

Advocacy and Advice Factsheet

Introduction

We have legal powers to investigate complaints made about a public body. However, we are independent and impartial and cannot advise you about the grounds of your complaint or act on your behalf when you make a complaint.

Some people can benefit from advice on how to make a complaint, assistance in making their complaint, or, in some cases, a complainant may want someone to make a complaint on their behalf.

Advisory services

There are number of advisory services. Some offer general advice on a range of subjects, for example, Citizens Advice Wales, and some are specific to the subject you are complaining about, for example, Planning Aid Wales.

Advisory services may offer telephone advice or have an office where you can meet to discuss your concerns. They may be able to give you information about procedures or information about legal matters that relate to your concerns.

Advocacy services

An advocate is someone who can assist a complainant in making a complaint or understanding the complaints process. There are a number of different advocacy bodies which offer a range of different services. Some bodies may offer a telephone advisory service; some may meet with you to discuss your complaint and offer you advice on how to present your complaint. Other bodies may help you make your complaint.

There are two types of advocacy service. The first type of service will advocate for anyone who is making a certain type of complaint, for example, a complaint against a Local Health Board. The other type of service is one which acts on behalf of people within groups, for example, people with learning disabilities or mental health problems.

What we can do

We may be able to provide you with contact details for relevant advisory or advocacy services.

What we cannot do

We cannot act as a go-between for you and an advisory or advocacy service.

Issues to bear in mind

Many “third sector organisations” (non-profit/ voluntary/ charitable groups) offer advice and support to those that need their services. If you are already receiving the services of a third sector organisation, you may wish to contact it to ask if it has an advocacy service.

Further information

The following are examples of advice/advocacy services which may be able to help:

Citizens Advice Wales is an advisory service for members of the public in Wales. It may assist you in finding an appropriate advocacy service. You can contact them by phone on 03444 772 020 or on the internet <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Community Health Council (CHC) advocates can help you make a complaint about the actions of a GP, dentist, pharmacist or a Health Board. Each Health Board in Wales is linked to a CHC. The Board of Community Health Councils can provide you with contact details for your local CHC contact by phone on 0845 644 7814 or on the internet www.wales.nhs.uk

Planning Aid Wales can provide advice on the planning system in Wales. Contact by phone on 02920 625 004 or on the internet www.planningaidwales.org.uk

MIND Cymru can provide help and advice on a range of mental health issues and may be able to direct you to an appropriate advocacy service. Contact by phone on 029 2039 5123 or on the internet

www.mind.org.uk

Gingerbread offers advice and support to single parents. It may be able to provide information about appropriate advocacy services. Contact by phone 0808 802 0925 or on the internet www.gingerbread.org.uk

Advocacy Matters Wales is a charity which helps adults with learning disabilities or Aspergers syndrome. Contact by phone 02920 233 733 or on the internet www.advocacymatterswales.co.uk

A more complete list of organisations can be found on our website, on the 'Making A Complaint' tab under 'Advocacy & Advice Bodies'

Examples of cases that we have looked at can be found on our website, under the 'Publications' tab on the '[Our Findings](#)' page.

Contact us

If you would like more information, please [contact us](#) on 0300 790 0203 or ask@ombudsman.wales

Also available in Welsh.

This document is available in Welsh and English. You can write to us in Welsh and we will reply in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding.

ask@ombudsman.wales

0300 790 0203 Our phone line is open 10am-12:30pm and 1:30pm-4pm Monday – Friday