

Advocacy Services

-Helping you be heard-

What is advocacy?

Speaking with professionals in the care or health system can sometimes feel intimidating and you may find it difficult to express your views.

If you need support, an independent advocate can help you say what you want, get the information you need and make sure your rights are protected. Advocacy services help people – especially the most vulnerable – to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

All the advocacy services here are free.

An advocate can:

- help you express your opinions
- provide information
- help you understand and explore your choices
- offer practical help, such as writing letters and attending meetings
- make sure the correct procedures are followed.

An independent advocate may be helpful if there is any disagreement between you, your health or social care professionals or even family members about a decision that needs to be made. An independent advocate should represent your wishes without judging or giving a personal opinion.

Your rights to advocacy

Local councils – Lewisham included - must involve people in decisions about their care and support. No matter how complex your needs, they are required by law to help you:

- express your feelings and wishes
- weigh up your options
- make your own decisions.

When you might need an advocate

You might want to have an advocate with you or to speak on your behalf in the following situations:

- during assessments, such as hospital discharge or needs assessments
- when planning or reviewing your care and support
- if there are changes to your services
- if there is an investigation into possible abuse
- when making complaints

You are legally entitled to an advocate in 3 situations.

- Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs) - if you are being assessed or receiving treatment for a mental health condition under the Mental Health Act 1983.
- Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCAs) - if you lack capacity to make certain decisions and there is no-one else (such as a family member or friend) who can support or represent you
- Care and Support Advocates (Care Act) - if you have 'substantial difficulty' in being involved in assessments and decisions about your care and don't have an 'appropriate adult' to support you.

Mental capacity means having the ability to understand, retain and use information in order to make and express decisions about your life. Mental capacity can fluctuate and it must never be assumed that someone lacks mental capacity because that could mean depriving them of their rights.

The national charity POhWER has funding to provide advocacy to Lewisham residents for all three of these groups. Contact them/find out more here:

Tel: 0300 456 2370

Email: pohwer@pohwer.net

Web: <https://www.pohwer.net/lewisham>

Complaints about health services

Healthwatch Lewisham Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy Service can:

- Support you to make your complaint
- Provide you with self-help tools to help you make your complaint
- Listen to your concerns
- Explain the NHS complaints procedure and provide you with information about how best to make your complaint
- Provide an advocate to support you through the complaint should you feel that you are unable to make the complaint yourself
- Signpost you to other services if we are unable to give you the help that you need.

Tel: 020 3886 0196

Email: advocacy@healthwatchlewisham.co.uk

Web: www.healthwatch.co.uk

Learning disabilities

Lewisham Speaking Up (LSUP) help people with learning disabilities to speak up and get their voices heard.

Offering 1-2-1 advocacy service, and self-advocacy service.

- Community Advocacy which focuses on non-statutory issues such as housing, crime, care and support issues.
- Money Management Advocacy which can help people with learning disabilities and/or autism with financial difficulties

Current Self Advocacy support includes:

- Lewisham People's Parliament is their largest self-advocacy forum. It meets four times a year and is focused on a particular theme chosen by people with learning disabilities.
- Weekly Zoom Group is to give people a regular voice about things that are important to them.
- The Big Group is for more independent people with a learning disability who get little or no statutory support. People come together once a month.
- Women's and Men's Groups are gender specific groups Sometimes they have their group on Zoom; sometimes they meet in person.

Tel: 020 8692 1862

Email: info@lsup.org.uk

Web: www.lsup.org.uk

Besson Street Garden – Advice & Form filling

If you are frustrated by a form you have to complete, or if you are not keen to fill in online forms and need some help, we offer a form filling service. Passports, Freedom Pass, benefits applications including PIP, any form you are struggling with, we will give you a helping hand.

They also have an advice service to any resident experiencing a problem affecting their well-being.

Call if you have any questions or to book an appointment.

Where: Besson Street Community Garden, Besson Street, New Cross, London, SE14 5AE

When: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday (13:30 – 15:30)

Tel: 0207 639 7605

Email: jill.mountford@bessonstreet.org.uk

Website: www.bessonstreet.org.uk

Lee Green Lives – Support and Advocacy Service

Get support and advocacy with benefits, housing, and other issues. We offer a professional, confidential service which is delivered by trained staff who have experience of working in social care and mental health. No problem is too big or small

By appointment only. To book please call either **020 7998 1004** or **07706 931 986**

Where: St Peter's Hall, Weigall Road, SE12 8HQ

When: Wednesday 10:30 – 14:30 & Thursday 11:30 – 15:30 – **by appointment only**

Tel: 020 7998 1004

Email: support@lgl.org.uk

Website: www.lgl.org.uk/

Issues with Tenancy – Thamesreach

Lewisham Intensive Housing Advice & Support (IHASS) is a floating support service supporting Lewisham-based people who are at risk of losing their tenancy and prevent homelessness.

They can work with people in a variety of ways to do this including:

- Advocacy support with landlords and family members to prevent homelessness.
- Applying for benefits
- Support to manage rent payments
- Signposting, and referrals to relevant support services.

