

Heritage Care at Home Ltd Advocacy Policy

Policy reviewed and valid from 01/01/20

Introduction

These Guidelines have been devised to enable all staff working at Heritage care at Home Ltd to understand what is meant by advocacy within Community Care and to be aware of their roles and responsibilities as the Customers advocate.

Definition

“Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. Advocates and advocacy schemes work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.”

In the health or social care setting, someone who is acting as an advocate may see their role as:

- To uphold the rights of the patient or customer
- To act in the patient or Customer’s best interests
- To act as an intermediary between the patient or Customer and those providing or seeking to provide services for that person.

Principles of Advocacy: The Role of the Health / Social Care Worker

- The role must be discharged in a non-confrontational atmosphere, which seeks to avoid conflict.
- Advocacy implies the empowerment of the individual; enabling people to take a more active role in planning their future. This may involve the development of self-advocacy, which enhances a person’s ability to speak and act on their own behalf.
- Advocacy is based on a relationship of equality and mutual respect. It should not be confused with campaigning on behalf of a distinct group of people. Pressure groups have an important role in promoting the interests of the group they represent but advocacy concerns itself with the interests of an individual patient or customer.
- The interests of the advocate should never supersede those of the patient or customer.

Advocacy in Action

Examples of advocacy in action include:

- Helping a person select appropriate clothing
- Passing on messages
- Helping a person choose between various treatments – this may include the need to book an interpreter
- Providing support during a major life change, for example moving out of a long stay hospital
- Assist with customers needs recognising different cultures and religions e.g. Hindu, Muslim, Polish, Eastern Europeans etc.

Some of these examples are routine, others represent major changes and challenges for the individual. Each involves an opportunity or a threat to the individual’s choice and ability to make decisions. Some Customers will have difficulty in making decisions. You as the care assistant can develop this ability and build their confidence by encouraging and supporting choice in the day-to-day activities, which most people take for granted. You also need to help the customer learn from the consequences of their decisions.

Self Advocacy

Self-advocacy is a vital component of advocacy. Care Assistants can facilitate this by:

- Teaching assertiveness, social and problem solving skills
- Making information more available and understandable – this may include having information translated
- Arranging meetings and opportunities for customers to discuss issues of their choice – this may include having an interpreter or a specialist advocate present

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Advocacy

One of the main aims of PALS is to provide a 'voice' for patients. This may be as an advocate within the Hospital Trust or to refer to outside advocacy services.

As care assistants, and as demonstrated in these guidelines we all have an advocacy role for our customers.

Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA)

In April 2007, the MCA became the legal framework to protect vulnerable adults who lack capacity. In health, this means staff have a legal duty to comply with the Act when working with patients.

Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) Service

Most Customers who lack capacity will have family, friends, carers etc who are able to support them when making important decisions. However some customers who lack capacity may have family who are unable to support them because of their own medical conditions or no one to support them with major, potentially life changing decisions. The MCA has created IMCA's to represent and support these people

An IMCA will be involved if:

- The decision is about a serious medical treatment provided by the NHS
- It is proposed that the person be moved into long-term care of more than 28 days in a hospital or 8 weeks in a care home
- A long-term move of over 8 weeks in accommodation is being considered
- This can be extended to care reviews and adult protection procedures
- There is no family or friends to represent them.

The IMCA is not involved if the treatment is to be given under the Mental Health Act 1983. Advocacy has become essential to delivery of person centred care and to many customers who are not always able to articulate their needs and concerns. Care Assistants may face difficulties of potential conflict of interest between the needs of the Customer and the care assistants' responsibility to their colleagues or to the company. These dilemmas are not easily resolved but support for individual care assistants is available from their Manager.