



advocacy services  
in staffordshire

# The Watching Brief

Working with advocates using Non-Instructed Advocacy

**Information for professionals and care givers**



making advocacy a right not a privilege

# Regular advocacy

An advocate listens to their partner, finds information for them, and represents their views as if they were their own. Advocates work to the instruction of their advocacy partner.

## Non-Instructed Advocacy (NIA)

NIA is used when a person is unable to communicate their wishes and views to an advocate. There is no instruction.

### The core of NIA

The core of NIA is the use of the Watching Brief (WB), a process by which an advocate generates questions on behalf of their advocacy partner. In essence, the advocate asks questions that any reasonable person would have asked in the same circumstances.

For any proposal, planned or actual, the advocate looks at how it impacts on the life of the advocacy partner. The advocate can break down the proposal in relation to each of the 8 domains that constitute the WB and ascertain, through questioning, whether it impacts positively or negatively on the life of the advocacy partner.

# The 8 Domains of the Watching Brief

- **Skills & abilities** developing and using your skills to be as independent as possible
- **Community presence** using, being involved with and contributing to the local community
- **Continuity** having a past, present and future with key people and events in your life
- **Choice & influence** influencing and making choices about your own life
- **Individuality** being a unique and distinctive person in your own right
- **Status & respect** being held in esteem and valued for who you are
- **Partnerships & relationships** having meaningful contact with other people
- **Well-being** feeling physically and psychologically well

Many people would view these concepts as ordinary life principles and as such they constitute what we all believe to be the basic rights we enjoy as a citizen.

# The right questions

The advocate is required to construct the questions that correspond to the unique nature of their advocacy partner.

In order to ask appropriate questions, the advocate is required to know about their partner and their relationship to their own world.

## Knowing your advocacy partner

The advocate must:

- interact with their partner and get to know them as best they can. Find out if there are any means that their partner uses to tell others about their likes and dislikes.
- find out as much as they can about their partner's life, their history, their likes, their dislikes, their preferences.
- find out any previously expressed preferences.
- examine the legislation/strategies/protocols that are relevant to their partner's life.
- take into account their partner's specific impairments and cultural, family, historical and ethnic background.

## and then

It is only once the advocate has undertaken all this that they are in a position to construct questions that marry up everything they know about their partner with the 8 domains of the WB.

The fundamental question that underpins everything in the WB is

**‘what’s in it for my advocacy partner?’**



## Summary

In a NIA partnership, it's the duty of the advocate to probe, to question and ensure that questions about the impact of any proposal are voiced and brought to the attention of the people who are making decisions about their advocacy partner.

The advocate plays no part in determining the care received by the advocacy partner and is not a decision maker.

# About ASIST

Asist was established in 1994 and offers all forms of one to one advocacy across the County of Staffordshire and City of Stoke on Trent. Asist provides a large generic service for anyone with a disability or mental health need, alongside specialist projects including IMHA, IMCA and the REACH group advocacy project.

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