

Peer Advocacy in Mental Health **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/541>)**

Established following two conferences that took place in 1999, Derry/Londonderry; and Ballybofey, Co. Donegal, 2004.

Hundreds of people with experience of mental health challenges and use of mental health services attended both events, making their way from the four corners of the island to participate.

Subsequently, an elected management committee composed of people from the island of Ireland was charged with establishing the Irish Advocacy Network. The Irish Advocacy Network is one of very few organisations in Ireland involved in mental health whose function was determined by people with mental health challenges.

The Irish Advocacy Network developed peer advocacy across Ireland and fostered the concept of recovery. We began with a small number of volunteers providing peer advocacy in key areas of the country.

We now have paid staff trained to a high standard delivering peer advocacy in mental health across the island of Ireland. Because our advocates have self-experience, they have a strong affinity and a notable ability to deploy an authentic, deep-seated empathy while working with advocacy clients.

We believe our advocates are examples of recovery and recovered persons and therefore act as symbols of hope and inspiration.

Contact Info

Peer Advocacy in Mental Health

First Floor, The Tannery Building,

53 - 56 Cork Street,

Dublin 8,

D08 X31R

Tel: [\(01\) 5470510 \(tel:015470510\)](tel:015470510)

Email

admin@irishadvocacynetwork.com

Website

<https://www.peeradvocacyinmentalhealth.com/> (<https://www.peeradvocacyinmentalhealth.com/>)

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