**ADVOCACY POLICY**

**Name: Care Stream Limited**

**Policy Statement**

We believe that people being supported should be enabled to express their views as clearly and candidly as they wish. Recognising that some people being supported may not be able to communicate easily, we encourage representatives to speak on their behalf where this is appropriate.

We believe that representation of this sort may be required:

* In the course of the pre-admission needs assessment.
* During any subsequent assessment of needs.
* In the drawing-up or reviewing of the care plan of the person being supported.
* In the process of assisting a person being supported to participate in the day-to-day delivery of their service.
* In making risk assessments relating to a person being supported’s activities.
* When helping a person being supported to represent their views to an outside organisation.
* When a person being supported wishes to express a concern or complaint.
* In instances where a person being supported may have been subject to abuse.
* When a person being supported wishes to submit their views on the organisation as part of our quality assurance programme.
* In helping a person being supported to make an input to the drawing up or review of the policies and procedures.
* In situations where the person being supported must take important decisions, for example about having surgery, but might lack the mental capacity to take the necessary decision on their own.

The IMCA’s task is to make representations about the person’s wishes, feelings, beliefs and values, to bring to the attention of decision makers all relevant factors, and to challenge decisions if necessary. See also the organisation’s policy on Working with person(s) being supported who Might Lack Mental Capacity.

We therefore make available information about advocacy, are prepared to deal with an advocate who is representing a person being supported in communication with the organisation, and aim to facilitate the use of advocates who are representing our person being supported to other organisations.

**Aim of the Policy**

The aim of this policy is to help the person being supported through the use of advocacy to express their views both to the organisation and to other bodies and to feel that their views are understood and respected.

**Defining Advocacy**

We accept the following definition of advocacy adopted by the organisation Action for Advocacy following consultation with a wide range of advocacy bodies in the social care field:

***“Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain service they need. Advocates and advocacy schemes work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and*** ***social justice.”***

**The Qualities of Advocacy**

* **Independence**: Advocates should be independent from statutory and other service providing agencies.
* **Empowerment**: People using advocacy should be able to participate in the running of the scheme.
* **Accountability**: Every advocacy scheme should monitor and evaluate its work effectively.
* **Support for advocates**: Advocates must be appropriately prepared, trained and supported.
* **Complaints**: Advocacy schemes must have policies for dealing with complaints.
* **Clarity of purpose**: Advocacy schemes must have clear objectives and must make these known.
* **Putting people first**: Advocates must be non-judgmental and respectful of the person being supported’s needs, views and experiences.
* **Equal opportunities**: Advocacy schemes must have and observe a written equal opportunities policy.
* **Accessibility**: Advocacy must be provided free of charge and in ways which make it widely accessible.
* **Confidentiality**: Advocacy schemes must have a policy on confidentiality, which includes the circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached.

**Our Person being supported’s Access to Advocacy**

We will seek to make advocacy available to any person being supported who needs help in presenting their views by:

* Publicising information on local advocacy schemes.
* Involving advocates where appropriate in the preparation and review of individual care plans.
* Using advocates to promote supported peoples’ participation in the running of the organisation.
* Helping people being supported to find and participate in advocacy schemes.
* Seeking peer support for individual people being supported from others who share their disability, heritage or aspirations.
* Promoting a culture which enables people being supported to call on advocates to express their concerns and provide feedback on the way the organisation is run.
* Respecting the role of advocates in situations in which people being supported wish to complain about services.
* Co-operating with any Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) appointed to assist a person being supported under the *Mental Capacity Act 2005*.

**Advocates Appointed under the Mental Capacity Act 2005**

Care Stream recognises the role under the *Mental Capacity Act 2005* of the Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA), who can be formally appointed to support someone who lacks capacity, for example, a person being supported with a brain injury or a severe learning difficulty. The IMCA’s task is to make representations about the person’s wishes, feelings, beliefs and values, to bring to the attention of decision makers all relevant factors, and to challenge decisions if necessary. An example of a key decision would be if the carers of a person being supported decided he/she should move to a project without attempting to involve the person in the decision.

Care Stream will encourage the appointment of an IMCA where a person being supported, who has been assessed as lacking mental capacity, needs to take a key decision that affects or possibly compromises the service delivery that has been agreed with the organisation.

Care Stream then undertakes to co-operate with the advocate to arrive at a decision that clearly represents the person being supported’s best interests. The organisation will at all times follow the principles and practices laid down by the *Mental Capacity Act 2005* as described in its code of practice.

**Training**

All staff will be encouraged to read this policy and will be provided with training on the use of advocacy at all suitable stages of their employment with the organisation.

This policy will be reviewed by the Director of Operations

Advocacy Services contact details

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Signature:

Date: