



SPECTRA TRANS HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICE INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is support from a professional to help people express their needs, make informed decisions, and stand up for their rights. Spectra's free, confidential Trans Health Advocacy Service supports and empowers trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people accessing any kind of healthcare. The Trans Health Advocacy Service is client-led, with the advocate's role varying depending on the person's individual needs. Advocates represent their clients' voices at their direction – they gather information and help construct and carry out a plan, but don't make decisions for service users or give their opinion.

What advocacy is not

Trans health advocates work on practical issues with clients to specific defined outcomes. This means that advocacy is not long-term support, an on-call service, therapy, or crisis support. One of the biggest differences between advocacy and other types of support is that advocacy is entirely client-led, and can sometimes involve confrontation or conflict with other professionals. Advocates do not coordinate with other professionals without a service user's explicit instruction. We are obligated to share all information passed along about our clients.

What can the advocacy service help with?

People who experience transphobia and transmisogyny face unique barriers to care, transition-related or otherwise. Our trans health advocates can help people explore ways to access healthcare, understand and defend their rights, challenge discrimination in healthcare settings, communicate with services, and accompany people to appointments to ensure their voices are heard.

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 people to support for legal, social, housing, and financial issues, but can't take these on for one-on-one work. We can do advocacy work related to any of the following:

- Primary care
- 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 healthcare-related

What do we offer and who's eligible?

One-on-one advocacy casework is available to anyone age 18+ primarily 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.

We conduct assessments of clients to determine suitability for one-on-one advocacy work. Depending on the issue(s) involved, we offer between 1 and 12 hours of casework over a 3-month period. The client sets the structure and goals of the work together. We also might signpost clients to more appropriate services, provide them with self-advocacy resources, or ask them to join a waitlist depending on capacity/remit.

For people outside London, the Trans Health Advocacy Service runs weekly virtual workshops answering FAQs about healthcare access for trans people and can provide general info/signposting at advocacy@spectra-london.org.uk. Our Advocacy Lead also runs an in-person drop-in session at 56 Dean Street's 56T. Spectra's other trans support services, including peer support, mentoring, and counselling, are open to anyone in the UK.

How do I refer someone into the service?

Once you have the person's consent to refer them to the service, fill in the referral form on our website. We will be in touch with the client or yourself within 5 working days as indicated to arrange an initial assessment. We welcome co-working with other services if that's the client's preference. We won't contact clients who haven't consented to a referral.

When referring a client, please make them aware that we are a small specialist service and do not always have capacity or remit to take them on for one-on-one support. While we try to prioritise time-sensitive, urgent need issues, we can't provide crisis support or guarantee capacity when you get in touch – we operate a waitlist due to high levels of need. We will always conduct an assessment and provide information and signposting if we're unable to take clients on for casework right away/at all.

If you're not sure if our support is right for a client, want some advice, or need more information, get in touch at advocacy@spectra-london.org.uk.

Can we collaborate in other ways?

The Spectra Trans Health Advocacy Service is proud to be a unique service with a wealth of information about the UK's current trans health landscape. We run occasional free trainings and skillshares beyond the trans community, and are always open to discussing longer-term collaborations and education, especially from professionals in LGBTQ, sexual health, mental health, and health justice sectors.

If you're a cis professional asking for in-depth information from the service, we ask you consider offering an exchange/collaboration (skillshares, resources, etc.) or contacting Spectra to discuss a paid training opportunity. We do not generally contribute to academic research projects or journalistic pieces.

For general enquiries about press, training, education, volunteering, or other services, please contact info@spectra-london.org.uk.