



Document Control

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1.0 POLICY:

Every person has a right to have their voice and opinion heard.

Sunbeam House Services (SHS) embraces, independent and systems advocacy as a means of empowering people by supporting them to assert their views, safeguard their rights and claim their entitlements. Where necessary this advocate can be as a representative or negotiator on the persons behalf. Advocacy is seen as a means to provide service users with the support necessary to make their own informed decisions and choices and also to deal with official processes.

Self-Advocacy

SHS is committed to supporting people to advocate on behalf of themselves and others.

Each location is encouraged to have people who use services actively involved in all decisions that affect them and in the future direction of the organisation. Sunbeam House Services Service Users Forum (SUF) meets on a monthly basis. The SUF has a strong lobbying role in the decision making processes of SHS and also in wider community decisions.

The SUF is part of the consultative process of Sunbeam House Services with representatives from the forum attending quarterly meetings with the Senior Management Team and also regularly meet with the Board of Directors.

The SUF provides suggestion/comment boxes in all of the main SHS locations to encourage feedback from people who use these services.

Independent Advocacy

Service users who require an advocate (independent of Sunbeam House Services) are provided with an independent advocate, for advice and support. Sunbeam House Services works in partnership with service users, and the advocates to ensure best practice in the area of Rights and Fairness for every service user.

Independent advocates, or SHS staff who are acting as an advocate for a service user, must respect the person's autonomy, encourage the empowerment of the individual where possible, take into account the person's best interests, and ensure that the individual's rights are safeguarded. They should also maintain confidentiality (as per Sunbeam House Service's Confidentiality Policy) and act with diligence and competence at all times.

Systems Advocacy

SHS endeavours to facilitate Service User Advocates to engage with other agencies, for the benefit of the client. Through this Systems Advocacy approach, Sunbeam House Services aims to form part of a national alliance which will advocate on issues affecting service users, people with an intellectual disability in general, other groups and all citizens.

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2.0 SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Sunbeam House Services stakeholders.

3.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

All advocates (including staff) have a responsibility to take action to enable people to express what they want; secure their rights, represent their views and interests, and obtain necessary services. The advocacy process supports social inclusion, equality, and social justice.

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