

Bristol Mind



For better
mental health

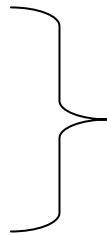
Advocacy at Bristol Mind

Volunteer Information & Application Pack

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Can be found on the website

Who or what is Bristol Mind?

Bristol Mind is affiliated to National Mind and in its history of over thirty years has fulfilled many different functions for local people with mental health needs.

Mind, is Britain's foremost organisation promoting issues around mental health and service-user involvement, and has been around for over fifty years. Mind exists to promote mental health, to foster and encourage greater understanding of mental health problems and to represent the concerns and common interests of users of the services, their families, service providers and members of the public.

At present Bristol Mind operates four key services:

- ◆ **Advocacy** assisting isolated individual service users to get their views heard. We also have services operating in local prisons and acute wards. We also have the contracts for Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) and Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) for the Bristol area.
- ◆ **MindLine** (a crisis telephone support line) open five nights a week, 8pm-midnight.
- ◆ **Information Project**, making information about mental health available throughout Bristol.
- ◆ **“Meeting Minds” Counselling Project**, for short term face to face or telephone counselling.

The Role of an Advocate

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is helping someone get their views, needs and wishes across to others, to help them secure services and gain their rights.

We aim to support isolated individuals on a broad range of issues, and particularly in their contact with service providers (statutory or voluntary) on matters relating to their individual package of care. To give information about rights and services so that people can make informed choices and decisions.

We hope to deliver this service to individuals by listening, empathising and encouraging them to express their views, by giving them information

so that they can make informed choices, by remaining completely independent when liaising or negotiating on their behalf.

The central principle of the Advocacy Project is service user empowerment and supporting individuals towards self-advocacy.

The majority of the work we do is in the community, you may be meeting clients in their home, at the office or in a public place such as a café.

As a volunteer advocate what would I be expected to do?

As a volunteer with Bristol Mind Advocacy Project there will be a number of opportunities for involvement:

- ◆ **Drop-in sessions**, people often make first contact with us through the drop-in sessions which we run weekly at the office on Tuesdays and at Windmill Hill City Farm in Bedminster on Wednesdays.
- ◆ **Individual casework**, talking to individuals about their needs, views and wishes, and supporting the user to get these heard in meetings relating to the services they receive. You will be expected to accompany and support users at care plan meetings and possibly in one to one meetings with psychiatrists, community psychiatric nurses, social workers or keyworkers. Work might also include supporting people around housing, benefits and similar issues (but not giving advice). You are likely to have one or two “on-going” clients who you would work with over the long term as well as have the opportunity to do “One-off” work which would only involve a couple of meetings.

What do I get in return for all my hard work?

- ◆ Regular **support and supervision**, you will not be alone, and you won't be asked to do more than you feel able. There will be a monthly support group for volunteers and regular individual supervision, together these will provide a chance to off-load as well as to monitor your progress and individual development.
- ◆ **Training**, you will receive initial training to ensure you have the skills and knowledge required for the work, as well as additional sessions of interest and relevance to our work. The training is accredited by the Open College Network and will be useful not only for your work with Bristol Mind but also for any future involvement with mental health and community services.

- ◆ We will provide **references** for future paid work, education or other voluntary activities.
- ◆ As a volunteer advocate your contribution will be **recognised and respected**, the service will depend on your commitment and integrity.
- ◆ Volunteers can reclaim any **expenses** incurred as a result of their involvement; it is vital that volunteers are not “out of pocket” as a result of their involvement.
- ◆ **Enjoyment**, volunteers should expect to balance hard work with the best aspects of working in a team, you can meet new people and make some friends.

What do I do next?

As part of the selection process you will be required to attend an **Introductory Session**. It's best to do this before sending your application form. For further information and dates please call Claire Barnard on 0117 9800 376 or email advocacy@bristolmind.org.uk.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer advocate, please read through the enclosed person specification and complete the application form. Upon receipt of the form we will contact you to arrange to arrange an interview (after you have attended an Introductory Session) to discuss this informally and for you to ask any questions.

Completed application forms should be sent in the enclosed envelope to:

Outreach Advocacy Service
Bristol Mind
35 Old Market Street
Old Market
Bristol
BS2 0EZ
Or e-mailed to advocacy@bristolmind.org.uk