



**INCLUSION IRELAND**

## **Advocacy Policies & Code of Practice**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to offer support and guidance to the advocacy staff of Inclusion Ireland. It describes what we do and how we do it. It also outlines the principles guiding the behaviour of Inclusion Ireland advocacy staff.

Although the document is aimed primarily at advocacy staff, the policies are also applicable to all employees, board members and representatives of Inclusion Ireland.

The document will also be of benefit to people receiving advocacy services or support from Inclusion Ireland and to agencies and organisations interested in learning more about how we provide and support advocacy. This document should be read in conjunction with the Inclusion Ireland Guide to Advocacy.

This publication has been developed and prepared by Inclusion Ireland staff with the support and guidance of the Inclusion Ireland Advocacy Committee. The Board of Inclusion Ireland has approved this document, which will be reviewed bi-annually.

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# **Policies and Procedures**

## **Information & Data Protection**

<b>Policy Ref:</b>	<b>A001</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>February 2011</b>
<b>Responsible:</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>February 2013</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Board of Inclusion Ireland</b>

### **Policy Statement**

Inclusion Ireland will keep personal information about individuals confidential, safe and secure and will use information only for the purposes for which it was collected

### **Rationale**

To safeguard the processing of personal information and ensure compliance with data protection legislation

### **Definitions**

Information management refers to the process within Inclusion Ireland that deals with personal information received from the people it supports.

Data protection is about how Inclusion Ireland protects the personal information it collects about the people it supports.

### **Protecting personal information**

In protecting people's personal information, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Never disclose your personal details without your consent
  - Keep information about you safe, secure, accurate and up-to-date
  - Use information only for the purposes it was collected
  - Data and personal information will not be left around where it can be accessed by other
  - Use encryption on our laptop computers
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## **Disclosing information**

Under data protection legislation, Inclusion Ireland can only disclose personal data to others when it is:

- Authorised to do so to safeguard the security of the State
  - Required for the purpose of preventing, detecting or investigating offences / crimes
  - Required urgently to prevent damage to health or serious loss/damage to property
  - Required under law and for legal advice
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## **Confidentiality**

**Policy Ref:** A002  
**Effective Date:** February 2011  
**Responsible:** Chief Executive Officer  
**Review Date:** February 2013  
**Approved by:** Board of Inclusion Ireland

### **Policy Statement**

Inclusion Ireland will treat as confidential all personal information about an individual, whether obtained directly, indirectly or by inference.

### **Rationale**

To protection the client's right to confidentiality and privacy

### **Definition**

Confidentiality is the right of an individual to have his/her personal information kept private.

### **How is confidentiality protected?**

- By inclusion Ireland using secure information systems
- By Inclusion Ireland keeping safe all correspondence, personal information, records and case files.
- By Inclusion Ireland not disclosing information about a client unless that person agrees to it

In the following circumstances, Inclusion Ireland may have to break confidentiality

- If there is a serious or real concern that abuse has occurred or may occur
  - If we have concerns that the client is a threat to themselves or others
  - If we are required to do so by law
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## Enquiries

<b>Policy Ref:</b>	<b>A003</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>February 2011</b>
<b>Responsible:</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>February 2013</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Board of Inclusion Ireland</b>

### Policy Statement

Inclusion Ireland will treat as confidential all personal information provided by a person, whether obtained directly, indirectly or by inference and will treat the person making the enquiry with the utmost respect.

### Rationale

To have a clear and consistent approach to how we deal with the public

### Definition

When a person contacts Inclusion Ireland with a request for information, advice or advocacy support we call this an enquiry.

### How we deal with enquires

The procedure in which an enquiry is dealt with is dependent on how the enquiry is received. The following general standards will be applied by Inclusion Ireland when dealing with all enquiries:

- We will respect the beliefs and values of the person making the enquiry
  - We will only request information necessary to deal with the enquiry
  - We will explain the reason for any questions we ask
  - We will treat as confidential all information provided by a person, whether obtained directly, indirectly or by inference
  - We will protect any information provided
  - The staff member dealing with your enquiry will request from you general information regarding your enquiry. This will include your name, contact details and the main area or issue of your enquiry.
  - The enquiry will then either be dealt with immediately or referred to an appropriate staff member
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- There are occasions where an enquiry relates to issues that do not relate to intellectual disability. On these occasions, the staff member will refer these enquiries to another agency.

The following section describes how we deal with enquires made in specific ways:

### **Enquiries by telephone**

Inclusion Ireland staff will:

- Identify themselves immediately
- Treat people with courtesy, professionalism, efficiency and discretion.
- Return telephone calls as soon as possible
- Respond to telephone messages within one working day at the latest
- Refer the person making the enquiry to other relevant organisations if we cannot help

### **Enquiries by letter /email**

Inclusion Ireland staff will:

- Acknowledge your letter/email within 24 hours
- Respond to you with details of how we can help with your enquiry
- Use clear language in our dealings with you
- Ensure our 'out of office' e-mail service is on when staff are absent

### **Enquiries made in person**

Inclusion Ireland staff will:

- Ensure our offices are open to the public during regular office hours
- Ensure our office is accessible to all
- Greet you with courtesy and respect
- Provide the facilities to ensure your privacy and personal details are protected

There are occasions when an enquiry is quite complex and requires ongoing support. This is when the enquiry becomes an advocacy case. Please refer to our case management policy.

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## **Case Management**

<b>Policy Ref:</b>	<b>A003</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>February 2011</b>
<b>Responsible:</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>February 2013</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Board of Inclusion Ireland</b>

### **Policy Statement**

Inclusion Ireland will have a clear system and procedure for managing advocacy cases

### **Rationale**

To provide a system for managing advocacy cases

### **Definition**

Case management refers to how advocacy cases are managed

### **Opening an advocacy case**

There are occasions when an enquiry comes into the office and the issue identified is quite complex and requires ongoing support. This is when the enquiry becomes an advocacy case and a case file is opened.

### **What is in an advocacy case file?**

An advocacy case file contains information about all meetings attended, phone calls, reports and correspondence. The case file is kept in a secure filing cabinet. Information about the case is also stored on our secure computer system.

### **Managing advocacy cases**

It is the responsibility of the advocate to keep all case files up to date. The advocacy staff will adhere to information management, data protection and confidentiality policies when managing cases.

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## **Closing an advocacy case**

An advocacy case will be closed when:

- The advocacy issues are resolved to the satisfaction of the person receiving the advocacy service or the person receiving the service decides not to continue
  - When Inclusion Ireland can no longer effectively assist the client or when it is agreed between the advocate and the client that all avenues in respect of the issue have been exhausted
  - Inclusion Ireland will keep the case file, according to provisions of data protection legislation
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## **Non Instructed Advocacy**

**Policy Ref:** A004  
**Effective Date:** February 2011  
**Responsible:** Chief Executive Officer  
**Review Date:** February 2013  
**Approved by:** Board of Inclusion Ireland

### **Policy Statement**

Ireland will provide advocacy in circumstances when a person with an intellectual disability is unable to express their wishes and views at a particular time in their lives

### **Rationale**

To have a procedure for providing advocacy in specific circumstances

### **Definition**

Non-instructed advocacy is a procedure used by advocates to represent what he or she believes would be a client's views if the client were able to express them themselves. Non instructed advocacy is only ever used when a client is unable to express their wishes and views at a particular time in their lives

### **How is non-instructed provided?**

- The advocate satisfies themselves that the client cannot give a clear indication of their views at a particular time
  - The advocate explains clearly to all relevant people the role of the advocate and how non-instructed advocacy works
  - The advocate recognises as important the views of family, friends and significant others to the client
  - The advocate is guided by the past wishes of the client and any advanced statements made by them
  - The advocate spends time getting to know the client
  - The advocate remains loyal to the client
  - The advocate uses best practice in the provision of non instructed advocacy
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## **Conflict of Interest**

**Policy Ref:** A005  
**Effective Date:** February 2011  
**Responsible:** Chief Executive Officer  
**Review Date:** February 2013  
**Approved by:** Board of Inclusion Ireland

### **Policy Statement**

Inclusion Ireland will avoid situations which give rise to conflicts of interest

### **Rationale**

To safeguard the advocate and his/her client

### **Definition**

A conflict of interest is a situation where the interests of an individual or organisation clash with those of a person with an intellectual disability

### **When does it occur?**

When the advocate cannot act independently

### **Dealing with conflicts of interest**

Inclusion Ireland advocates will:

- Only represent the views of the client
  - Remain loyal to their client
  - Make the client aware of any conflict of interest
  - Clarify their role and responsibilities to the client and to others (e.g. family member, staff member)
  - Adhere to the Inclusion Ireland policies and code of practice
  - Step aside from a case if and when the advocate is responsible for the conflict of interest (when this occurs, the advocate will refer the client to another independent advocate)
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## **Complaints**

<b>Policy Ref:</b>	<b>A005</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>February 2012</b>
<b>Responsible:</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>February 2013</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Board of Inclusion Ireland</b>

### **Policy Statement**

Inclusion Ireland promotes the rights of all those who come into contact with us to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

### **Rationale**

To provide a system for dealing with complaints as they relate to our advocacy supports and services.

### **Definition**

A complaint is a statement of a client's unhappiness with something Inclusion Ireland has said or done.

### **Why make a complaint?**

If you feel unhappy about you have been treated by us.

### **How to make a complaint**

- Talk to the staff member concerned and tell them what you are unhappy about.
- If you have done this and you are still unhappy, or if you are unable to do this, you should contact the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Inclusion Ireland. You can do this in person, in writing or over the telephone.

