

## **The Advocacy Charter**

The Advocacy Charter was published in July 2002 and defines and promotes key advocacy principles. This charter is the basis for Healthwatch Shropshire's Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service.

### **Definition of advocacy:**

'Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. Advocates and advocacy schemes work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.'

(Action for Advocacy)

### **The principles:**

#### **Clarity of purpose**

The advocacy scheme will have clearly stated aims and objectives and be able to demonstrate how it meets the principles contained in this Charter. Advocacy schemes will ensure that the people they advocate for, service providers and funding agencies have information on the scope and limitations of the schemes' role.

#### **Independence**

The advocacy scheme will be structurally independent from statutory organisations and preferably from all service provider agencies. The advocacy scheme will be as free from conflict of interest as possible both in design and operation, and actively seek to reduce conflicting interests.

#### **Putting People First**

The advocacy scheme will ensure that the wishes and interests of the people they advocate for direct advocates' work. Advocates should be non-judgemental and respectful of peoples' needs, views and experiences. Advocates will ensure that information concerning the people they advocate for is shared with these individuals.

## **Empowerment**

The advocacy scheme will support self-advocacy and empowerment through its work. People who use the scheme should have a say in the level of involvement and style of advocacy support they want. Schemes will ensure that people who want to, can influence and be involved in the running and management of the scheme.

## **Equal Opportunity**

The advocacy scheme will have a written equal opportunities policy that recognises the need to be pro-active in tackling all forms of inequality, discrimination and social exclusion. The scheme will have in place systems for the fair and equitable allocation of advocates' time.

## **Accessibility**

Advocacy will be provided free of charge to eligible people. The advocacy scheme will aim to ensure that its premises, policies, procedures and publicity materials promote access for the whole community.

## **Accountability**

The advocacy scheme will have in place systems for the effective monitoring and evaluation of its work. All those who use the scheme will have a named advocate and a means of contacting them.

## **Supporting Advocates**

The advocacy scheme will ensure advocates are prepared, trained and supported in their role and provided with opportunities to develop their skills and experience.

## **Confidentiality**

The advocacy scheme will use Healthwatch Shropshire's policy on confidentiality, stating that information about a person using the scheme is confidential to the scheme and any circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached.

## **Complaints**

The advocacy scheme will use Healthwatch Shropshire's written policy describing how to make complaints or give feedback about the scheme or individual advocates. Where necessary, the scheme will use its services to access external independent support to make or pursue a complaint.

Developed as a set of core principles for advocacy, the Charter is designed:

- To inform advocacy practice and training.
- To raise awareness of the value of advocacy.
- As a tool for negotiating with funding and commissioning bodies.
- As a quality assurance mechanism.