



Freephone 0808 196 3525

Address: AdvoCard, Duncan Place Resource Centre, 4 Duncan Place Leith EH6 8HW

www.advocard.org.uk

advocacysupport@advocard.org.uk

www.advocard.org.uk
Scottish Charity No. SC023181
Company Limited by Guarantee No. SC396023

Understanding Advocacy

A Guide for Partner Organisations

What advocacy is, and how to recognise when a family bereaved by a death in prison custody may need support

Your Voice, Your Rights, Our Support

1. What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy is support that helps a person be heard on the issues that matter to them. An advocacy worker does not speak instead of someone or make decisions for them but will help them understand their situation, work out what they want to say, and get their views heard by the organisations they are dealing with.

2. What the Family Advocacy Service Does

The Family Advocacy Service supports families bereaved by a death in a Scottish prison, from shortly after the death and at any stage until after the Fatal Accident Inquiry concludes. Our advocacy workers will:

- Explain the DIPLAR, COPFS/Scottish Custody Deaths Unit, NHS Serious Adverse Event Review, and Fatal Accident Inquiry processes in plain language.
- Attend key meetings with families, in person or remotely, and provide advocacy support to ensure they get a chance to raise any concerns they have.
- Help families put their questions to the right organisation and explain the answers they receive.
- Request information or documents on a family's behalf.
- Signpost or refer to bereavement, financial, or legal support where this is needed.

The service will not provide legal advice, counselling or therapy, its own investigation into the death, or a decision-making role in any process.

Families will always be told this clearly and signposted to the right organisation for anything outside the service's scope.

3. Who Can Use the Service

Any family member bereaved by a death in a Scottish prison can be referred to or contact the service directly. There is no other eligibility test. A family does not need to have started any formal process before they are referred and can be at any stage in the process when they decide they no longer wish to use the service.

4. How to Recognise When a Family May Need Advocacy Support

Every family bereaved by a death in prison custody may benefit from advocacy support, and staff should feel able to mention the service to any family in this position at the earliest appropriate point.

The signs below are common indicators that a referral would be particularly helpful:

- The family seems unclear about what key meetings involve, or what will happen next.
- The family is dealing with more than one process at the same time and finding it hard to keep track.
- The family has communication needs, for example around language, literacy, or disability, that make written or verbal information hard to follow.
- The family has stopped responding to contact or is not attending meetings they have been invited to.
- The family is visibly distressed or overwhelmed in meetings.

None of these signs are required before a referral can be made. Bereavement following a death in custody is reason enough to let a family know the service exists.

How to Refer

Referrals can be made by telephone, email, the online referral portal, in writing, or through an agreed direct referral pathway. Families can also refer themselves.

Our service will make contact within 2 working days of a referral being received. There is no cost to the family, and the family is free to decline or stop using the service at any time.