

What does the Coronavirus Act mean for social care – and for advocacy?

The Coronavirus Act is designed to enable the country to deal with the unprecedented impact of COVID-19.

Amongst many other changes, it is likely to alter what people can expect from social care. It's important for everyone who relies on social care, families, professionals and advocates to know about it.

The Act allows local authorities not to fully meet their duties under the Care Act. This includes relaxing the duty to assess, plan for and meet people's social care needs. Local authorities must still make sure that people's human rights are respected and safeguarding duties remain.

But local authorities must only reduce what they do, or the support that they pay for, if and when they have to do so because of Coronavirus. That means different local authorities must decide individually.

Each must make clear what they are changing and why. There is Government Guidance about this called the Care Act Easements Guidance.

It is vital that people who use service are heard, that their wellbeing still comes first, and that people are not left without essential support. Advocacy helps with this and it will be even more important that people can get advocacy support.

As advocates we may need to change some of the ways in which we help people to have a voice; for example, if local authority processes, like assessment and care planning are changed. We may also need to be help people to explore options to get the support that they need in different ways.

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