

# Self Advocacy



## A Guide to help you develop skills to Self Advocate

If you want more information after reading this pack please contact Advocacy in Slough Referrals - Referrals Line:

- Telephone – 01753 415299
- Text/SMS 07713 711999
- Email: [info@advocacyinlough.org.uk](mailto:info@advocacyinlough.org.uk)



Registered Charity: 1156963 Company Limited by Guarantee: 8915239  
Surrey Disabled People's Partnership (SDPP) Lead Provider of Advocacy in Slough



## **Introduction**

This pack is provided by Advocacy in Slough and provides you with:

- Information about what Self Advocacy is, and the benefits of using it to help resolve issues that you are having and to help you become a more confident person
- Useful information about what you can do to Self Advocate and examples of when it can be used to help you get what you need

## **How to recognise someone who is able to Self Advocate**

This is someone who has learnt how to:

- Understand about their rights
- Speak up for themselves and be heard
- Take control and make decisions about their own life
- Access the information they need

## **Benefits and how it can be used**

Self Advocacy can be a useful tool to help yourself and others, especially if you are a vulnerable person and receiving services from social care or health. You may be in a Care Home, Supported Living, Day Centre, Hospital. Knowing what Self Advocacy is and being able to use the tools within this guide can improve your ability to communicate with others about what's important to you and can help you take more control over issues affecting your life, health and wellbeing.

If you are a provider of services, Information within this guide is a useful tool to make available to service users. You will understand the need for those using your service to be able to say what's important/troubling them so issues can be resolved. For various reasons, like lack of time, trust of others, lack of confidence, the 'voice' of users of services are not always heard.

Knowing how to Self Advocate can often help provide someone with the confidence to speak up and make decisions for themselves. We know from clients that have received 1-1 support from a Professional Advocate that having someone 'on their side' makes it so much easier to cope with issues and deal with difficulties in the future. Advocates who work with vulnerable adults 'empower' those they work with to Advocate for themselves.

See feedback below.

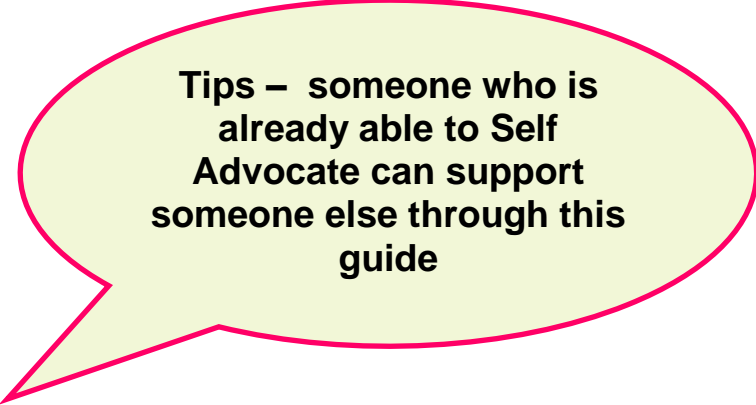
## Feedback 1

- *I know you say that it's your job, but you make it more than 'just a job' The passion you have for helping people and the empathy you show towards people who are in desperate need of someone on their side is outstanding. You have brought me comfort when I felt things were just too much, you have made the others see that I am more than just a number. So, once again, huge gratitude and thanks to you. I feel able to deal with problems that affect me myself.*

## Feedback 2

- *Even though my situation is still ongoing, I just wanted you to know how grateful I am for everything you have done for me. You have gone that extra mile every time we have met and spoken and despite services always turning their back on us you have helped me by being a great, in fact, a huge help every step of this awful journey. I don't know what I would have done without you and your knowledge, kindness and strength, as this has helped us carry on. You are truly an ambassador for Slough Advocacy. I feel stronger and happier in myself.*

## Step 1



**Tips – someone who is already able to Self Advocate can support someone else through this guide**

Self Advocates who can support others are likely to display the following:

- Empathy for others
- Takes an interest in other people
- Is able to speak up for themselves
- Can ask for help and support when needed

**Reminders:**

**Think about the people you know and whether there is anyone that could support you to Self Advocate**

## Step 2

**Useful information to help  
someone Self Advocate  
for themselves**

### Communicating with others

Good communication skills will help you to obtain what you want and need, also to resolve issues that are having a bad affect on your life and wellbeing.

You may be receiving services from social care or health, and sometimes struggle to communicate to let others know what you think, feel, need and want.

Examples of when we all need to communicate:

- Face to face with someone
- In groups
- At meetings
- Letterfrom
- Email

it's important to let others know what you want and need, and the best way to communicate with you. For example, speaking without jargon, using text, phone, email. Understanding that body language, such as a simple shake of the head can also communicate feelings.

Listening is an important skill. Listening well will help build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding and reduce frustration or distress.

Letting others know you don't understand something can sometimes be resolved by asking for the information to be explained again or in a different way. Repeating back what someone has said helps to make sure you understand.

#### Reminders:

- **Think about what you want to say**
- **Practise beforehand**
- **Keep it simple – focus on what's important to you**
- **Take your time**
- **Listen**
- **Ask again if you don't understand something**

## **Goals and Time keeping**

When meeting someone or attending a meeting, knowing what you want your goal to be will increase your chances of 'being heard' and obtaining what you need.

