

Independent support brokers: Required competencies and characteristics

People who choose to use the services of an independent broker should be able to access brokers with reasonable confidence that the broker will have at least a basic level of skills and knowledge, will work ethically, and will be genuinely independent. The table below – first developed as part of the NDT's *Life Planning* projects – aims to set out the required and desirable characteristics of an independent support broker.

These provide the basis for assessment of people undertaking broker training. However, assessment from training is not sufficient in itself to determine whether a person should be accredited to work as an independent broker. This is partly because the amount of evidence from training may not be sufficient to make a firm judgement; in practice the assessment more often highlights areas that need further learning and/or monitoring as the person begins working as a broker. It is also important to recognise that a short training course can only establish foundation skills and knowledge. Even those participants who strongly demonstrate competence at this level will need to be committed to continuing learning. Furthermore, accreditation needs to combine assessment from training with information from CRB checks and personal references.

The table below also includes (under Area 3) the characteristic of independence – a critical requirement for people acting as independent brokers. Some people may not meet this requirement at the time of training but have plans to change their employment situation later on, so that they will become independent. Equally, some people may change their situation after the training in a way that compromises their independence. So accreditation must be considered as dynamic condition, not as a one-off outcome of training.

For all these reasons, the characteristics set out in the table are divided into 3 categories, as follows:

A ABSOLUTE: There are some areas – notably those concerned with values and basic inter-personal skills – which people must meet in order to work as a broker, and for which evidence should be available by the end of the training course. Evidence from training that a participant does not meet these requirements is likely to result in a recommendation (to the training commissioner and/or accrediting body) that the person should not be accredited.

B SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION: Some competencies, particularly the more technical skills, may not be demonstrated directly during the course, though they may be indicated from the person's previous life experience or work. Where there is no negative evidence, but there is a lack of both direct and indirect supportive evidence, a recommendation of accreditation may be made, but subject to the condition that further evidence is acquired from monitoring the person's early practice as a broker, and that there is both the opportunity for further learning and a commitment by the broker to achieve the learning that is necessary. The scope to make a recommendation of this sort is much greater if there are strong and reliable arrangements to support and monitor brokers after training.

C CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT: Developing the specific skills required for the role of broker, and gathering knowledge about services and community resources, must be a continuing process. A high level of competence in these areas is not required for accreditation, provided that the person has the foundation of basic values and inter-personal skills, and a commitment to invest in their own development.

If the trainers/assessors have concerns that the person does not meet the requirements for accreditation, they will be shared with the person as soon as possible. The training course is also designed to encourage participants to assess their own competence and goals for further development.

	Area	Details	Category
1	VALUES AND ATTITUDES		
1a	Attitudes towards disabled people	Committed to the ability and right of disabled people (including people with severe learning disabilities) to make choices and to be citizens with access to the same resources and opportunities as other citizens.	A
1b	Person-centred perspective	Able to distinguish between their own interests, aspirations and concerns, and those of the person, so that they are able to focus on the person's requirements.	A
1c	Independence of mind	Free of any loyalty to health or social service commissioners or providers that might undermine their ability to work in the interests of the disabled person to whom they are providing a service.*	A
1d	Service oriented attitudes	Willing to accept direction from the disabled person, and to work on the terms agreed with the person.	A
1e	Perspective	Respects and values the ways and assets of informal community life (alongside, but in contrast to, the resources and methods of formal public and commercial organisations).	A
2	PERSONAL AND INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS		
2a	Self-assessed limits	Able to identify the limits of their own competence and act appropriately when those limits are reached.	A
2b	Customer service oriented communication	Able to assist people without taking control.	A
2c	Person-centred facilitation	Able to facilitate people to define their own problems, needs, and goals.	B
2d	Personal manner	Has the personal manner and communication style to develop positive relationships with people in services and community networks.	B

2e	Personal presentation	Has an appearance and manner that supports a positive view of disabled people.	A
2f	Appropriate assertiveness	Able to be assertive, in ways and on occasions that are appropriate, to promote the interests of the disabled person.	B
2g	Response to risk and possible abuse	Acts appropriately when there are indications that the person may be the victim of abuse or other dangers, in their present situation or in a situation that may result from the plans being made for the person	B
3	CIRCUMSTANCES		
	Independence	Free of any accountability to, or association with, organisations that might indicate that the person is not able to work solely to promote the interests of disabled person. *	A
4	KNOWLEDGE		
4a	Basic understanding of disability	Has an accurate basic understanding of the nature of disability, including learning disabilities.	A
4b	Basic understanding of role of health and social care	Understands the role of health and social care for disabled people; the main types of services provided; and the major goals of relevant national policy.	A
4c	IF and support broker role	Understands the role of support broker within an individualised funding system, including the differences between the care manager and support broker role.	A
4d	Detailed knowledge of policy and services	Has knowledge of the different main relevant strands of national policy, including health and social care, housing, employment, and human rights; and of welfare benefits and other sources of funding for individuals.	C
4e	Detailed understanding of ways to facilitate a person's thinking about their situation now and the future.	Has detailed understanding of a range of Person Centred Approaches that aid thinking and acting with and for a person, their family and supporters.	C
4f	Detailed knowledge of the local community	Has a detailed knowledge of local community public resources and services.	C

4g	Awareness of risk	Recognises situations which may present risks, as they occur in the work that the broker carries out, to the person's current situation, or in the plans developed with/for the person; or risks to the broker's reputation; or risks to the quality and reputation of independent brokers.	A
5	PLANNING AND ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS		
5a	Problem analysis	Able to review a complex problem situation; and identify options, required decisions, and information needs to move towards a solution.	B
5b	Information-gathering	Able to carry out research, as necessary by phone, Internet, and personal visit, to gather information about relevant resources	B
5c	Self-management	Has the self-management skills to organise their own time and be reliable in honouring commitments they have made within their role as broker.	B
6	TECHNICAL SKILLS		
6a	Numeracy	Sufficiently competent in working with numbers to develop an itemised budget.	B
6b	Literacy	Has sufficient writing skills to produce a structured and grammatical report.	B
6c	Computer skills	Able to use a personal computer for word processing and Web searches.	B
7	HONESTY AND INTEGRITY		
7a	Ethical standards with vulnerable adults	Can be entrusted to work with vulnerable adults without concern that any form of exploitation or abuse may occur.	A
7b	Honesty as a contractor	Can be entrusted to submit accurate reports of the work they have carried out, and the expenses incurred.	B

* The notion of independence is complex, and is discussed in detail in the paper, *Independence and the support broker role*.