

5 March 2025

Advocacy

1. I would like a copy of your policy for:

- **Independent advocacy for adults with a learning disability**

The Intellectual Disability Service do not have an advocacy policy but RQIA provide guidance (Attachment 1).

- **Independent advocacy for adults with a mental health condition**

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Mental Health Service do not have a policy for advocacy services. They monitor the contract agreement of each provider. Each provider sends in monthly returns for their service. The Trust and the organisation have an annual review of the service provided by the organisation under the contract, with the review taking place in the last quarter of each financial year under the terms of this contract. This joint review shall cover all aspects of the working contract.

- **Independent advocacy for adults with dementia**

Belfast Trust do not have an advocacy policy but the service have a contract with Alzheimer's Society to deliver advocacy services.

Attached is the Welcome Guide for Belfast Advocacy (Attachment 2) and a Service Specification for Advocacy (Attachment 3). The specification is currently under review and will be altered accordingly.

If you do not have a policy, then provide what document you use to guide and monitor the independent advocacy process.

2. Names of all organisations you are in contract with for independent advocacy.

- a. Names of organisations with whom the Trust currently hold a contract for the provision of independent advocacy only.

Name of Provider
Praxis Care
Mind Wise New Vision
Irish Advocacy Network Ltd
Inspire Wellbeing
Alzheimer's Society

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- b. Names of organisations with whom the Trust currently hold a contract for the provision of independent advocacy as well as other services.

Name of Provider
Voice of Young People in Care
Engage with Age
Cause NI
Bryson Care
Advice Space
East Belfast Independent Advice Centre
Bryson Care

3. Total payments to each organisation above for each year since 2025?

- a. For organisations which hold/held a contract for the provision of independent advocacy only.

Name of Provider	1 st April 2020 – 31 st March 2021	1 st April 2021 – 31 st March 2022	1 st April 2022 – 31 st March 2023	1 st April 2023 – 31 st March 2024	1 st April 2024 – 31 st March 2025
Praxis Care	£30,091.38	£30,091.38	£39,592.18	£41,587.63	£43,280.25
Mind Wise New Vision	£32,255.54	£32,255.54	£33,526.41	£35,216.14	£36,649.44
Irish Advocacy Network Ltd	£135,364.50	£135,364.50	£140,697.86	£147,789.03	£153,804.04
Inspire Wellbeing	£48,031.99	£48,031.99	£36,513.34	£38,353.61	£39,914.60
Alzheimer's Society	£32,480.98	£32,480.98	£33,760.73	£35,462.27	£36,905.58
TOTAL VALUE	£278,224.39	£278,224.39	£284,090.52	£298,408.68	£310,553.91

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- b. For organisations which hold/held a contract for the provision of independent advocacy as well as other services. **The payments below are inclusive of advocacy and other service provision delivered under each contract.**

Name of Provider	1 st April 2020 – 31 st March 2021	1 st April 2021 – 31 st March 2022	1 st April 2022 – 31 st March 2023	1 st April 2023 – 31 st March 2024	1 st April 2024 – 31 st March 2025
Voice of Young People in Care	£54,666.12	£54,666.12	£56,819.97	£58,683.70	£62,112.83
Engage with Age	£49,566.27	£49,566.27	£51,519.18	£54,115.75	£56,318.26
Cause NI	£65,921.94	£65,921.94	£179,424.96	£188,467.98	£196,138.61
Bryson Care	£128,816.61	£128,816.61	£142,118.98	£149,281.78	£155,357.55
Advice Space	£101,989.38	£101,989.38	£106,007.76	£39,862.43	£115,882.52
East Belfast Independent Advice Centre	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£103,940.00	£109,178.58	£113,662.15
TOTAL VALUE	£500,960.32	£500,960.32	£639,830.85	£559,590.22	£699,471.92

4. Does the Health Trust employees have to get consent from family of the service user before appointing an independent advocate?

Adults with Dementia Service

When a person lacks capacity, the Alzheimer’s Society advocate gets proxy consent from the person referring them, such as social worker or family member, and the service record that under the consent part on their internal records system (CRS). Quite often, a social worker will have talked to the service user, prior to referral, but it is not always the case.

If the service user has the capacity to provide consent themselves, they will complete the consent form (Attachment 4) as long as they are able to, or the advocate will record that they have gained verbal consent from them.

Each time the advocate speaks to a service user, they ensure the user consents to their involvement on that day and they include it in their notes, for example: *“Advocate visited Betty on ward, explained purpose of visit and asked if she was happy for advocate to speak with her today. Betty confirmed she was happy to continue”*.

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Mental Health Services

Belfast Trust's Mental Health staff promote and encourage service users and carers to use independent advocacy services, when required.

Consent from the family of a service user is not required as service users and carers can self-refer. This promotes self-empowerment and independence.

Intellectual Disability

Regarding obtaining consent, this is dependent on the service user's capacity and best interests

Where a service user is able to give informed consent, they are consulted.

Where a service user is unable to give consent, the views of their next of kin are heard as to whether they are best placed to undertake the advocacy role and decision-making. Appointment is based on the best interests of the service user.

5. What legal status does an independent advocate have with they are appointed and paid by a Health Trust?

Adults with Dementia Service

Advocates do not have any legal status.

An advocate is an individual engaged by the Alzheimer's Society to provide an independent advocacy service to the person with dementia and not to either the Trust or the Alzheimer's Society.

Mental Health Services

Currently there is no regulatory framework for advocacy services.

Belfast Trust's Mental Health services value the importance of independent advocacy in supporting people to access appropriate services, allowing them to be part of the decision making process in their own wellbeing.

Intellectual Disability

The legal status is in the form of a contract outlined in Service Level Agreement with the Health Trust. In that contract, performance and assurance indicators are outlined. The advocates are not appointed individually by Health and Social Care Trusts but via a provider or private company.