Independent Advocate

Job description and person specification

Citizens Advice Sheffield provides a range of advice and advocacy services through digital means, by telephone and in person. We seek to empower our clients and support them to improve their confidence and capability on a wide range of issues.

We aim for excellence. Our ambition is to be among the best advice and advocacy services in the country, and one of the leading voluntary and community organisations in Sheffield. We campaign for change to social policy to improve the well-being of the people and communities we support.

We, in partnership with Cloverleaf Advocacy, SACMHA and Disability Sheffield, are responsible for delivering the Sheffield Advocacy Hub which brings together all statutory advocacy in the city.

Purpose of job

Advocates are responsible for providing independent advocacy on one or more of the above projects. All of our advocates are required to work to the principles of the Advocacy Charter (2002).

The advocate seeks to support and empower clients to voice their wishes and feelings, and to become fully involved in key decisions about their lives.

The advocate provides support that is accessible, taking full account of clients' communication and other needs.
Advocates provide services in a wide range of settings, including our own offices, those of partner agencies, hospital wards, care homes and when necessary, clients' homes.

Advocates may also, subject to their skills, experience and where necessary accreditation, provide statutory advocacy services to our clients. Care Act, IMHA, IMCA and DoLS RPR advocates are statutory roles which must be carried out to particular standards, in line with the Care Act (2014), Mental Health Act (1983) and Mental Capacity Act (2005) Codes of Practice, their supplements and updates.

The advocate is required to undertake all their duties in accordance with Citizens Advice Sheffield policies and procedures, utilising national and local sources of information and guidance.

Main duties and responsibilities

Advocacy provision

All advocates are required to:

- Take referrals to the service from clients themselves, professionals, friends and family members of clients as appropriate
- Support clients to express their wishes and feelings, and where possible give clear instruction to the advocate
- Research alternatives and provide information to clients to enable them to make informed decisions
- Agree action plans with clients wherever possible
- Assist clients to implement their action plan, including liaising with relevant agencies
- Assist clients to understand and exercise their rights to appeal under relevant legislation, to challenge decision makers, and to make referrals to solicitors where appropriate
- Communicate effectively with clients with diverse needs, and with professionals at all levels, including working with signers, interpreters and communications aids
- Create and maintain comprehensive client and service provision records, using information technology and other systems
- Provide verbal and written reports to professionals where this is required
- Provide services in accordance with all relevant quality standards
- Contribute to ensuring that service performance standards and targets are met
- Identify and report evidence to support social policy campaigns, participate in such campaigns

Advocacy support

The advocate may, subject to their skills and experience, and subject to the needs of the service be required to:

- Supervise other advocates and volunteer advocates, including advocacy session supervision, case checking and independent file reviews
- Support and develop volunteers

Professional learning and development

The advocate is required to undertake learning and development including:

- Keeping up to date with legislation and case law
- Keeping up to date with policies and procedures
- Attending internal and external training
- Obtaining and maintaining accreditation for specialist practice

Person specification

This post requires a high level of ability in understanding, analysis and the resolution of issues. It is **essential that the worker has previous significant experience of working with people with acute mental health needs, brain injury, learning disability or adults who lack capacity to take specific decisions, either in a paid or unpaid capacity.**

Knowledge

- Equality and diversity, especially in relation to our client groups
- Issues affecting our client groups

Skills

Applicants will be expected:

- to have excellent listening, verbal, written and presentation communication skills
- to communicate well with clients, colleagues and other agencies
- to work in partnership in multi-professional and multi-agency settings
- to utilise case recording and other information systems that support advocacy provision
- to undertake analysis and research to support the formulation of action plans to meet clients' needs
- to represent clients when necessary, and where appropriate to challenge decision makers
- to supervise advocacy sessions, and undertake case checking and independent file reviews
- to support and empower clients at all times
- to work on your own initiative, plan and manage the workload and keep clear, accurate records to required standards
- to use a computer, including databases, internet and email systems. An understanding of Google Drive and applications is desirable

Aptitude

Commitment to

- The goals and values of Citizens Advice Sheffield
- The principles of the Advocacy Charter
- Working flexibly and to adapting to changing needs and priorities
- Team Working

- Delivery of Service performance standards
- Personal learning and professional development
- Equal opportunities and valuing diversity

Qualifications, training and accreditation

- Essential: Ability and willingness to achieve and complete level 4 of the City & Guilds accredited National Advocacy Qualification, and any additional training relevant to the role
- Desirable: To have achieved the National Advocacy Qualification

Appointment is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.