



Niamh
Mental Wellbeing

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*Niamh is a company limited by guarantee
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Niamh Advocacy Service

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Service User Guide

1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (Niamh) is a registered mental health charity which has been providing independent professional advocacy in Northern Ireland since 1990. Being independent ensures that your voice is heard. All Niamh's advocates are professionally qualified and have knowledge of local service provision and relevant legislation. The advocacy service is free to service users.

2. What is Advocacy?

Niamh advocates speak up for you when you feel you are not being heard. We help to support you so that you can express your own views. We help you to make informed choices by providing information and exploring options. Ultimately where possible, we support you to make your own decisions and take control of your own life. Niamh advocates helps you in your recovery journey.

3. When can advocacy be useful?

Advocacy is useful when:

- Other people have more to say about your life than you do.
- Others are making decisions on your behalf without involving yourself.
- You do not feel able to speak up for yourself.
- You are unsure what your rights are.
- When no one is listening to what you have to say.

4. How can I contact an advocate?

You can contact your advocate by phone, email or letter. Please refer to the contact card inside this leaflet.

5. What to expect from your advocate

- Once the advocacy service has received a request for an advocate, your advocate will make contact to offer an initial meeting.
- Your advocate will aim to respond to all referrals within 3 working days of receiving a request.
- When meeting with you, your advocate will aim to meet privately where possible.
- What you have to say to your advocate is kept confidential except in certain circumstances (see no. 6). Your advocate will keep you informed throughout the process.

6. Confidentiality

Niamh treats all information with confidentiality and respect. However, in the following circumstances, Niamh is duty bound to break confidentiality:

- Where a service user threatens to endanger his or her own life.
- Where a service user threatens to harm another person.
- Where a service user expresses intent to carry out an illegal act.
- Where there is reason to believe that a child or young person may be put at risk.

7. How to make a complaint about the advocacy service

If things go wrong and you are unhappy with the advocacy service, we want you to tell us so that we can put things right. You can make a complaint in a number of ways:

- Speak directly to your advocate who will try and resolve things straight away.
- If you are still not satisfied, you may make a formal complaint by contacting Niamh Central Office by letter, telephone or by email at 80 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HE. Tel: 02890 328474 Fax: 02890 234940 Email: p.walker@beaconwellbeing.org
- If things are still not resolved, you may wish to take things further by contacting the Patient Client Council, your local Health Trust or the NI Ombudsman.