



What is advocacy?

Advocacy is support from another person to help you express your needs, make informed decisions, and stand up for your rights. Spectra's free, confidential Trans Health Advocacy Service supports and empowers trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people accessing any kind of healthcare.

People who experience transphobia and transmisogyny face unique barriers to care, transition-related or otherwise. Our trans health advocate can help you:

- Explore ways to improve your access to mental and/or physical healthcare
- Understand and defend your rights as a trans patient
- Know your options for NHS and private medical transition pathways
- Challenge discrimination from healthcare providers
- Communicate with services and professionals on your behalf
- Make your voice heard for better care coordination and support
- Accompany you to appointments to help take notes, ask questions, and keep you safe (like asking for a break if you're feeling overwhelmed)

You lead the advocacy process every step of the way, with the advocate's role varying depending on your needs. Our trans health advocate represents your voice at your direction – they'll make sure you have all the information you need and help you construct a plan, but won't make decisions for you or give you their opinion.

What advocacy is not

Our trans health advocate will help you work on a practical issue with a specific outcome you define. This means that advocacy is not long-term support, an on-call service, or crisis support – you'll always be working towards an agreed goal together.

The trans health advocate does not:

- Offer long-term emotional support or care work
- Provide immediate support when you're in crisis
- Solve problems or make decisions for you
- Take any action or share information with other professionals without your explicit direction (unless someone's in immediate danger)
- Give medical advice

Am I eligible for the advocacy service?

One-on-one advocacy support is available to anyone age 18+ based in London who considers themselves under the trans umbrella, including people who are trans, nonbinary, intersex, genderqueer, crossdressing, gender nonconforming, and questioning. It is also open to people outside of London who have already accessed Spectra's trans counselling or peer support services.

What kinds of issues can the advocacy service help with?

Our service focuses on improving access to *healthcare*, which can include any aspect of mental or physical healthcare in the public, private, and community health sectors. We can help connect you to support for legal, social, housing, and financial issues, but can't take these on for one-on-one work.

Get in touch if your issue involves any of the following:

- Your GP surgery
- Mental healthcare
- Transition-related healthcare
- Other specialist care (sexual and reproductive health, disability and chronic health support, addiction recovery services, etc.)
- In-patient or hospital care
- Care and support coordination
- Issues accessing the above (because of systemic inequality, lack of information, admin issues, wait times, mental health, immigration status, sex work, incarceration, housing status, finances, etc.)
- Anything else you consider to be healthcare-related

How do I work with an advocate?

You'll fill in a short form on our website explaining what you'd like help with. We'll be in touch within 5 working days to discuss how we can help. That might include offering you self-advocacy resources, signposting you to a more appropriate service, or doing one-on-one work with an advocate. Please be aware there may be a wait, and we don't always have capacity or remit to do one-on-one work – but we'll always try to give you more information and options.

If one-on-one advocacy work is right for you, you'll meet with your advocate to get introduced, talk through your feelings and options, make a working agreement and plan, and debrief as you put the plan into action. Your advocate will often do work outside these meetings at your instruction, like researching resources for disability-related care, calling the gender clinic, or accompanying you to an appointment. They'll work at your pace around your schedule, needs, and questions, and be clear and honest with you when they can't do something or need more information.

Depending on the issue and your needs, your advocate will offer you between 1 and 12 hours of work done over a period of up to 3 months, working on one issue at a time. You decide how you use this time, which includes one-on-one meetings with your advocate and external meetings they do with you/on your behalf.

What happens when advocacy work finishes?

Spectra wants you to feel confident and supported when you finish work with your advocate. Towards the end of your work, your advocate will offer you the opportunity to create a self-advocacy and on-going support plan together.

When you finish your agreed-upon hours with an advocate, you will take a 3-month break from access to one-on-one advocacy. This is to ensure as many people as possible who need it can access the service. During that time, you can still come to Spectra's advocacy workshops, get in touch via email for signposting and advice, or access Spectra's other services.