

The Role of Advocacy in Mental Health Local and Global Perspectives



Aims



- To review the concept of advocacy in a mental health context;
- To give context and background to mental health advocacy;
- To consider how advocacy has overcome barriers for mental health;
- To introduce advocacy and the law;
- To evaluate advocacy on a global scale.

What is Mental Health Advocacy?

'Advocacy is an important means of raising awareness on mental health issues and ensuring that mental health is on the national agenda of governments. Advocacy can lead to improvements in policy, legislation and service development'

(World Health Organisation, 2003)



What is Mental Health Advocacy?

'Advocacy means getting support from another person to help you express your views and wishes, and to help make sure your voice is heard. Someone who helps you in this way is called your advocate.'

Unfortunately, having a mental health problem can sometimes mean that your opinions and ideas are not always taken seriously, or that you are not always offered all the opportunities and choices you would like. This can be difficult to deal with, especially when you need to communicate regularly with health care professionals, or other professionals'

(Mind, 2013)



Mental Health Advocacy as a Concept

- The concept of mental health advocacy has been developed to promote the human rights of persons with mental disorders and to reduce stigma and discrimination;
- As such, it consists of various actions aimed at changing structural and attitudinal barriers to achieving positive mental health outcomes in populations.

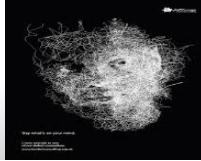


Mental Health Advocacy: Background

- Advocacy in this field began when the families of people with mental disorders first made their voices heard. Individuals with mental health disorders then made their own contributions.
- Gradually, these people and their families were joined and supported by a range of organisations, as well as mental health workers and their associations and even some governments....

Mental Health Advocacy Today

- Recently, the concept of advocacy has been broadened to include the needs and rights of persons with mild mental health disorders and the mental health needs and rights of the general population



Advocacy Actions

- Awareness raising;
- Information;
- Education;
- Training;
- Mutual help;
- Counselling;
- Mediating ;
- Defending;
- Denouncing.



Drawing Attention to Barriers for Mental Health

If physical diseases were treated like mental illness...



Issues Raised by Advocacy:

- Right to self-determination and need for information about treatments;
- Paternalistic services;
- Lack of parity between mental and physical ;
- Violations of human rights for persons with mental disorders;
- And MANY, MANY more.....

Advocacy Works!

Positive Mental Health Outcomes

- Evidence as to whether advocacy directly improves the level of an individuals mental health is still limited.....

BUT

- There are many encouraging projects and experiences in various countries including....

Positive Mental Health Outcomes

- The placing of mental health on government agendas;
- Improvements in the policies and practices of governments and institutions;
- Changes in laws;
- Improvements in the promotion of the rights and interests of persons with mental disorders and their families;
- Improvements in mental health services, treatment and care.....

Impressive!!!

The Importance of Mental Health Advocacy

- The emergence of advocacy movements globally has helped to change society's perceptions of persons with mental health disorders.
- Consumers have begun to articulate their own visions of the services they need.
- Increasingly, service users are able to make informed decisions about treatment and other matters in their daily lives.
- Consumer and family participation in advocacy organisations leads to increasingly positive outcomes.



But don't just take my word for it....

"I was told to just listen. It is not *your* job to get you better" (Service user).

"They [the clinicians] told me that I don't have capacity to make treatment decisions...I wondered what the hell that meant- I'm stupid?" (Service user).

"We just assumed that we were not supposed to give our opinion about our daughters illness and treatment" (Parent).

This is why we need advocacy!!!!!!

Advocacy Organisations in the UK

- Mind
- Hearing Voices
- SANE
- Mental Health Foundation
- Rethink Mental Illness



And many others on both local and national levels.....

Advocacy and the Law

- Access to an Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA) is a statutory right for people detained under the Mental Health Act
- IMHAs are independent of mental health services and can help people get their voices heard and make sure they know their rights under the law
- Worryingly, research indicates that only about half of the individuals entitled to an IMHA actually get one.

(Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2015)

