advice (but we can help you to get this)
- investigate complaints
- provide ongoing advocacy (but we can help you to get this)



What to expect

Most people wanting to speak to advocate usually have a specific question or query. We expect that we will be able to help with a simple chat. We listen to you and then help you with the information you need. We will do this on the telephone or via email - whatever you prefer. Other people might need a bit more time and so the advocacy support might take place over a few days or a few weeks.

Here are a couple of examples:

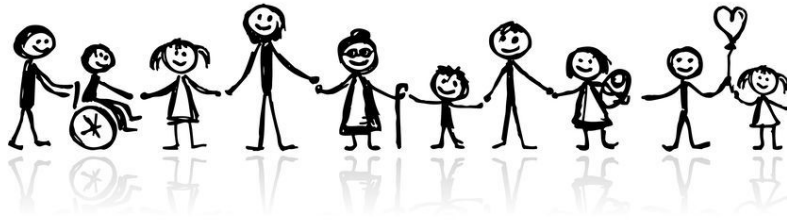


Josie has been told she is entitled to a carers assessment but doesn't know how to get on. She calls the advocacy service who gives her the correct information and signposts her to her local authority.

Tomas wants to know if he can visit his girlfriend in hospital and isn't sure how to arrange a visit. The advocate helps Tomas to talk to the ward and get a visit booked.



Raheena is worried that her daughter is being over medicated and that she is constantly 'zoned out'. The advocate helps Raheena write down her concerns and speak to the ward staff. Together they make a plan for Raheena to attend the next ward round and share her concerns.



A confidential and independent service

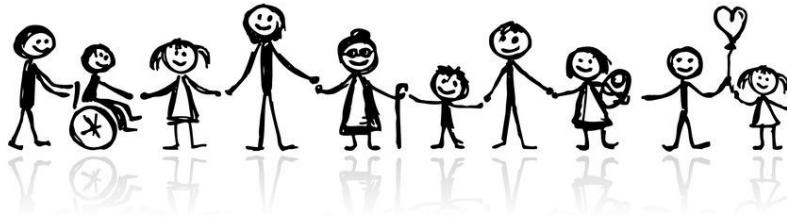
An advocate works for YOU - not the hospital! Our role is to listen to you and understand what you need. Our work is 100% guided by you. We might help you to access information or understand different choices, but we are ALWAYS led by what you want.

At Black Belt Advocacy we understand that having a confidential space is important. We will only share information with the hospital if you tell us to. In our experience most people want action to be taken to resolve their concerns and want the hospital or Local Authority to know what it is happening. But it is important that you know that an advocate only does this with your permission.

The only exception to this is if we are worried about somebody's safety. This might mean we are required to pass this on to the hospital or the local authority. In these instances we promise to:

- let you know what information we have to pass on
- ask you for permission to pass it on
- if you do not give permission, we will explain why we have to pass it on

We will do our best to keep you in control of what happens and be with you throughout any processes.



What happens to my personal data?

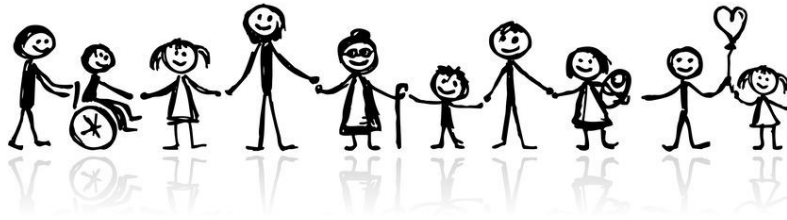
We store relevant data about our interactions with you. This includes personal details like your name and contact information, the hospital your loved one is staying at and a record of what we discuss. You can request access to this data at any point.

We do not share any information with Cygnet that can identify you (unless you give us permission). But we do tell Cygnet what themes and problems carers are experiencing. This is anonymised so families cannot be identified. The reason we do this is so we can help Cygnet improve what they do and to keep your loved ones safe.

Making a complaint about advocacy

If you are unhappy with the advocacy provided, you are encouraged to feed this back and we genuinely welcome complaints and feedback. We know we might not get everything right all of the time but promise to do our best to correct any mistakes and listen to you.

If you are dissatisfied with the advocacy you have received you should contact us through the helpline or email carers@katemercer-training.com where a manager will respond.



Get in touch.

You can contact us in any of the following ways.

Phone: 0808 175 0787 This free phone number will have an advocate available to talk to every day.

Email: carers@katemercer-training.com. You can drop us an email at any time and we will come back to you.

Referral: You can ask any member of the Cygnet team to make a referral on your behalf. Cygnet will then let the advocacy service know you would like to speak to an advocate and we will get in touch with you.

We will respond to all enquiries within 1 working day.

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