

# Their support was really reassuring.

Children's advocacy: A guide for professionals  
in Lincolnshire



# What is an advocate?

Advocates are independent professionals who work with people to help them understand their options, know their rights and say what they want.

This helps to make sure that people are involved as much as possible in decisions about their health and care.

## Your duty to refer

Advocacy is a statutory entitlement for many groups of children and young people. The Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy assistance to children and young people

## Who is eligible?

Use the grid in this leaflet to find out who you must refer.

If you are unsure about eligibility, or have questions about advocacy types, contact us.



Children's advocacy	The Advocate's role
<p><b>Looked after Children's advocacy</b></p> <p><b>When to refer</b> Please remember a looked-after child or young person may have difficulty expressing their wishes and feelings. Make a referral when a looked-after child or young person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs support in making complaints and representations about their care</li> <li>• asks for help to understand their rights and options and say what they think</li> </ul> <p><b>Child Protection advocacy</b></p> <p><b>When to refer</b> Make a referral when a looked-after child or young person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is subject to Child Protection Issues, on a Child Protection Plan or has a Child Protection Conference (offered to all CYP on an opt out basis)</li> </ul> <p><b>Other eligible children and your people</b></p> <p><b>When to refer</b> Consider making a referral when a looked-after child or young person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is aged 0-25 years with Special Educational Need and/or disabilities</li> <li>• is placed in Private Foster Care</li> <li>• resides in the Lincolnshire Secure Unit</li> <li>• residing within the community and beyond, is identified as a 'Child in Need' e.g., legal entitlement; health issues, secure accommodation, vulnerability, asylum seeking, english not first language, travellers, etc.</li> <li>• is aged 16 or 17 and may be homeless and/or require accommodation</li> <li>• is in long-term hospital care</li> <li>• requires support following a 'return interview' after an unauthorised absence</li> <li>• is a young carer</li> <li>• aged 16 and over, is judged to lack capacity, is sectioned or subject to other circumstances, under Mental Health Act/legislation</li> <li>• of school age are at risk of being or are currently excluded from school</li> </ul> <p>Looked-after children and care leavers can also self-refer. Please obtain consent to any referral from the YP and parents/guardians as necessary.</p>	<p>Advocacy is key in achieving children's rights. We want to make sure children and young people can get help when they need it and from independent people that will listen to them and represent their views.</p> <p>The advocate can support the child or young person to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand what is happening and what other professionals are doing</li> <li>• understand any meetings or conferences, their rights and what will happen</li> <li>• understand their rights and options to make informed decisions</li> <li>• support them to say what they think</li> <li>• tell professionals and carers what they think and how they feel</li> <li>• have their views and wishes heard in decisions about their care and where they live</li> <li>• raise anything they are unhappy with relating to their care plan</li> <li>• contribute to their child protection plan</li> <li>• attend any meetings with them to support - or attend on their behalf</li> </ul>

For these services, you can refer children and young people up to the age of 18, or up to the age of 25 if they have a learning disability.

**In Lincolnshire we also offer Care Act advocacy and Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) to young people who are transitioning to adult services.**

# What do advocates do?

## An advocate can support someone to:

- communicate their views and wishes
- understand their rights
- understand any processes and decisions they are subject to
- understand the options they have
- make their own choices
- challenge a decision

**Even when someone can't tell their advocate what they want, our advocates will use a range of approaches to establish their views and wishes as far as possible and secure their rights.**

In some circumstances, an advocate has the right to access medical or care records on behalf of the person they are supporting. An advocate may write a report that must be taken into consideration by professionals.

## An advocate does not:

- offer counselling or befriending
- offer legal advice
- tell people they support what decisions to make
- tell health or social care professionals what decisions to make

# How to make a referral

Go online to find services near you and make a referral  
[voiceability.org/make-a-referral](https://voiceability.org/make-a-referral)

You can also request a referral form by emailing  
[helpline@voiceability.org](mailto:helpline@voiceability.org)

If you have questions about eligibility or advocacy types, contact us.

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Freephone:

**0300 303 1660**

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Email: [helpline@voiceability.org](mailto:helpline@voiceability.org)

Website: [voiceability.org](https://voiceability.org)

## About VoiceAbility

We've been supporting people to have their say in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing for almost 40 years. We're an independent charity and one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.