

Are you a disabled person? Would you like to:

- Look at ways of getting your views across in work?
- Find out about employment rights?
- Share advice on getting and keeping a job with other disabled people?
- Challenge employment barriers?

If you said yes to any of these questions then you may be interested in attending one of our free employment self advocacy sessions.

Self advocacy in employment is about:

- Knowing your employment rights and responsibilities
- Speaking up for yourself assertively at work when appropriate
- Being listened to by colleagues and managers
- Creating an environment where people are treated with equal respect in your workplace
- Putting your employment rights into practice
- Challenging employment barriers and discriminatory policies / procedures

Self advocacy skills empower disabled people at work. They also encourage organisations to create a positive culture and get rid of disabling attitudes and practices.

The history of self advocacy

Ideas about self advocacy have been developed by groups of learning disabled people. They were – and still are - angry about not being involved in important decisions about their lives and not having their views listened to and respected. To tackle this, they set up self advocacy groups such as **People First** across the country to support each other to find out about their rights, speak up and be fully involved in important decisions affecting them.

Who is Breakthrough's employment self advocacy for then?

At Breakthrough's **Independent Employment Advocacy Centre (IEAC)**, disabled people from all impairment groups have told us that they have been treated badly by employers or have had bad experiences at work. They may not have been told about their employment rights or been allowed to use them. They might have been bullied, lost their jobs unfairly or been turned away from employment or promotion because they are a disabled person.

Employment self advocacy is one approach to dealing with things like this. It could be useful to any disabled person who would like to develop more confidence in knowing and using your employment rights. It would suit people who would like to become more self-assured when dealing with issues at work (paid or unpaid), including barriers to finding a job. It is also a useful way of sharing your employment

experiences with others and finding out about what has worked for other disabled people in similar situations. Many people who attend sessions say this is one of the most important parts of the day. **Any disabled person who lives or works in Greater Manchester can access this free support.**

What happens at Self Advocacy sessions?

Traditionally, self advocacy work is done in groups. We usually work with people in a workshop or group of up to 14 people. Sessions are a full day or a half day. **If you would like us come and deliver a workshop for your group, venue or workplace, please do get in touch.** Sometimes we work with people on a one to one basis to develop the skills and knowledge needed. This could be a one off session, or a series of sessions, depending on what is required.

We will start with an informal discussion with you to discuss your requirements. We always like to find out what you want to get out of a session beforehand so it can be made as relevant as possible. We will also ask you if you have any access requirements, such as information in large print or in easy read.

What self advocacy is not:

In common with other types of advocacy, self advocacy sessions do not offer advice and no-one will tell you what to do about a particular situation. However we will try to give you all the information you need to make an informed decision, and we will support you to develop the skills and confidence to do this. If you need training on something in particular, we may signpost you to a reputable training provider.

Top tips on advocating for yourself at work:

1. Find out as much as you can about your employment rights, especially under the Disability Discrimination Act. **We can help you with this.** Familiarise yourself with company policies and procedures.
2. Express any concerns clearly, at an appropriate time, and listen carefully to the response. You may wish to refer to notes and record answers given.
3. If you feel you are being bullied or treated unfairly, keep a record of incidents and retain copies of any correspondence. This may prove invaluable in the future.
4. Find out if there is a Trade Union at work and consider joining. Some unions also have a disabled members group.
5. If an employer is unaware of their obligations or is unclear about how to support disabled people at work, you can tell them about Breakthrough UK's free, confidential information service for employers.

For more information contact us on **0161 273 5412** (voice), **0161 273 5727** (answerphone minicom), or e-mail: advocacy@breakthrough-uk.co.uk. Please tell us about any access requirements when you get in touch.

Further good practice information is available online at www.breakthrough-uk.com.