Time keeping is also useful to focus on. It's not just about making sure you and others are on time. It is also knowing:

- How much time there is to discuss your problem/issue
- How much time it will take to discuss each issue
- Working out if/when a break is needed during the meeting
- What help you may need keeping the discussion on track to avoid unnecessary conversation

### **Reminders:**

- **What's your goal**
- **Time keeping**
- **Keeping things on track**

## **Negotiation**

Negotiation is about trying to get the best outcome for yourself or another person. It's about working with someone else, that could be someone who is delivering a service to agree what's possible and is agreeable to both parties. Being able to negotiate can make the difference between achieving your goal and not achieving it.

Things which help when negotiating:

- Making a list of what you need/want, with the most important at the top
- Anything that can be changed or done differently
- The impact on you if it's not possible to get everything that you want
- Ask questions about things which are not clear
- If not everything can be agreed, what's an acceptable offer and what's not
- Only agree if what you are offered is right

It's important to recognise that it's not always possible to achieve what's wanted in a negotiation.

### **Reminders:**

- **What's your goal**
- **What's an acceptable offer**
- **Only agree if what you are offered is right**

## **Self Confidence and Assertiveness**

When you are self confident you trust in your own abilities, qualities, and judgement. Confident people behave in an 'Assertive' way which means they are able to put their point across without upsetting other people or getting upset themselves. This is very hard to do when you have something important to say that others may not agree with. Assertive people are able to:

- Give an opinion or say how they feel
- Ask for what they want or need
- Disagree respectfully
- Offer ideas and suggestions
- Say no without feeling guilty
- Speak up for someone else

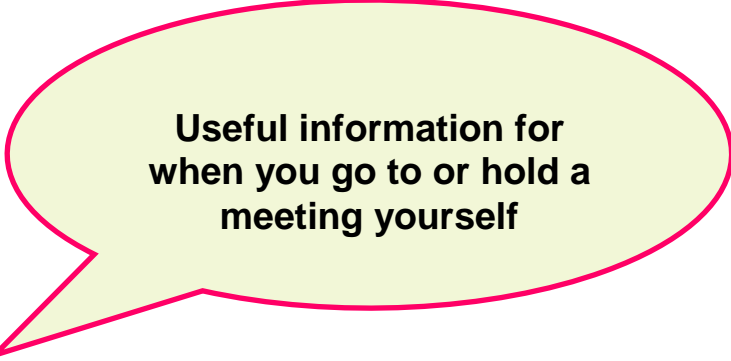
It's very hard to control your emotions when there is something important to discuss with someone and you don't know whether they will agree. Keeping your emotions in check ensures that the focus is on what you say. Things that will help you are:

- Practise what you want to say with someone you trust, saying what you want, how you feel, saying no and that you disagree
- Practise listening to someone else
- Keep what you say simple
- Keep calm yourself and remind others to keep calm
- Don't rush
- Let others speak without interrupting
- If you are feeling angry or upset ask to take a break

### **Reminders:**

- **Practise what you want to say with someone you trust**
- **Listen to others**
- **Don't rush**

## Step 3



**Useful information for  
when you go to or hold a  
meeting yourself**

### **Information to help you if you are going to a meeting which is about you**

To be well prepared for a meeting it's helpful to find out:

- The purpose of the meeting
- Is there an agenda
- Who will be there
- How long will it last
- Is there any documentation that you need to read beforehand

Also:

- Know what your goal is
- What you want to say
- What you will and won't accept
- What information you need
- Have notes of what you want to say
- If you need someone supporting you at the meeting

Remember any meeting about you, is your meeting. So it needs to be easy for you to understand, clear in what the results are and what you can expect next.

### **How to hold your own meeting**

To help you feel in control of your meeting and confident

- Ensure you invite the people you need to speak with to the meeting
- If someone you need to invite has upset you before, let them know and have someone with you who can support you if you get upset
- Meet where you are comfortable
- Make time for breaks
- Refer to your notes

### **Focus on**

- The most important things about the issue that needs sorting out
- Use short sentences to explain the issue and avoid telling a long story

## How to write notes

Note taking can be a difficult skill to learn. If you write too much you might miss what else is being said, if you write too little, information can be missed.

Try to:

- Use headings
- Write the most important things about the issue that needs sorting out
- Use short sentences to explain the issue and avoid telling a long story

Think about:

- Whether you need someone else to take the notes

## Follow up from a meeting

There may be things that need to be done by you, Professionals or others at the meeting, after the meeting has finished. These are called 'Actions'. If an action is given to someone to complete, it is their responsibility to complete it.

## The Actions from the meeting

They will be sent to all the people at the meeting and will show:

- Who is responsible for the action
- What the action is
- When it needs to be completed

## **Reminders:**

- **Know who is invited to a meeting or who you want to invite**
- **Know what you want to say**
- **Have someone with you to support you if needed**
- **Be calm**
- **Follow up on any actions**



**Registered Charity: 1156963 Company Limited by Guarantee: 8915239**  
Surrey Disabled People's Partnership (SDPP) Lead Provider of Advocacy in Slough





