

National Advocacy Service

Clarity of Purpose

www.citizensinformationboard.ie
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The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) was set up in 2010. It is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board (CIB). The *Comhairle Act 2000* and the *Citizens Information Act 2007* give CIB a statutory responsibility in the area of advocacy, particularly for people with disabilities.

NAS provides an independent, confidential and free, representative advocacy service that puts the person at the centre and adheres to the highest professional standards. It is a countrywide service managed by five Citizens Information Services and is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board.

Independent, representative advocacy empowers and is directed by the people who use it. It is person centred, accountable, accessible, impartial and independent of service providers, families and other supports. NAS has a particular remit for people with disabilities who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services, attend day services and have limited informal or natural supports. NAS advocates work to standard policies and procedures. They are supported and supervised and record their work on a confidential case management system.

NAS ensures that when life decisions are made, due consideration is given to the will and preference of people with disabilities and that their rights are safeguarded.

NAS operates on the principle that people with disabilities:

- make decisions about their lives
- are listened to and consulted by their families and those who provide their services
- access the supports they need to enable them to live their life and enjoy meaningful participation in family, work and leisure
- enjoy the benefits of participation in and contribution to their local communities

The purpose of advocacy is to:

- Enable people to seek and receive information, explore and understand their options, make their wishes and views known to others and make decisions for themselves
- Support people to represent their own views, wishes and interests, especially when they find it difficult to express them
- Ensure that people's rights are respected by others
- Ensure that people's needs and wishes are given due consideration and acted upon
- Enable people to be involved in decisions that would otherwise be made for them by others

Professional NAS advocates, on the basis of an understanding of a person's needs and wishes, support that person to make a decision or access services and if appropriate, go on to negotiate or make a case for the person. They take direct instruction from the person, and in instances where preference and will is not immediately clear to others, advocates will engage with the person and their supporters to gain an understanding of their wishes and preferences. Advocates will take affirmative action to uphold the person's rights, ensure fair and equal treatment and access to services and make certain that decisions are taken with due consideration for their unique preferences and perspective.