

Advocacy skills

1. **Advocacy** means giving support to a person so their voice is heard. Your disabled and/or neurodivergent brother/sister may be able to have an independent advocate to support them with some decisions.
2. **Use the laws to support your key points.** Human rights, care and equality laws are complex – don't expect to learn them all (health and social care staff won't either). But having a basic understanding will help when you are putting across a key point about your disabled brother or sister's care.
3. **Tips for managing meetings:** request a meeting time and format (e.g. online if needed) that enables you to attend; ask for a copy of the agenda in advance; take someone with you to help you take notes and keep you emotionally focused if you need to; send any issues that you would like to be discussed to the chair a week before; have some questions ready; ask for clarification if there's anything you don't understand.
4. **Focus on the bigger picture** and keep returning to this. For example, "I'd like my brother to live pain free" is ultimately what you're looking to achieve by requesting that he has a dentist appointment soon. The bigger picture is often hard to argue with.
5. **Think about the language you use.** "My sister has put on weight since coming here" might make people feel defensive. Saying "I'm concerned about my sister's weight because of her diabetes" focuses on the problem itself. Stock phrases can help, such as: "Can you show/tell me how you arrived at this?"; "That sounds interesting, tell me more"; "How can we..." help people respond more openly.
6. **Above all else, look after yourself.** Take it a step at a time, do what you can and remember that you can't solve everything.