

How independent is ESAN?

ESAN is mainly funded by the NHS and Suffolk County Council through the Pooled Budget to provide an independent advocacy service. Because our advocates do not work for either of these organisations, their loyalty to clients is not compromised by relationships with other professionals.

How can people access advocacy?

Individuals are encouraged to refer themselves. We accept referrals from professionals, family members or others with the client's consent.

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 Professionals

ESAN was established in 1992, and currently provides free information, guidance and support for people with mental health difficulties who either live in, or receive services from, Suffolk. Our main office is in Ipswich, and we also have offices in Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft. Contact details are found at the end of this leaflet.

ESAN is a registered charity and a user-led organisation run by a Management Committee. Some of its members are or have been mental health service users. Our advocacy team includes paid and volunteer staff, all of whom are trained and supervised to a high standard.

By drawing on its work with individuals, ESAN seeks to influence the provision of mental health services, and our staff are involved in a number of projects and working groups across the county.

What is advocacy?

People with mental health problems sometimes lack the confidence or skills to speak up for themselves. Professionals, family members and others may be unable or unwilling to hear what they are saying, leaving them feeling confused, frustrated or angry. Advocacy helps people to overcome these obstacles and communicate their concerns.

How does advocacy work?

Advocacy is a process rather than a one-off event, and it includes a number of elements:

- gathering information about the client's concerns;
- helping the client to understand the situation that is causing concern;
- exploring the client's options to help him/her decide on a course of action;
- supporting the client in the choices he/she makes.

Throughout the process, the advocate takes care to listen to the client, feed back information to him/her and review outcomes.

The advocacy process is client-led from start to finish, and advocates do not set out to dictate its course. They encourage clients to take responsibility for their lives and speak up for themselves wherever possible. Advocates do not encourage anyone to believe that they should always get what they want. They help their clients to ask their own questions and put their views across, not least so that they can understand what is going on in their lives.

Advocacy does not set out to be confrontational. Advocates try to cooperate as much as possible with all who have their clients' interests at heart. Sometimes it is necessary to challenge those who claim to be acting in a client's best interests. But this is always done from the client's, not the advocate's, perspective.

What do advocates do?

Advocates support clients in a variety of ways:

- by providing them with a wide range of information;
- by contacting someone on behalf of a client, either by telephone or letter;
- by attending appointments, ward rounds, CPA reviews, tribunals and other meetings with clients;
- by representing clients at these meetings.

In all this advocates take care to ensure that they know what their clients want to say or do, so that the client's voice, rather than the advocate's, is heard.

How confidential is advocacy?

ESAN's Confidentiality Policy makes the following points clear:

- Clients can see any information about them held by ESAN
- Professionals should be aware that when they are speaking to an advocate, it is as if they are speaking to the client. Professionals should therefore be careful what they discuss about clients with advocates
- ESAN will not pass on any information about clients without their consent. The exception is any suggestion that a client is a danger to him/herself or others. An advocate would then encourage a client to share this with the appropriate person. Only if this proves impossible will the advocate take things further. In ESAN's experience, these instances are very rare.

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.