



# PROCEDURE 5.1 - ADVOCATES AND INFORMAL SUPPORTS

| <i>Number</i> | <i>Procedure</i>  | <i>Related National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality Practice Standards</i> |
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| 5.1 (C)       | <i>Providing information about advocates</i>              |  |
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## Preamble

The following procedures are to be implemented to ensure that Better Together meets its policy objective of maximum participation and integration in and with the community through the support of freely given, enduring relationships.

## Procedures

### 5.1(A) Advocates

What is an advocate?

- An advocate is a person who supports a service user to protect and promote their rights and interests.
- An advocate can, with the service user's permission, negotiate on their behalf or support the service user to negotiate for themselves.
- An advocate does not conciliate or arbitrate between organisation and service user.
- An advocate 'stands beside' a service user to support them to make their own decisions.
- An advocate is an important resource for a service user in situations where a service user feels confused, overwhelmed, intimidated or under confident. An advocate can be a family member, friend or an outside organisation.



The National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 defines an independent advocate, in relation to a person with disability, to mean a person who:

- is independent of the National Disability Insurance Agency, the NDIS Commission and any NDIS
- providers providing supports or services to the person with disability
- provides independent advocacy for the person with disability, to assist the person with disability to exercise choice and control and to have their voice heard in matters that affect them
- acts at the direction of the person with disability, reflecting the person with disability's expressed wishes, will, preferences and rights

Types of Advocacy:

- *Individual Advocacy*: a one-on-one approach, aiming to prevent or address instances of discrimination or abuse.
- *Systemic Advocacy*: working to influence or secure long-term changes to ensure the collective rights and interests of people with disabilities.
- *Family Advocacy*: a parent or family member advocates with and on behalf of a family member with a disability.
- *Citizen Advocacy*: matches people with disabilities with volunteers.
- *Legal Advocacy*: upholds the rights and interests of individual people with disabilities by addressing the legal aspects of discrimination, abuse and neglect.
- *Self-Advocacy*: supports people with disabilities to advocate for themselves, or as a group.

## **5.1 (B) Promoting Other Informal Supports**

### **Rational**

non paid informal relationships are some of the most important relationships on a person with a disabilities life. Family and friendship are part of informal free supports. Better Together is committed to providing supports for informal relationships to support a decrease in service dependency and act as a safeguard for the people we support.

Detailed Procedure:  
Better Together will;

- Make sure staff are aware of the value and importance of freely given relationships
- Support service users with maintaining their informal support through
  - Assisting the service users with communication
  - Facilitate catch ups between service user and freely given relationship
  - Help navigate friendship if they have limited capacity with friendship development
- Never replace a freely given relationship with a paid one



## 5.1 (C) Providing information about advocates

### **Rational**

Some people may need support to exercise their capacity to make decisions that affect them, and to increase their decision making skills and confidence. Everyone should have someone if they choose to support them in their decision making process outside of the paid service.

### **Detailed Procedure**

Should a service user need or request access to an external advocate Better Together will;

- Ongoingly explain a service users right to access an advocate especially when dealing with complaints and incidents and they can change their advocate from time to time
- Support service users to access an advocate by either providing them with the advocacy organisations phone number or;
- Call the advocacy organisation on the service users behalf to organise an advocate for the activity they require/ request it for.
- Maintain advocacy information page for annual planning
- Provide advocacy information page in a service user intake checklist in an easy English version
- Educate during service user survey time, that they can access and advocate should they requires
- Inform them of their right to access advocates whenever they would like one.

## 5.1 (D) Working with advocates (when a service user has nominated an advocate)

Where a service user has identified or nominated an advocate Better Together must:

- Record the advocates details in the service user's personal record
- Ensure the service user is aware of their advocacy rights including the right to have an advocate present for all
- assessments, meetings and communication between themselves and the organisation
- Ensure any identified advocate is present at assessments and meetings
- Communicate and work co-operatively with the advocate
- Communicate comprehensively with a service user's advocate and involve them in the support and service planning

## 5.1 (A) Roles of Civic Advocates

### **Rationale**



Civic Advocates are people who have been specifically sought out and asked to commit to freely share time with a person with a disability and/or mental health issue and assist them to gain more opportunities to participate in the social, economic and civic life of the community.

### ***Detailed Procedure***

Civic Advocates may choose from a number of ways to do this, including:

- Supporting a person with a disability and/or mental health issue to be part of their church, group or club, or joining a new club or group with the person.
- Spend time sharing an interest with a person with a disability and/or mental health issue
- Including a person with disability and/or mental health issue in their own life by doing things like inviting a person over for dinner, going to a movie together, sharing celebrations and much more.
- Supporting a person with a disability and/or mental health issue to learn a new skill at TAFE or through the Caboolture Learning Network
- Becoming a co-worker and supporting people with a disability and/or mental health issue through the Caboolture Community Work Cooperative.
- Regularly attending Better Together initiated community activities to spend time with members of the Better Together network who have a disability and/or mental health issue.

