

Expression of Interest

Building the Evidence Base: The Value of Independent Advocacy within the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) System

Recent changes to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) legislation have created a significant shift in policy and practice. While independent advocacy continues to play a vital role in protecting people's rights and supporting lawful, person-centred decision-making, there remains very little published evidence demonstrating the impact and value that advocacy brings within the DoLS process.

Advocacy organisations consistently tell us that they know advocacy makes a difference, but that evidencing this in a way that is meaningful to commissioners, policy-makers and funders is challenging.

NDTi wants to help address that evidence gap.

What are we planning?

We are developing an independent position paper that will bring together:

- A review of the changing policy and legislative landscape.
- A synthesis of the current evidence relating to advocacy and DoLS/Community DOLS.
- Five detailed costed case studies illustrating the contribution advocacy makes to protecting rights, influencing decision-making and supporting better outcomes.
- Cross-case analysis identifying common themes, learning and wider system benefits.
- Recommendations for future policy, practice and research.

The report is intended to provide practical evidence that can support advocacy organisations, commissioners and policymakers, while also acting as a foundation for future research, service development and funding opportunities.

We are looking for advocacy organisations to work with us

We are inviting expressions of interest from advocacy organisations that believe they may have one or more cases that could contribute to this important piece of work.

At this stage, we are not asking for detailed information or completed case studies. We are simply looking to identify organisations that may have suitable examples and would be interested in working with us to strengthen the national evidence base for independent advocacy within the DoLS system.

Suitable case studies are likely to

- relate to a person who has been through the DoLS or Community DoLS process;
- demonstrate a clear contribution from an independent advocate;
- show identifiable outcomes for the individual, improvements in decision-making, or protection of the person's rights;
- include sufficient retrospective information to enable a robust case study to be developed; and
- be capable of being fully anonymised.

To help you decide whether you may have a suitable case, Appendix 1 contains an example of the type of information that is useful when developing a case study. This is provided for guidance only and does not need to be completed or returned with your expression of interest.

What would participation involve?

If your organisation is selected, NDTi will work alongside you to develop the case study. We recognise that organisations record information in different ways and we will work flexibly to make the process as straightforward as possible.

We anticipate asking for:

- a short discussion about why you believe the case demonstrates the value of independent advocacy;
- access to existing background information about the circumstances leading to the DoLS or Community DoLS process and the role of advocacy;

- an interview with the independent advocate;
- where appropriate and feasible, introductions to other professionals involved in the case (for example, a social worker, DoLS practitioner or care provider). We will then undertake conversations with them or ask them to share learning with us in a convenient way;
- access to relevant documentation that helps us understand the advocacy provided, the outcomes achieved and any wider system impacts.

Where possible, we will use information that already exists rather than asking organisations to produce new documentation. Most case studies will be developed through interviews with advocates and relevant professionals, together with existing case records.

Where a person is living under Community DoLS, has capacity to decide whether they would like to participate, and wishes to do so, we may also invite them to contribute their own perspective. Participation by individuals is entirely voluntary and will only take place following an accessible consent process.

All case studies will be fully anonymised.

Approximate time commitment

We recognise that advocacy organisations are busy and have designed this work to minimise the demands on staff.

For organisations whose case study is selected, we anticipate approximately:

Activity	Approx. time
Initial discussion with NDTi	30–45 minutes
Identifying existing documents or information	1–2 hours
Interview with advocate	Up to 2 hours
Liaising with other contributors (where appropriate)	Up to 1 hour
Responding to factual queries and reviewing the draft case study	Up to 1 hour

Total estimated advocacy staff time: approximately 5–7 hours, spread across several weeks.

NDTi will undertake the analysis, writing and production of the case study.

Organisations will have the opportunity to review the draft for factual accuracy before publication.

Why get involved?

By contributing to this work, your organisation will be helping to build a stronger national evidence base for independent advocacy at a pivotal moment for the DoLS system.

