

# Self-advocacy Toolkit



## Welcome to our Self-Advocacy Toolkit

This toolkit aims to help you speak up for yourself and make sure your voice is heard. Self-advocacy means understanding your needs, knowing your rights, and confidently sharing what matters to you. It's about taking an active role in decisions that affect your life.

### Why use self-advocacy?

Because you are the expert on your own life. When you advocate for yourself, you can make choices that reflect your goals, values, and preferences. It helps you feel more in control and ensures that others understand what you need.

### What are the benefits?

- **Confidence:** You learn to express yourself clearly and respectfully.
- **Independence:** You gain the skills to make decisions and solve problems.
- **Better outcomes:** When you speak up, you're more likely to get the support and opportunities that fit your needs.
- **Empowerment:** You take charge of your life and your future.

This toolkit will give you practical tips and tools to help you speak up for yourself.

### When things go wrong - raising concerns informally

Sometimes, you might not be happy with the care or support you receive. For example, maybe your home care visits are often late, or the support worker isn't following your care plan. Or perhaps you feel the service isn't listening to your choices. In these situations, you might want to raise your concerns without making a formal complaint.

#### How can you do this?

Start by talking to someone in the service, like your support worker or their manager. Explain what's bothering you and what you would like to change. Keep it calm and clear.

You could say:

- "I've noticed my visits are often late. Can we look at how to fix this?"
- "I'd like my care plan to be followed more closely."

You can do this in person, on the phone, or by email - whatever feels easiest for you. Often, services want to help and can sort things out quickly when you speak up.

#### Why use the informal route?

It's usually faster and less stressful than making a formal complaint. It gives the service a chance to put things right straight away. And it helps keep a good relationship between you and the people who support you.

## Tips for Starting the Conversation

- **Write down your points first** so you feel clear and confident.
- **Be specific** about what's wrong and what you'd like to happen instead.
- **Stay calm and polite** - it helps the other person listen.
- **Bring someone with you** if you feel nervous, like a friend or advocate.
- **Ask for a follow-up** so you know what will happen next.

## Phone Script Example

Here's an example of what you could say if you call:

"Hello, my name is [Your Name].  
I receive support from your service, and I wanted to talk about something that isn't working well for me.  
[Explain the issue briefly, e.g., 'My home care visits have often been late.']  
I would like [say what you want to happen, e.g., 'the visits to be on time so I can plan my day.']  
Can you tell me what can be done to fix this?  
Thank you for listening. I'd appreciate it if you could let me know what will happen next."

## Email Template

See our appendix for a simple email template you can use.

## Making a Formal Complaint

Sometimes, raising concerns informally doesn't lead to the changes you need. If you've tried talking to the service and things still aren't improving, you can make a formal complaint. This is your right, and it's an important way to make sure your voice is heard.

### When might you make a formal complaint?

- Your home care visits are still late even after you've spoken to the manager.
- Your care plan isn't being followed, and nothing has changed.
- You feel your concerns aren't being taken seriously.

### Steps to Make a Formal Complaint

#### 1. Find out the complaints process

Most services have a formal complaints procedure. You can ask for a copy or check their website.

## 2. Write down what happened

Be clear and include:

- What went wrong and how it's affected you
- When it happened
- What you've already tried to fix it

## 3. Say what you want to happen

For example:

- "I would like my visits to be on time."
- "I want my care plan to be followed."

## 4. Send your complaint

You can usually do this by email, letter, or an online form. Keep a copy for yourself.

## 5. Ask for a response time

Most services should tell you when you'll get a reply.

### Email Template for a Formal Complaint

See our appendix for a simple email template you can use.

### Preparing for a Meeting About Your Complaint

Sometimes, as part of the complaints process, a professional may want to meet with you to talk about your concerns. This is a chance to explain what happened, share how it affected you, and discuss what you'd like to happen next. Preparing for the meeting can help you feel confident and make sure your voice is heard.

#### Why Prepare?

- It helps you stay calm and focused.
- You can make sure you don't forget anything important.
- It gives you the best chance of getting the outcome you want.

#### Steps to Prepare

##### 1. Write down the key points

- What went wrong?
- When did it happen?
- How did it affect you?
- What have you already tried to fix it?

##### 2. Decide what you want to happen

Be clear about the changes you'd like. For example:

- "I want my care plan to be followed."
- "I'd like visits to be on time."

##### 3. Bring any evidence

- Emails, letters, or notes about what happened.

- Dates and times of issues.

4. **Think about how you'll explain your points**

Practice saying them in a calm and clear way.

5. **Ask for support if you need it**

You can bring a friend, family member, or advocate to the meeting.

**Script for Starting the Meeting**

Here's an example of what you could say at the start:

"Thank you for meeting with me. I made a complaint because [briefly explain the issue, e.g., 'my care plan hasn't been followed']. I'd like to talk about what happened and what can be done to fix it."

**Checklist to take with you**

- ✓ Notes about what went wrong and when
- ✓ What you want to happen
- ✓ Copies of emails, letters, or other evidence
- ✓ Pen and paper (or phone) to take notes
- ✓ A friend, family member, or advocate (if you want support)
- ✓ Questions you want to ask, like:
  - "What will happen next?"
  - "When will I get an update?"

**If You're Still Not Happy**

If the service doesn't resolve your complaint or you're unhappy with their response, you can:

- **Ask for the complaint to be reviewed** by someone more senior.
- **Contact the local council or commissioning body** if they arranged your care.
- **Go to the Ombudsman** (for example, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman) for an independent review.

You might wish to ask for an advocate to help you with this process.

## Appendix 1: Email template for an informal complaint

**Subject:** Concern about my care/support

Dear [Name or Service],

I wanted to let you know about something that isn't working well for me. [Briefly explain the issue, e.g., "My home care visits have often been late."]

I would like [say what you want to happen, e.g., "the visits to be on time so I can plan my day."]

Please let me know what can be done to fix this. I'm happy to talk more if needed.

Thank you for your help.

[Your Name]

## Appendix 2: Email template for a formal complaint

**Subject:** Formal Complaint about My Care/Support

Dear [Name or Service],  
I am writing to make a formal complaint about the care/support I have received.

[Briefly explain the issue, e.g., “My home care visits have often been late, even after I raised this informally.”]

I have already tried to resolve this by [say what you did, e.g., “speaking to the manager on two occasions”], but the problem has not improved.

I would like [say what you want to happen, e.g., “the visits to be on time so I can plan my day.”]

Please confirm you have received this complaint and let me know when I can expect a response.

Thank you for your help.  
[Your Name]