

Why have Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs)?

People who are treated under the Mental Health Act now have the right to independent mental health advocacy (IMHA). This applies to hospital patients and those who are on Supervised Community Treatment. The role of an IMHA is to help people to communicate with an effective voice to enable them to influence decisions that affect their lives. An IMHA is not a member of the medical or social care team, and plays no part in your treatment and care. As an independent advocate your IMHA's first loyalty is to you.



An IMHA will not tell you what he or she thinks is right for you, but help you to decide what you want to do. He or she will act only on your instructions, and will support you for as long as it takes for your questions to be answered and your concerns heard.



Contact us at:
Medway & Swale Advocacy Partnerships,

**Lingley House,
Commissioners Road,
Rochester ME2 4EE**

Telephone:

Medway (01634) 713739

**E-mail us at: medwayswale@btconnect.com
Or: advocacy@msap.org.uk**



IMHA

Independent Mental Health Advocates

worried?

stressed?

anxious?

We can help you answer the questions you have about your treatment

**Advocacy support
for people treated under
the Mental Health Act.**



What is an Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA)?

An Independent Mental Health Advocate is a specialist type of advocate, granted specific roles and responsibilities under the Mental Health Act.

IMHAs work alongside qualifying patients to understand the legal provisions to which they are subject under the Mental Health Act, and the rights and safeguards to which they are entitled



An IMHA can assist you in obtaining information about any of the following:

- The provisions of the legislation under which you are subject
- Any conditions or restrictions you are subject to
- The medical treatment being given, proposed or being discussed and the authority under which this would be given
- The requirements that would apply in connection with the giving of the treatment
- Your rights under the Act and how those rights can be exercised

IMHAs will help people to exercise their rights

IMHAs will help you to obtain information about and understand your rights and how to exercise those rights.

An IMHA will:

- **Where appropriate visit and speak with you in private**
- **Ensure that your voice is being heard by supporting you to express your views and to engage with the multi-disciplinary team**
- **Speak on your behalf and represent you when required**
- **Support you in exploring options, making better-informed decisions and in engaging with the development of your care plans**
- **Visit and interview any person who is concerned with your medical treatment**
- **Require the production of and inspect any records relating to your detention or treatment in any hospital or registered establishment or to any after-care services provided under section 117**
- **Support you in other ways to ensure you can participate in decisions that are made about your care and treatment**
- **Support you to ensure you are valued for who you are**
- **Support you to counteract any actual or potential discrimination**

Who qualifies for an IMHA?

People will qualify for an IMHA if:

- They are liable to compulsory treatment under the powers of the Act, except those on emergency short-term section
- They are on supervised community treatment
- They are 'informal' or 'voluntary' patients who are discussing the possibility of serious treatment such as neurosurgery for mental disorder or ECT for patients under 18 years.

To request the support of an IMHA you can contact your local IMHA service yourself Alternatively a member of your care team or your family can contact us on your behalf.



Having an IMHA does not affect your right to get advice from a lawyer, or any entitlement you have to legal aid