



NICE: Advocacy as a preventative measure

Training Aid 3

Advocacy as a preventative measure

This guide explains how advocacy not only responds to immediate needs but also serves as a powerful preventive tool. By identifying and addressing risks early, advocates can support individuals in ways that promote safety, independence, and well-being. This preventive approach aligns with the NICE guidance [NG227] on advocacy for adults with health and social care needs, particularly the focus on early intervention and proactive support [e.g., 1.3, 1.5].

What prevention means in advocacy

Prevention in advocacy involves early intervention—helping individuals access the right support and information to prevent crises or harm. By supporting people in understanding their rights, navigating services, and identifying potential risks, advocates can help prevent issues from escalating.

- **Early risk identification:** Advocates can identify signs of distress, neglect, or emerging challenges before they become severe. This allows for timely interventions, reducing the likelihood of crisis situations. [NICE NG227, 1.3.6]
- **Access to support:** Advocacy can connect individuals with appropriate resources and services, helping them access support at the right time. This can involve liaising with health or social care providers to set up services that maintain independence and safety. [NICE NG227, 1.5.3]
- **Building knowledge and empowerment:** By educating individuals about their rights and options, advocates empower them to make informed decisions and take an active role in their own well-being, aligning with NICE's emphasis on person-centred support. [NICE NG227, 1.5.1]

Examples of preventive advocacy

Preventive advocacy comes in many forms. Below are examples to illustrate how early advocacy interventions can support individuals and promote well-being.

- **Rights education:** An advocate helps a client understand their rights to social care assessments, which can prevent potential neglect by ensuring they access necessary support.
- **Early service access:** An advocate identifies that a person may struggle with mobility in the near future and helps them apply for accessible housing or mobility aids. This prevents possible isolation and loss of independence.
- **Safeguarding awareness:** An advocate notices signs of neglect or subtle indications of emotional abuse and raises these with the safeguarding team early. This helps avoid more serious harm and ensures the person's safety. [NICE NG227, 1.3.3]

Benefits of preventive advocacy

Taking a preventive approach in advocacy benefits individuals, families, and the wider community by promoting wellbeing, reducing emergency interventions, and enabling people to maintain control over their lives. Preventive advocacy aligns with the principles in the NICE guidelines by aiming for long-term, person-centred outcomes.

- **Promotes independence:** Supporting individuals to access the right services at the right time helps them remain independent, reducing reliance on emergency or intensive interventions later on. [NICE NG227, 1.5.4]
- **Improves quality of life:** By proactively addressing needs, advocates can help prevent situations that would negatively impact an individual's quality of life, such as isolation or financial instability.
- **Reduces pressure on emergency services:** Advocates help clients secure the support they need before reaching crisis point, reducing the burden on emergency services and ensuring the individual's needs are met in a sustainable way.

Outcome: demonstrating advocacy as proactive support

This preventive approach to advocacy shows the board that advocacy isn't only about responding to crises but is also instrumental in addressing issues proactively. By working to prevent harm and reduce risk, advocates align closely with safeguarding objectives, focusing on long-term safety and well-being as emphasized in NICE guidelines [e.g., 1.3.1, 1.3.5].

Key takeaways for advocates

- **Identify early risks:** Proactively observe and address potential issues in a client's circumstances to avoid escalation.
- **Promote access to support:** Facilitate connections to appropriate resources and services that foster independence and well-being.
- **Empower individuals:** Educate clients on their rights and options, supporting them in taking control of their care and services.
- **Act as safeguards:** By recognising early signs of potential harm, advocates contribute to safeguarding, promoting a safer environment for the client.



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