

How to become a Volunteer Advocate

Do you ... enjoy meeting people?

Are you ... a good listener?

If you are looking for a chance to volunteer that is challenging and rewarding look no further

How can you help?

You will be fully trained in the skills you will need to become an advocate. After training you will be ready to start, with support from a member of staff. You and the staff member will meet a client who you will support to deal with the issues they are facing.

You can do this by:

- attending meetings with your client
- finding your client useful information
- helping them to write letters

You will be supported by a member of Carers Together Advocacy Service staff. They will:

- come with you to meet your client at first (this may not be necessary when you become more experienced)
- be available to consult and discuss any problems, queries, information etc
- meet with you regularly to ensure you have support and access to information you may need
- ensure you will have access to ongoing training.

Clients are matched to volunteers according to the time commitment they can make.

Who Volunteers?

We look for

- volunteers who have time available to work with people on a one-to-one basis.
- friendly people with good listening skills.
- people who have experienced health and social services themselves, but this is not essential.
- volunteers to help people have their say and make sure their views are heard

We will give you full training to work with people to help them explore their options and make their own choices. It is essential that volunteer advocates do not make decisions for the person they are supporting but help them to make their own decisions.

What Volunteer Advocates say

'It is difficult to explain what I feel about being a volunteer advocate. I find it both challenging and rewarding. I feel I get a vast range of different people to work with as their advocate. This means that I get a wide variety of experience and that with each new client the work is different.

I think advocacy is good because when people talk to their advocate, they often seem to think about their issue and set it out clearly in their own mind. Then, when they want to put their views forward to professionals, they feel able to speak for themselves with their advocate with them for support. This demonstrates to me the way that advocacy helps people to become 'self-advocates', but when they feel they need someone to speak on their behalf we can do this for them too.

I also enjoy the training provided. I believe that the service takes training very seriously, and as a result, we get excellent training from a range of speakers. I would miss being a volunteer advocate if I were to give it up!