



Your Voice

ADVOCACY AND NEURODIVERSITY

5 MINUTE READ

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Advocacy can make a difference to the quality of somebodies life, meaning less frustration, better communication and understanding which leads to people's needs being met. This of course applies to everyone so why is it so important to autistic and Neurodiverse people?

For so long Autism and Neurodiversity hasn't really had a place in service provision and health care. Autism has been misunderstood and that means that autistic people's needs aren't really met. Many services still use the term 'learning disability and autism', which initially meant people with co-occurring Learning disabilities and Autism, this meant that Autistic people without a learning disability had nowhere to go and ask for support or have their voice heard.

While it does now include autistic people without a learning disability, the needs of people with a learning disability and autistic people can be very different and these services aren't necessarily set up for Autistic people. Therefore people can feel forgotten and that their rights don't exist. It creates barriers that make day to day life difficult leaving many autistic and neurodiverse people feeling alone, unsure where to go for support and isolated. However it also has a more serious effect on their quality of life, and ultimately life expectancy can be decreased. So we need advocacy, peer advocacy and self-advocacy to help us make sure our voice is heard.



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BRINGING TOGETHER A COMMUNITY



Self-advocacy and peer advocacy often provides a valuable sense of community. It gives people validation, the sense that there are other people out there who do understand and reassurance that you are not alone. While there's been quite a history of self-advocacy for the learning disability community dating back to the 1970's, self-advocacy in the autistic community is fairly new.

However over the last few years, Autistic and Neurodiverse people have taken advantage of the advancement of technology to bring a wide and diverse community together that can help bring that sense of belonging. It also brings to the forefront the needs of autistic and neurodiverse people to members of the public and people on the social media rather than the stereotypical views of autism that are often portrayed in the media. This brings more awareness, understanding and acceptance in the wider public.

THRIVING, NOT SURVIVING

For an individual, advocacy is about making sure that their needs are met, their views and wishes are heard and it means that people are more able to thrive. Being able to access health care, support, education and employment means we have a better quality of life. Reasonable adjustments being made impacts whether or not the people are successful at the task. It means Autistic and Neurodiverse people get to take control of their own lives and make their own decisions.

Being able to speak up for our rights, support each other so everyone in the community thrives and has the right to take control of their own lives, hopefully means that neurodiversity is better understood, provided for and valued.