### **How Inclusion Ireland deal with complaints**

- The staff member will take your complaint from you by way of a statement.
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- The staff member will write down your complaint, read it back to you and ask you to sign it.
  - The complaint is then given to the CEO of Inclusion Ireland
  - Inclusion Ireland will write to the person and make them aware that the complaint has been received
  - A representative of Inclusion Ireland will offer to meet the person making the complaint to ensure that they have all the information necessary
  - The person making the complaint will be told how their complaint will be dealt with
  - The person making the complaint will be informed what they can do if they are unhappy about how the complaint is being investigated
  - Inclusion Ireland Chief Executive will give the outcome of the investigation to the person making the complaint
  - This information will be communicated in a way that is accessible to the person making the complaint

### **Representation**

- If the person making the complaint wishes to obtain legal representation it is the practice of Inclusion Ireland to seek legal representation also
- If legal proceedings are commenced during a complaint or appeal process then the Inclusion Ireland internal investigation will be suspended.

### **Withdrawing a complaint**

- If the person making the complaint subsequently withdraws it, the CEO will decide if the investigation should continue or not

### **Making complaints about other organisations**

- Inclusion Ireland staff will inform you about how to make complaints in respect of services received from other organisations and public bodies
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## **Personal Safety**

**Policy Ref:** A005  
**Effective Date:** February 2011  
**Responsible:** Chief Executive Officer  
**Review Date:** February 2013  
**Approved by:** Board of Inclusion Ireland

### **Policy Statement**

Inclusion Ireland recognises and acknowledges that occasionally the personal safety of advocates may be exposed to risk when working in the community.

### **Rationale**

To provide guidance to advocates on the measures to take to minimise risk in respect of their personal safety

### **Inclusion Ireland responsibilities**

- Consult with employees for the purpose of effective personal safety in the workplace
- Provide a safe working environment for its employees

### **Employee Responsibilities**

- Take reasonable care for their own personal safety
- Cooperate with their employer in respect of personal safety issues
- Report to their employer any issues of personal safety which occur during work

### **Guidance for personal safety**

In order to maintain their personal safety in the workplace, Inclusion Ireland advocates will:

- Enter all advocacy appointments on the Inclusion Ireland information management system
  - Inform their line manager, or a colleague, who they are visiting and how long they expect the meeting to last
  - Remove themselves from any situation where they feel at risk
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- Keep their mobile phones fully charged and operational
  - Never disclose their personal address or private telephone number
  - Record and report any indication of the client having a history of violent or abusive behaviour
  - Record and report any perceived threat of violent behaviour
  - Remove themselves from a situation which they may feel uncomfortable or ill-equipped to deal with
  - Avoid using their private vehicle to transport clients
  - Never engage in a meeting where the client is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
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# Code of Practice

## Introduction

This code of practice is a set of principles which describe the behaviour that is acceptable for Inclusion Ireland advocates. This code of practice also informs people who may wish to use Inclusion Ireland services of what they can expect. The principles which underpin this code of practice reflect the values of Inclusion Ireland.

## Principle 1: Person Focussed

When providing or supporting advocacy, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Always focus on the needs, interests, views and wishes of the person with an intellectual disability
- Explain what advocacy is and how it can help in a particular situation
- Never allow personal opinions to influence how advocacy is provided
- Always remain loyal to the person receiving support

## Principle 2: Confidentiality

When providing and supporting advocacy, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Maintain confidentiality at all times
- Treat all information provided as belonging to the person providing it
- Consent will be sought to discuss ca case with others
- Ensure that any information provided complies with data protection laws
- Explain the circumstances under which confidentiality may be breached

## Principle 3: Respect for Human Rights

When providing and supporting advocacy, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Protect and promote the human rights of the people they support
- Never take action that restricts or removes the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities

## Principle 4: Independence

When providing and supporting advocacy, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Provide advocacy which represents solely the wishes and views of the client
- Be aware of any conflicts of interest and how to deal with them

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- Never be influenced or compromised in carrying out their advocacy duties on behalf of their client, by any organisation providing direct services to the client group, other organisations or other people involved with the client

### **Principle 5: Accessibility**

When providing and supporting advocacy, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Respond to all requests and enquiries for advocacy
- Refer an advocacy case or enquiry to another independent advocate if it is unable to take a case
- Use accessible facilities, language and materials when providing advocacy

### **Principle 6: Accountability**

When providing and supporting advocacy, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Be accountable to the people it provides advocacy to
- Provide a clear explanation of the role of advocacy and the role of the advocate
- Only act on the issues agreed by the person being supported
- Always act within the law
- Implement all advocacy policies and procedures

### **Principle 7: Support for Advocates**

When providing and supporting advocacy, Inclusion Ireland will:

- Provide necessary support, training and supervision to its advocacy staff;
  - Provide clear job descriptions, training and professional development opportunities to its advocacy staff
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## References

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**Scope**, When Communication Gets Tough: A Guide to Non-instructed Advocacy (2008)

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