



advocacy services  
in staffordshire

# Your guide to Asist



making advocacy a right not a privilege

# Clear information

## Everyone needs information to be clear

This booklet uses clear words and is suitable for most people.

We also have a summary of this booklet with key words and pictures. This is suitable for people with literacy and communication needs. This can also be suitable for people whose first language is not English.

We have information in other languages commonly used in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Please let us know if you want information about Asist and advocacy in any of these formats.



# In this booklet

page 4	introduction
page 5	about Asist
page 6	about advocacy
page 7	working together
page 10	our policies
page 11	confidentiality
page 12	equal opportunities
page 13	complaints
page 14	our standards
page 15	advocacy for all
page 16	contact Asist

# Introduction

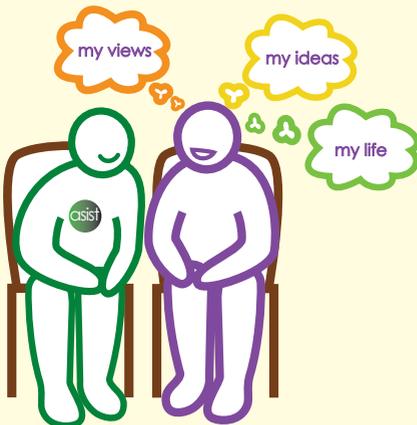
## You have a right to be heard

Advocacy is a partnership between two people; an advocate and a person who feels they are not being heard by professionals and other care givers.

Advocacy can help you to find out things so that you can make decisions about your own life.

Advocacy is about supporting you to take part in the processes that affect your life.

You instruct your advocate on what to say and do.



Advocacy  
is  
free

# About Asist

## Asist provides one to one advocacy

- we work within the voluntary sector and are completely independent of all statutory, private or voluntary sector organisations
- we mainly work with people who live in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent
- we work with people with disabilities and/or mental health needs

## Asist offers an issue based service

We work with you to deal with the issues you have at the time.

When those issues have been resolved we will finish the partnership although you can always come back if new issues arise.

## Promoting advocacy

Asist promotes advocacy in Staffordshire so that everyone can access an advocate when they need one.

# About advocacy

## Advocacy is independent

As the advocate plays no role in determining the care received by you, they can truly and independently represent your views as if they were their own.

While the advocate will represent these views, they remain yours, and professionals and other carers can accept, reject or listen to these views as if they were put forward by you directly.



# Working together

## What an advocate can do

Advocacy is about what you want and your views.

## Your advocate will:

- listen to you
- help you to find information about the things that affect you
- talk to people who make decisions, like social workers and doctors
- support you while you think about what you want to do
- support you in making your own choices and decisions about the things that are important to you
- attend meetings with you and help you take part

# Working together

## What an advocate cannot do:

Your advocate will never give you advice. Your advocate will never judge you, or offer their opinion about your views.

Your advocate will not give you legal advice. If you need legal advice we can help you to choose a lawyer and visit them with you if you want.

Asist does not offer a crisis service. We will always act as fast as we can but you may have to wait for a meeting with an advocate.

Your advocate will not be your counsellor or befriender. If this is what you want then your advocate can help you make contact and go with you to meet them.



# Working together

## Advocacy work is based on trust and respect between you and your advocate

You and your advocate need to keep each other up to date with the work that you have asked the advocate to do.

Asist believes it is vital that the people who act as your advocate must be properly trained, supervised and monitored.

Asist advocates can either be a paid worker or a volunteer. In both cases they have to undertake the training they need to become an advocate.

It is important that advocates are supervised on a regular basis in order that we can be sure that they are doing their job for you properly.

We need to know that we are doing our job correctly. We gather information to monitor what we are doing. We will also ask you to tell us if we are doing our job right.

# Our policies

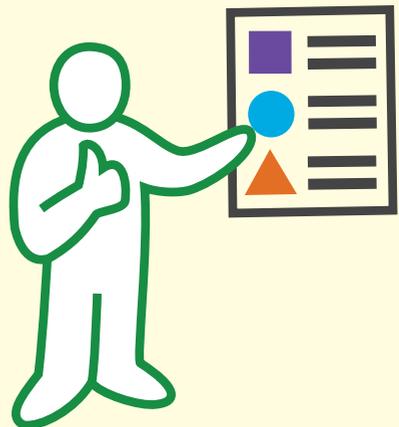
## Asist works within policies and standards to protect you

In order to provide a good quality advocacy service, Asist believes that advocates should keep to a clear set of guidelines.

The use of policies and standards ensures that every Asist advocacy partner will receive the same quality advocacy whichever advocate is allocated to them.

You have a right to your own copy of any Asist policy.

The following pages contain a brief outline of the main policies and standards that all advocates must work to.



# Confidentiality

Everyone at Asist must keep the information you tell them private, unless you give them permission to tell someone else

In some circumstances your advocate may have to break confidentiality.

Your advocate will break confidentiality if he or she reasonably believes:

1. that you are in imminent danger of harm or there is a risk of harm to others
2. a Court of Law demands that Asist shares information about you

Your records are kept safe on secure computers and in locked filing cabinets.

Your records are protected within the data protection act. Registration number Z5901306.

You can ask for a copy of your own records at any time.



# Equal opportunities

Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity

We work in a fair and equal way to make advocacy available to our advocacy partners.

We will:

- produce our booklets and leaflets in different formats to ensure that as many people as possible can use our service
- contact a signer if you are deaf or a communicator if you are deaf/blind
- contact an interpreter if you are unable to understand English
- find accessible meeting places.

We will not support you to show discrimination to others.



# Complaints

## You have the right to make a complaint about Asist

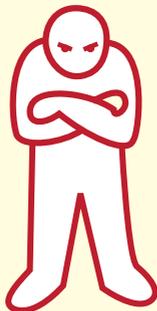
Asist has a complaints procedure to help sort out any problems that you may have about our work.

We will try to sort it out informally and if you are still unhappy you can ask for a formal investigation.

If you are still unhappy you can appeal.

You can have free independent support if you want to make a complaint about Asist.

To make a complaint you can contact the Managers of Asist using the details on the back of this booklet.



# Our standards

Asist will always try to match you with an advocate who best meets your needs.

Your advocate will try different ways to communicate with you if you need them to.

Your advocate will take action as soon as possible and keep you up to date with the work.



## Your advocate will always:

- listen to you
- act independently from all others
- be loyal to you and support you
- treat you with respect
- be guided by you
- support you to make your own decisions
- treat you in a fair and equal way

# Advocacy for all

We believe that all people have the right to use an advocate if they want

We promote advocacy across the country for all people with mental health needs and/or disabilities.

We promote the wider use of standards, training and supervision that protect you whenever you use an advocate.

If an advocate cannot say for certain what you want, they can ask questions on your behalf - this is called non instructed advocacy.

We believe in sharing best practice with other organisations.

We always welcome your comments about us and the advocacy that we offer. You can contact us at the address on the back of this booklet.

# Contact Asist

Asist was established in 1994 and offers all forms of one to one advocacy across the County of Staffordshire and City of Stoke on Trent. Asist provides a large generic service for anyone with a disability or mental health need, alongside specialist projects including IMHA, IMCA and the Reach group advocacy project.

Asist does not assert copyright on this document, however, if you would like to use all or part of it we would ask that you acknowledge Asist.

## Contact

01782 845584



[www.asist.co.uk](http://www.asist.co.uk)  
[help@asist.co.uk](mailto:help@asist.co.uk)



Asist, Winton House, Stoke Road,  
Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2RW



Registered Charity No. 1048075.  
Company No. 3068125



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE