

This information is about **Independent Mental Health Advocacy**. Sometimes people say **IMHA** to make it easier to understand.

**Advocacy** is about helping you to speak up and get the support you need.

Advocacy is **confidential**. That means we won't tell anyone what you have said unless you want us to. Sometimes we have to tell someone if we think you or other people may be in danger or if the law says we need to.

An advocate is someone who is **on your side**. They will listen to you and make sure that your voice is heard. They help you to speak up and make decisions.

Advocates are **independent**. This means they do not work for the council, hospital or any other care provider. An advocate works for **you**.

Advocates are **free**.

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Independent Mental Health Advocacy is about supporting you if you have been detained under the **Mental Health Act**.

The Act says that when you are detained you must be kept in hospital.

**A Code of Practice** explains how you should be treated in hospital. It tells you about **rights**.

You have the right to an **IMHA** if you are detained under certain sections of the Mental Health Act.

An IMHA is specially trained and knows a lot about rights.

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### **This is how an IMHA can help you:**

- Help you understand your rights and be involved in decisions about your care and treatment.
- Help you understand why you are in hospital and what you can and can't do.
- Help you get and understand information. This might be about your detention, medication, treatment or rights of your nearest relative.
- Help you prepare for and go with you to meetings. This might be at ward rounds, CPA's (Care Programme Approaches), tribunal or managers hearing.
- Help you to make a complaint if you are unhappy.

**An IMHA cannot make decisions for you or tell you what to do.**