Together, we hope to demonstrate not only the difference advocacy makes to people's lives, but also the wider value it brings to health and social care systems through protecting people's rights, improving decision-making and supporting better outcomes.

Participating organisations will also:

- contribute to the development of one of the first independent, practice-focused evidence reviews of advocacy within the DoLS and Community DoLS system following the recent legislative changes;
- receive an advance briefing on the findings before publication;
- be acknowledged in the report (unless anonymity is preferred); and
- help shape future research, policy and commissioning discussions relating to independent advocacy.

Next Steps

If your organisation believes it may have one or more suitable case studies, we would be delighted to arrange an informal conversation to discuss the project and answer any questions.

Submitting an expression of interest does not commit your organisation to taking part. It simply allows us to explore together whether you have a suitable case and whether the project would be a good fit for your organisation.

Following these discussions, we will work with a small number of organisations to identify the final case studies and agree the next steps collaboratively.

To find out more or express an interest, please contact:

Gail Petty, Advocacy Programme Lead, NDTi

Email: Gail.petty@ndti.org.uk

or

Vicky Mason-Angelow

Email: Victoria.mason-angelow@ndti.org.uk

Appendix 1: Potential Case Study Nomination Form

This form is provided to give an indication of the type of information that is helpful when developing a case study. It is intended to help organisations decide whether they may have a suitable example to contribute.

You do not need to complete this form when submitting your expression of interest.

If your organisation is selected to participate, NDTi will work with you to gather the information needed and will adapt the process to fit the information you already hold.

Completing this form does not commit your organisation or the individual concerned to taking part. All selected case studies will be developed in partnership with participating organisations and, where applicable, following appropriate consent procedures.

Basic Information

Organisation:

Completed by:

Role:

Email:

Date:

Why does this case matter?

If you could use this case to explain why independent advocacy is important, what would you want people to learn from it?

About the person (please do not include names)

Participant initials (or identifier):

Approximate age:

Current setting

☐ Living in own home

☐ Supported living

☐ Residential care

☐ Nursing care

☐ Other _____

Community DoLS authorisation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Unsure

Why are you suggesting this case?

In a few sentences, please tell us why this would be a useful case study.

What does this case demonstrate?

Tick all that apply.

☐ Advocacy helped uphold the person's rights

☐ The person's wishes and feelings were better understood

☐ Better decision-making

- ☐ Improved involvement of the person
- ☐ Reduced conflict between professionals or family
- ☐ Challenge to restrictions or care arrangements
- ☐ Avoided unnecessary restriction
- ☐ Improved quality of life
- ☐ Improved communication
- ☐ Support through complex legal processes
- ☐ Good example of rights-based practice
- ☐ Other _____

Who could potentially contribute?

Staff

Would this case study be completed using staff perspectives only?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please indicate who could contribute.

- ☐ Advocate
- ☐ Manager
- ☐ Other staff member(s)

Person receiving advocacy

Is the person currently subject to Community DoLS?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Does the person appear to have capacity to decide whether they would like to participate in this research?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Would you be happy for NDTi to approach them (through the agreed process) to discuss participation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Other contributors (optional)

Tick anyone who may also be able to contribute.

- ☐ Family member
- ☐ Appropriate Person
- ☐ Relevant Person's Representative (RPR)
- ☐ IMCA
- ☐ Care provider
- ☐ Social Worker
- ☐ Best Interests Assessor / AMCP (where appropriate)
- ☐ Other _____

Information available

Tick anything that may be available.

- ☐ Advocacy records
- ☐ Referral information
- ☐ Case notes
- ☐ Care and support plans
- ☐ DoLS paperwork
- ☐ Reviews
- ☐ Timeline of events
- ☐ Correspondence
- ☐ Other _____

Ethical or practical considerations

Is there anything NDTi should know before deciding whether to approach this case?

Organisation contact

Name:

Role:

Email:

Telephone: