

**BLACK
HERITAGE
SUPPORT
SERVICE**

Self Advocacy

Brixton Residents Edition



SELF-ADVOCACY TOOLKIT FOR BRIXTON RESIDENTS.

Acknowledging Intersectional Realities

Self-advocacy is especially challenging for people living with multiple layers of marginalisation. Being Black already means facing unequal treatment in healthcare, housing, benefits, policing, and mental health systems. When this intersects with being queer, disabled, neurodivergent, chronically ill, or low-income, the barriers multiply.

This toolkit recognises these realities. It is designed to support you in navigating systems that were not built with your needs in mind, while helping you build confidence, clarity, and power.

1. What Is Self-Advocacy?

Self-advocacy means:

- ✓ Speaking up for your needs and rights
- ✓ Asking for clear explanations
- ✓ Making informed decisions
- ✓ Bringing someone with you for support
- ✓ Knowing what help exists locally

Self-advocacy does not mean doing everything alone. It means using tools, confidence, and support to ensure your voice is heard.

2. Preparing to Advocate for Yourself

Before an appointment, write down:

- ✓ What you need help with
- ✓ Your main questions
- ✓ Any symptoms, issues, or worries

Example:

“I want to understand my medication changes.”

“I need support with my housing application.”

Ask Clear Questions

You have the right to ask for plain English. Try:

- ✓ “Can you explain that in simpler words?”
- ✓ “What does this mean for me day-to-day?”
- ✓ “What are my options?”

Bring Notes or a Support Person

People often forget information under stress.

You can:

- ✓ Bring someone to advocate with you
- ✓ Ask to record the conversation
- ✓ Write down key points

3. Knowing Your Rights

In Healthcare

You can ask for:

- ✓ Clear explanations
- ✓ Time to process information
- ✓ Reasonable adjustments (e.g., longer appointments)
- ✓ Written instructions

If confused, say:

“I’d like to understand this Better, can we go over it again?”

In Benefits & Housing

You have the right to:

- ✓ Free independent advice
- ✓ Support completing forms
- ✓ Appeal decisions
- ✓ Get written explanations

If unsure, ask:

“Can you show me where to complete this part?”

4. Accompaniment & Advocacy Options

Local Advocate scan:

- ✓ Attend appointments with you
- ✓ Speak on your behalf
- ✓ Explain medical or legal jargon
- ✓ Support appeals
- ✓ Help prepare documents

Start with:

- ✓ Brixton Advice Centre
- ✓ Citizens Advice
- ✓ Local mental health services
- ✓ Community Support organisations (churches, charities)

5. Scripts You Can Use

At the GP or Hospital

- ✓ “I don’t understand that term, can you explain it another way?”
- ✓ “Can you write down the key steps for me?”
- ✓ “What choices do I have?”

When Filling Forms

- ✓ “I need help completing this section, can someone assist me?”
 - ✓ “Can you explain what this part means?”
- Take forms to Brixton Advice Centre.

If You Feel Unheard

- ✓ “I want to be part of this decision.”
- ✓ “I’m finding this overwhelming, can we slow down?”

6. Long-Term Self-Advocacy Tips

Keep a Simple Journal

Note down:

- ✓ Appointments
- ✓ What was said
- ✓ What you need to do next
- ❖ This becomes your evidence and memory support.

Build a Small Support Network

This can include:

- ✓ Friend
- ✓ Neighbour
- ✓ Faith leader
- ✓ Community worker
- ✓ Support group member

Use “I Statements”

Helps keep the focus on your needs:

- ✓ “I feel confused when medical terms are used.”
- ✓ “I understand my situation differently — here’s why...”

7. Message

Being Black in Brixton, especially when combined with disability, chronic illness, queerness, poverty, or trauma, means navigating systems that are often not inclusive.

This toolkit exists to help you speak up, get support, and access the care you deserve. You are not alone, and your voice matters.

Local Brixton & Lambeth Support Services

Legal, Benefits & Housing Advice

Brixton Advice Centre

- ❖ *Free help with benefits, debt, housing, and rights.*
- ✓ 167 Railton Road
- ✓ 020 7733 7554
- ✓ Walk-in info & phone advice available
- ✓ brixtonadvice.org.uk

Citizens Advice Lambeth

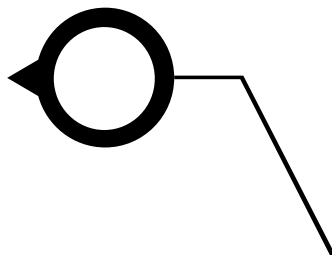
- ✓ Benefits, housing, employment & consumer support.
- ✓ lambeth.gov.uk



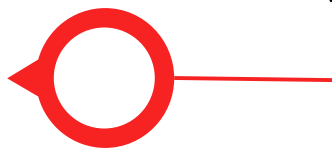
Getting Support



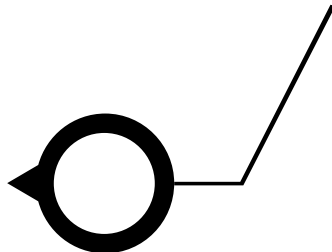
Sickle Cell Society
www.sicklecellsociety.org:
Information, advocacy, and support groups



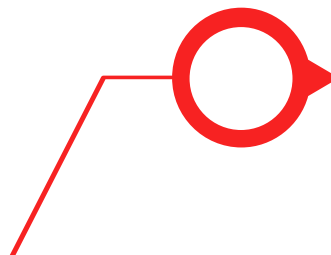
Contact – www.contact.org.uk For families with disabled children
[HELPLINE 0808 808 3555](tel:08088083555)



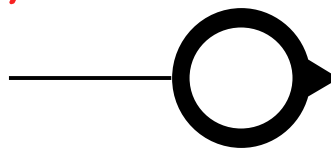
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): Available in every NHS hospital, please google the relevant hospital for their PALS advice line.



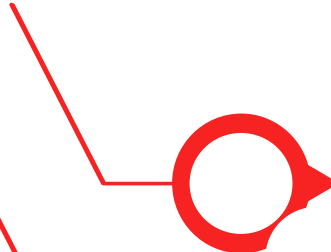
Citizens Advice
www.citizensadvice.org.uk:
Help with complaints and legal rights



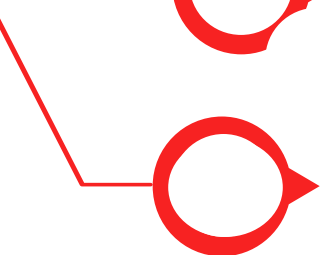
Equality Advisory Support Service
www.equalityadvisoryservice.com:
Help with discrimination issues



Family Lives. For parenting and family life troubles
0808 800 2222
www.familylives.org.uk



Advice Now – Free legal advice
0808 808 3555
www.advicenow.org.uk





Getting Support

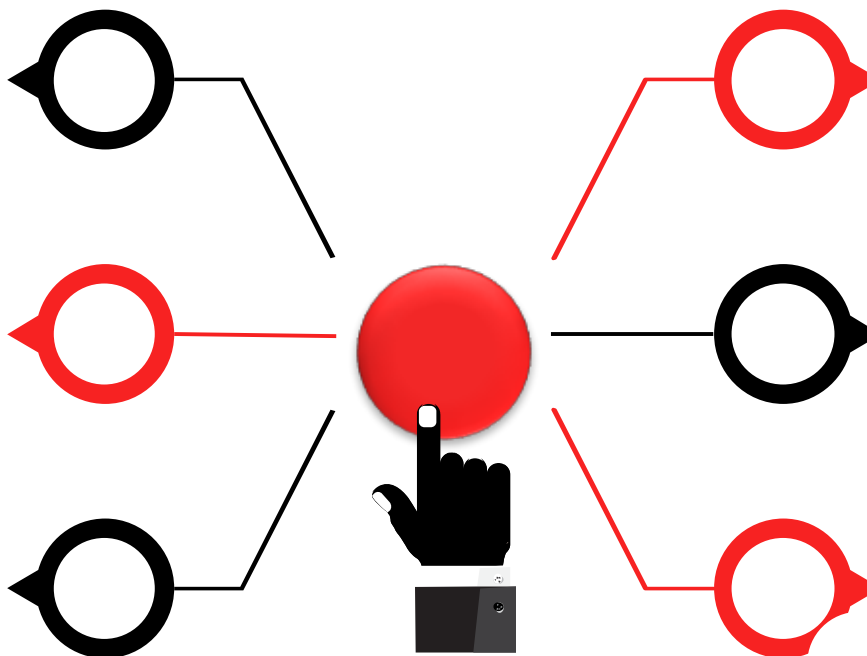


National LGBTQ+ support line

<https://switchboard.lgbt/>
0800 0119 100

AGE UK – Advice for the elderly offers a free advice line on **0800 678 1602** (open 8am-7pm, 365 days a year).

The Black Heritage Support Service
0800 861 1463 Wed and Fri 10am-4pm
www.bhss.co.uk



Carers UK

National helpline for carers
Call 0800 808 7777
<https://www.carersuk.org/>

Google Tasks

Manage your tasks
<https://zapier.com/blog/google-tasks-guide/>

Mental Health Helpline
24/7

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>
Call - 116 123



Template Letters & Scripts: **Sample Complaint Letter**



Complaint letter Example

Before complaining to an Ombudsman (regulatory service) You will usually need to go through an internal organisations formal complaint procedure.

"I am writing to express concern about the care I received on [date] at [location]. Despite presenting relevant information and following instructions, I was ignored by staff members. This caused unnecessary suffering and falls short of (company) guidelines. I would like an investigation and a formal response."



EG Script for A&E Visit Example

"I have (disorder). I'm experiencing a pain crisis. I need urgent pain relief within 30 minutes, per NHS guidelines.

Please refer to my care plan or contact my dedicated care team."

Specialist Services

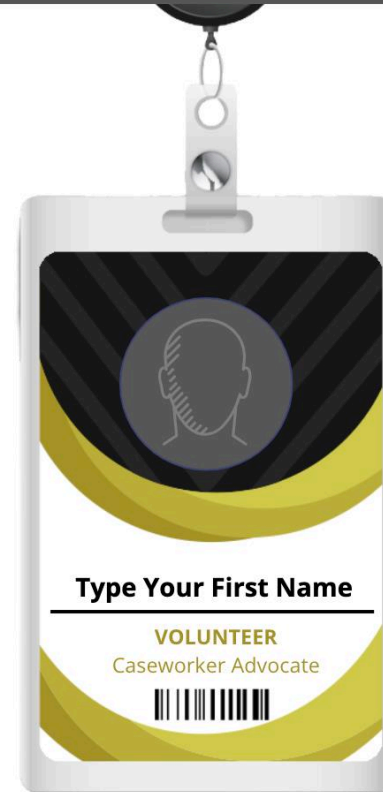
You have the right to request an interpreter/advocate and to have documentation explained to you if it is not clear.

Depending on the service provider, you may also have access psychological support, pain management services, and counselling.

Complete our human rights module [Human Rights Module BHSS](#) on our website.

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VOLUNTEER TRAINING
Advocacy Caseworkers



START

We hope this was helpful. If
you would like to contact us,

Please go to www.bhss.co.uk

The logo for Black Heritage Support Service is displayed in a white circle with a red border. The text is stacked vertically in a bold, black, sans-serif font with a white outline and a black drop shadow. The words are "BLACK", "HERITAGE", "SUPPORT", and "SERVICE".

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