



Advice, Information and Advocacy Volunteer Job role and Personal specification

Volunteer role: Advice Information and Advocacy volunteer

Responsible to: Advice, Information and Advocacy (AIA) Manager

Hours: Hours as agreed with AIA Manager

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is helping someone get their views, needs and wishes across to others, to help them secure services and gain their rights. We aim to support isolated individuals on a broad range of issues, and particularly in their contact with service providers on matters relating to their individual needs. We also give information about rights and services so that people can make informed choices and decisions - this could be on virtually any issue.

We deliver this service to individuals by listening, empathising and encouraging them to express their views, by giving them information so that they can make informed choices and by remaining completely independent when liaising or negotiating on their behalf. The central principle of the Advocacy Project is service user empowerment and supporting individuals towards self-advocacy.

As a volunteer advocate what would I be expected to do?

As a volunteer with Avon North Mencap there will be a number of opportunities for involvement:

- **Telephone Advocacy** – dealing with telephone enquiries, giving information and signposting to other services.
- **Individual Advocacy casework**, talking to individuals about their needs, views and wishes, and supporting the user to get these heard in meetings relating to the services they receive. You may be expected to accompany and support users at care plan meetings, possibly in one to one meetings with medical professional, social workers or other people in authority. Work might also include supporting people around housing, benefits and similar issues. As we develop this service you may have one or two “on-going” clients who you would work with over the longer term as well as have the opportunity to do “One-off” work which would only involve a couple of meetings.
- **Drop-in sessions**, people may wish to approach us via a face to face meeting which we will facilitate through drop in sessions at the Hive and other locations across Bristol and south Glos. (as yet to be agreed)

Job Role:

- Work in accordance with Avon North Mencap's principles, policies and Volunteer Handbook.
- Attend initial and ongoing training as required
- Support individuals to access Advice Information and Advocacy Service
- To deal with enquiries from people by staffing the telephone helpline during helpline opening hours
- Record information in line with office procedures
- Participate in the monitoring of the service
- Act as Advocate in line with service demand and office procedures
- Provide administrative support to the Hub

Personal Specification

Attitudes and values

1. Commitment to helping others take control of their lives
2. Non Judgemental attitude
3. Willing to challenge discrimination and prejudice
4. Commitment to equal opportunities practice ie challenging racism, sexism, ageism and disability
5. Commitment to client confidentiality
6. Patience, sense of humour, reliability, commitment, enthusiasm

Skills and experience

1. Experience working with people with learning disabilities
2. Good listening and verbal communication skills
3. Experience of Advocacy, including self advocacy (eg making a complaint) and or supporting someone through a difficult situation.
4. Ability to assist and support people who may be disempowered, vulnerable and distressed.
5. Ability to work in a way which allows people to lead the process rather than taking over
6. Ability to assist and support people to speak up for themselves
7. The ability to separate your own experience from other peoples issues
8. Interest in developing new skills.

Areas of responsibility

1. To meet with clients in their home or other planned venue such as the office, community centre etc..
2. Empower clients to choose the level of support they need
3. Attending meetings and appointments sometimes just as moral support or to speak on a clients behalf depending on what they want
4. Take notes, write letters, find information, provide information, advice or other resources.
5. To seek information and to signpost to other organisations
6. To take part in regular support and supervision and inform the AIA officer if you encounter any difficulties.
7. In the event of the breakdown in the relationship between the volunteer and the client inform the AIA officer ASAP so that the client may be re-matched with another volunteer.
8. To not knowingly place yourself in any situation which may compromise your personal safety.
9. In the event of misconduct by the volunteer their volunteering with Avon-North Mencap will reviewed and if appropriate cease with immediate effect.

DJB – 20 Jan 2015