

# Do you need an Independent Mental Health Advocate?

Easy read



**A member of staff or a carer can support you to read this booklet. They will be able to answer any questions that you have.**



## What is an advocate?



Sometimes it can be difficult for people to speak up for themselves.

An advocate is somebody who can work with you to help you have your say about things.

## What is an Independent Mental Health Advocate?



There is a law called the Mental Health Act which says how people with a mental health condition should be treated.

This includes:

- When a person is made to stay in a mental health hospital
- What treatment people should receive



It is important that when people are being treated for their mental health that they get the best care possible and that their voice is heard.

That is why people can have the support of a specially trained advocate called an Independent Mental Health Advocate.



An Independent Mental Health Advocate will:

- Only work with you around your care and treatment under the Mental Health Act
- Help you to understand your rights and support you when you are making **your** decisions.

## Some of the reasons why you might need and want an Independent Mental Health Advocate:



When you are made to go to a mental health hospital for your own safety and/or the safety of other people. This is called being Sectioned.



When you leave the mental health hospital there are rules about how you should be supported in the community so that you and other people are kept safe. The plan to support you when you leave the hospital is called a Community Treatment Order.



If you are under 18 and you are being considered for a special treatment called Electroconvulsive Therapy. This is where carefully applied amounts of electricity are used to change the way the brain thinks about things. One way it is used is to help people who have very bad depression and suicidal thoughts to change how they think.

## What will an Independent Mental Health Advocate do for me?



By helping you to understand what is happening an Independent Mental Health Advocate supports you to make your own choices and decisions.

They also help you to speak up and have your views listened to at meetings or when the doctors or nurses are visiting you on the hospital ward.

An advocate can also help in tribunals and managers hearings. An advocate can help you to challenge a section.

The can also help you to get the right help when you leave hospital.





Remember they help you decide what you want to do. They will act on **your** instructions.

## What else do I need to know?



An Independent Mental Health Advocate works for you. They do not work for the hospital or mental health services. This is why they are called 'independent'.



It is free to have an Independent Mental Health Advocate.

Your Independent Mental Health Advocate will only share information with other people if you agree or if there is a good reason to.



You can get support from a solicitor. Independent Mental Health Advocates do not give legal advice. They can help you to get advice about the law if you need it.



It is up to you to decide if you want to have an Independent Mental Health Advocate. You can change your mind at any time.

## How do I get an Independent Mental Health Advocate?



The staff in the mental health services you use can give you the information and a leaflet.



You or your family can ask for an Independent Mental Health Advocate for you.

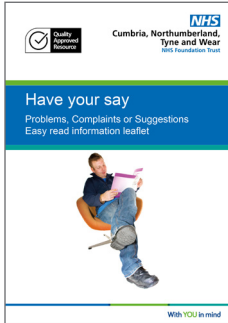


An Independent Mental Health Advocate can come and talk to you about what they do and answer any of your questions.



Contact details for your local Independent Mental Health Advocacy services are on this page on our website: [www.cntw.nhs.uk/imha](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/imha)

# Problems, complaints or suggestions



Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust has a complaints policy. We will give you a leaflet about how to make a complaint.

If you think that we could improve our service then please let a nurse know your idea.

**Easy Read version made  
by Skills for People**



Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 246 7288

Published by the Patient Information Centre

2024 Copyright, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust

Ref, PIC/807/1124 November 2024 V8

[www.cntw.nhs.uk](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk) Tel: 0191 246 7288

Review date 2027

Find us on social media, search for CNTW