

Contact details

We hope you are happy with the service you receive from us. If you have any comments or concerns about this, please contact the Advocacy Manager or the Chair of ESAN at the Freepost address below. We always welcome suggestions about how we can improve our service.

Main Office	Hollies Social Centre St Clement's Hospital Foxhall Road Ipswich IP3 8LS Telephone 01473 329671 Email ipswich@esan.org.uk
Bury St Edmunds office	The Coach House 50 Long Brackland Bury St Edmunds IP33 1JH Telephone 01284 765925 Email bury@esan.org.uk
Lowestoft office	42 Alexandra Road Lowestoft NR32 1PJ Telephone 01502 561200 Email lowestoft@esan.org.uk
Freepost address	ESAN Freepost ANG8234 Ipswich IP3 8ZZ
Website	www.esan.org.uk



Providing
Mental Health
Advocacy
Across
Suffolk

About Advocacy

A Guide for Clients

This leaflet sets out what you can expect from an advocate working for ESAN. Our advocacy services are free, and available to anyone with a mental health issue who either lives in, or receives services from, Suffolk. As well as our main office in Ipswich, we have offices in Bury St Edmunds serving the west of the county, and in Lowestoft serving the Waveney area. Contact details are found at the end of the leaflet.

ESAN is a registered charity, run by a Management Committee. Some of its members are or have been mental health service users. The Committee ensures that ESAN's advocates are properly trained, supervised and supported, so that they can offer you a competent and professional service.

What is advocacy?

Sometimes it can be difficult to get your concerns across to another person, and feel confident that you are being taken seriously.

- You may not feel able to speak up for yourself;
- You may not know your rights or the options that are open to you;
- The other person may be unable or unwilling to listen to you.

Advocacy can help you to express your concerns so that the other person hears what you have to say.

How does advocacy work?

Your advocate will take time to listen to you and gather the facts. He or she will respect your views and concerns, and provide you with any information you need so that you can work out what you'd like to say or do. In all this the most important thing is what you want to happen, not what your advocate thinks is best.

Your advocate will work with you for as long as it takes to resolve your concerns. You can of course suspend or stop the advocacy work at any time.

Advocates prefer to meet clients in one of ESAN's offices, or in the hospital if you are an in-patient. They can meet you elsewhere by arrangement, with due regard for safety.

What can an advocate do?

Your advocate may contact someone on your behalf, either by telephone or letter. He or she may go to an appointment or a meeting with you. If you prefer, the advocate will attend a meeting on your behalf. The advocate will take care to ensure that he or she knows what you want to say or do, so that your voice is heard.

Advocates sometimes do nothing more than provide a listening ear or moral support. That proves to be enough to help a person to work out what they want to say or do, so that they can go on to speak up for themselves. This is called 'self advocacy', and it is the goal of all advocacy work.

How is advocacy different from other forms of help?

Advocacy has a lot in common with other forms of help, such as advice or counselling, support work or befriending. However there are some important differences:

- Your advocate won't give you legal or benefits advice. If you need this, we will help you to get in touch with those who provide it;

- Your advocate won't act as a counsellor. Advocacy doesn't concentrate on feelings (though these are often very important), but on practical action;
- Your advocate won't be like a befriender (though we always try to be friendly!) or support worker. Our work is focussed on helping you to get your particular concerns heard.

How confidential is advocacy?

ESAN's Confidentiality Policy is available for you to read at any of our offices. It makes the following points clear:

- You can see any information about you that ESAN keeps in your file at any time. You only need to ask;
- Your advocate will share with you any information he or she receives about you from someone else, and will discourage people from revealing anything about you that they don't want you to hear;
- ESAN will not share any information about you without your consent. The exception is any suggestion that you are a danger to yourself, or that you are putting someone else at risk. Your advocate will then encourage you to share this yourself. Only if this proves impossible will he or she take things further. In ESAN's experience, these instances are very rare.

How independent is ESAN?

ESAN is a charity mainly funded by the NHS and Suffolk County Council to provide an independent advocacy service. But our advocates do not work for either of these organisations. You can be confident that your advocate's loyalty to you is not compromised by relationships with other professionals.

What can advocacy do about prejudice and discrimination?

People from minority communities often experience prejudice and discrimination, which can have an adverse effect on their mental health. ESAN seeks to challenge this through the support our advocates provide, and by working for services to be delivered in a person centred and culturally sensitive way. We have a specialist advocate who leads our work in this area. Let us know if you would like to meet with her.

What happens if advocacy doesn't work?

Advocacy cannot guarantee to help you to get everything you want. But you can expect your advocate to work with you in a responsible way, to ensure that your concerns are heard. If, however, you feel that your advocate has not been as helpful as you had hoped, write to the Advocacy Manager at the freepost address below.