## **5.1 (B)            *Personal Qualities of a Civic Advocate***

### ***Rationale***

Better Together can recruit people with the following personal qualities required for a Civic Advocate

### ***Detailed Procedure***

Personal Qualities to identify include:

- Someone who values the lives of people with disabilities and/or people with a mental health issue.
- A strong belief in the value of people with a disability and/or mental health issue being included and participating in the social, economic and civic life of the community
- Warm and open personality.
- A hopeful and positive spirit regarding what is possible for people with disabilities and/or mental health issue.
- A spirited, motivated and energetic person.
- Maturity and life experience.
- Possessing self-knowledge - especially knowing own limits, that is humility while being confident about one's abilities.
- Self-motivation.



- General competence including basic common sense.
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills
- Trustworthy - respects people's privacy.

## **5.1 (C) Accountability of a Civic Advocate**

### **Rationale**

The Civic Advocate is accountable firstly to the person they support.

### **Detailed Procedure**

Once a Civic Advocate is matched to a participant the relationship is to take a natural flow. The aim is for the relationship to evolve into a healthy relationship that supports the presence and belonging of the person with a disability and/or mental health issue and in the local community, with minimal involvement from Better Together. The manager or assistant manager will provide orientation, support, and guidance and follow along in the role the Civic Advocate undertakes.

## **5.1 (D) Essential skills and Knowledge of a Civic Advocate**

### **Rationale**

Better Together can support Civic Advocates to gain the essential skills and Knowledge, including criminal history screening - prescribed notice (yellow card):

### **Detailed Procedure**

- Better Together will provide appropriate orientation, training, development opportunities, information and ongoing support that will assist Civic Advocates in their role.
- Civic Advocates attend orientation sessions before commencing their role and can attend training sessions during their time as a Civic Advocate.
- Better Together will assist the Civic Advocates to request and gain a criminal history screening - prescribed notice (yellow card)(refer to policy
- Better Together has processes to recruit, orientate, match, support and follow-up Civic Advocates to ensure that Civic Advocates are most likely to meet their commitments to individuals with disabilities.
- Civic Advocates will be given every encouragement to fulfill their role.

## **5.1 (E) Orientation, Training and Information**

### **Rationale**



Better Together will provide appropriate orientation, training, development opportunities, information and ongoing support that will assist Civic Advocates in their role, by supporting them to access understanding disability training.

### **Detailed Procedure**

- Civic Advocates should attend orientation sessions before commencing their role (see procedure 10.0 (J) Staff Training and Development
- Better Together will host Civic Advocate get-togethers and information sessions so that Civic Advocates can benefit from peer support. Linking them in with the sunshine coast citizen advocacy organisation
- Civic Advocates are also invited to attend training sessions provided by Better Together. During their time as a Civic Advocate. A Certificate of competence will be issued on the completion of any assessment connected to the sessions.

## **5.1 (G) Making the Match**

### **Rationale**

Introducing and bringing people together

### **Detailed Procedure**

- Decision making and choice: Where a person has expressed an interest in having the involvement of a Civic Advocate, that person will be consulted with - by whatever means of communication necessary - to determine if the prospective Civic Advocate is the right person with the right interest/skills. The decision of this person shall be respected.
- The Manager or designated worker will endeavour to introduce the Civic Advocate and person with a disability and/or mental health issue in a highly valued setting that is suited to the interests and likes of both people.
- The first get together can take a couple of hours - if that is what is needed to make people feel comfortable. It is at this meeting that the Connector and person with a disability and/or mental health issue can exchange contact details and work out how and when to meet again.

## **5.1 (H) Follow along and support**

### **Rationale**

Maintaining contact and support for both the person with a disability and/or mental health



issue and the Civic Advocate.

***Detailed Procedure***

- The Manager and/or a delegated staff member of better Together will contact Civic Advocates and the person with a disability and/or mental health issue on a regular basis to talk about how things are going and offer any information and advice Civic Advocates may need.
- The Manager and/or delegated staff member will also use this opportunity to gather information e.g. amount of time spent with person and activities person has been involved in (This information will be recorded in the individual's file to maintain privacy and confidentiality).
- Over time contact with the Civic Advocate will reduce to as little as twice a year if all is going well. The Manager will also be available for Civic Advocates if they need to talk over something or share their experiences.

***Related Better Together Policies and Procedures***

*Policy 1.0 Service Access*

*Policy 2.0 Individual Needs, Values and Planning*

*Policy 3.0 Choice, Choice and Consent*

*Policy 4.0 Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality*

*Policy 6.0 Valued Status*

*Policy 7.0 Complaints and Disputes*

*Policy 10.0 Staff Recruitment, Employment and Development*