

Citizen

Advocacy Service

**Supporting people to speak up, stand together
and make change happen themselves**

The Citizen Advocacy Service operating within Barrett, Cara and Richmond Cheshire homes is hosted by Cheshire Ireland and funded by the Citizens Information Board. The aim of this project is to build on the advocacy work that has been carried out in these services to date; to promote, protect and defend the rights of people using Cheshire services by making a citizen advocate available to as many people as possible by April 2008.

Citizen advocates play a vital role in facilitating access to a whole range of information, representation and other supports for people living in residential services. Citizen advocacy brings an individual together with an advocate on a long term, personal, one-to-one basis, so people using services experience a trusting relationship that involves an independent advocate whose loyalty is solely to them. This person-centred approach, in keeping with the ethos of Cheshire Ireland, will help to support people in their individual choices as to how they lead their lives.

The role of the service is to establish and support a range of freely given, personal relationships between people using Cheshire services and valued, competent citizens, prepared to undertake committed and sustained representation of each person's interests. A citizen advocate may become a monitor, friend, ally, mentor, supporter, spokesperson, guardian or any number of other roles in a person's life. The possibilities are endless, because each advocate's role in someone's life grows from the individual needs of each person.

The process of successfully establishing these relationships will involve information sharing, staff training, advocate recruitment, partner recruitment, advocate orientation, matching, monitoring and support, ongoing training, and involvement of advocate associates. These activities will support advocates to ensure that their partners receive a quality service, with as much continuity as possible over time despite their changing needs.

Citizen Advocacy is about –

- * Person-centredness
- * Loyalty
- * Rights
- * Equal opportunity
- * Support
- * Respect
- * Independence
- * Confidentiality
- * Accountability
- * Empowerment
- * Representation
- * Sharing