

Delivering best practice in commissioning advocacy service.

When services are commissioned the key measure is the quality of the service provided. For this reason a recognised measure of this such as the Action for Advocacy Quality Performance Mark is to be welcomed. It has an important role in ensuring the quality of advocacy services and promoting confidence for commissioners.

Sutton Voice

In April 2009 the London Borough of Sutton and Sutton and Merton NHS jointly commissioned Sutton Voice. This is an advocacy service for older people.

- Consultation – advocacy for older people by older people
- Not one size fits all. Need a mix of paid advocacy and peer advocacy – increasing the supply of advocates in the Borough
- Service provision via consortium between age concern and advocacy partners.
- Joint Commissioning Health and Social Care

What are commissioners seeking?

- Support for the most vulnerable people – those with complex health and social care needs.
- Evidence of improved outcomes – choice, control, safety and dignity are very abstract concepts that are made up of specific experiences such as “I am now able to have the carers to visit when I want them to”.
- Evidence of how providers will support personalisation and Transforming Social Care Agenda. How will people with Direct Payments purchase advocacy?
- Learning from advocacy – what are the key issues that are emerging ie safeguarding and direct payments?

Top tips for best practice in commissioning advocacy services:

- Advocacy is something that people feel very passionate about and are very committed to. It is much easier to work with this than something people don't care about.
- There are external sources of support such as Older Peoples Advocacy Alliance (www.opaal.org.uk). The Improvement and Development Agency publication “Transforming adult social care: access to information, advice and advocacy” (www.idea.gov.uk)
- Users and carers are clear about what they want. Engage with a wide range of users and carers and potential users and carers. The challenge is how to address these aspirations.
- Third sector and service users – Provided their direct experiences of contacting or getting support from our services.

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