Please contact for more information

Email: IHASS@thamesreach.org.uk

Website: www.thamesreach.org.uk

Domestic Abuse Advocacy (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates or Independent Gender-Based Violence Advocacy) - Athena

The Athena service, run by Refuge, provides confidential support to those living in Lewisham who are experiencing gender-based violence

It provides the following services, all under one roof:

- One-to-one confidential, non-judgmental, independent support
- A specialist independent gender-based violence advocacy (IGVA) team to support clients at risk of serious harm
- Outreach Support
- A specialist service for 13–21-year-old girls and boys from the age of 16
- Group support
- A volunteer scheme to help break isolation; build social networks and provide support clients regain control of their lives

Phone: 0800 112 4052 (Athena Lewisham) or 0808 2000 247 (Refuge 24/7 Helpline)

Email: lewishamvawg@refuge.org.uk

Website: <https://refuge.org.uk/i-need-help-now/the-athena-gender-based-abuse-service-in-lewisham/>

Sexual Violence Advocacy (Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy) - Rape Crisis South London

Provides support for women and girls who have been raped or sexually abused.

They do this by providing:

- **Advocacy** – Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA) offer specialist support to women and girls aged 13 and over who have survived rape and childhood sexual abuse in South London and who are thinking about reporting to the police or who are currently reporting through the criminal justice system.
- **Counselling** – Specialist counselling for up to a year for women and girls who have been raped or sexually abused. This can be provided, online, over the phone or in person. They have specialised counselling for young people between 13-24.
- **National Free Helpline** - open 24/7 – 0808 500 2222

Phone: 020 8683 3311 (office) or 0808 500 2222 (24/7 Helpline)

Email: info@RapeCrisisSouthLondon.org

Website: www.rapecrisissouthlondon.org

Outreach Service for Gypsy Roma Travellers

The service provides advice, advocacy, information, and support services primarily for Travellers of Irish Heritage and English & European Romany Gypsies. These communities are recognised in law as minority ethnic groups.

The Outreach Service for Gypsy Roma Travellers can also work with other Travellers who may not be from minority ethnic groups including New Travellers, show-people (Circus & Fairground) and people dwelling on the waterways.

Service Provision

- Advice and support on Housing rights, housing benefit, housing and homeless applications.
- Support with welfare applications on all aspects of income related and disability rights.
- Access to health, legal, immigration, employment, education and counselling services.
- Support with Irish passports

Phone: 07494029668

Email: grtproject@lewishamirish.org.uk or francesca@lewishamirish.org.uk

Website: www.lewishamirish.org.uk

Africa Advocacy Foundation (AFF)

Africa Advocacy Foundation (AAF) supports and empowers vulnerable and disadvantaged people. We are a community-led initiative that aims to equip diaspora communities and marginalised people with the tools they need to find better health, safety, prosperity and opportunity to lead fulfilling and happy lives. AAF works with communities both in the UK and overseas who are affected by a range of issues including: sexual and reproductive health, violence against women and girls including Female genital mutilation (FGM) and mental health issues.

AAF mission is to provide practical, social, training and community support to those who are marginalised, disadvantaged, vulnerable, facing violence, living in poverty and in poor health particularly within black migrant communities in the UK.

Tel: 0208 698 4473

Email: info@africadvocacy.org

Web: www.africadvocacy.org/

Advocacy Support for Eastern European People

East European Resource Centre is a charity that provides information, advice, Advocacy and support to people from Central and Eastern Europe.

We support citizens of the EU: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and non-EU: Ukraine, Belarus, Russia.

EERC delivers information, advice and advocacy for disadvantaged Eastern European migrants in need of help to navigate British systems, develop confidence and skills, and improve integration with the British society – including with Welfare, Housing, Immigration, Domestic Violence, and Hate Crime

Phone: 020 8741 1288 (there are various mobile numbers based upon languages spoken – these can be found on their [website](#))

Email: info@eerc.org.uk

Website: www.eerc.org.uk

Legal Advocacy – Support through Courts

If you are facing court alone, with no legal representation, then Support Through Court may be able to help

Volunteers can:

- Explain how the court works, help fill in forms, organise papers, and discuss settling issues without going to court
- Help plan what you want to say in court, and if needed, go with you to court to provide support and help afterwards
- Provide details of other specialist advice agencies, where possible, and help you find out whether you can get free legal advice

They are able to support people going through civil or family courts. They are unable help people going through the criminal courts. If you might benefit from help elsewhere, like when legal advice is needed, we will let you know we can't help, and where possible signpost you elsewhere.

You can call their helpline or book an appointment online.

National Helpline – 0300 081 0006 nationalhelpline@supportthroughcourt.org

Website: <https://supportthroughcourt.org/>

Racial Violence Advocacy - The Monitoring Group

We provide advocacy, support and campaigning advice and assistance for people suffering Racism and Policing problems including hate crimes. The information shared with us is kept strictly confidential.

We aim to ensure that we:

- Work with our clients so they are fully informed on the steps we take
- Provide clients with update information
- Organise case conferences with agencies to move the case forward
- Prepare and make oral and written representations
- Contact politicians and other agencies for support
- Get advice from specialist lawyers if necessary
- Work with our partners if the case is complex

Telephone: 020 7582 7438

Email: office@tmg-uk.org

Website: www.tmg-uk.org