

1

BACKGROUND

Under the Children Act 1989, there is a statutory duty placed on Local Authorities to have an Independent Advocacy Service.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – Article 12 states Children and Young People have the right to tell you their views and to be listened to.

Human Rights Act – Article 10, Children have the right to Freedom of Expression.

2

WHY IT MATTERS

Advocacy is about empowering children and young people to have a say in decisions that are made about their lives.

It is about supporting them to know, understand and use their rights to ask for something to be stopped, started or changed, or for explanations around why things have happened.

3

INFORMATION

Young people have the right to express their views, wishes, and feelings, and to receive support in making decisions.

Professionals should encourage young people to have a say in their lives and inform them about advocacy. Although they may have family or carers, they are entitled to independent advocacy support.

4

KEY POINTS

Advocates do not have any personal opinions and are not part of decision making processes.

Advocates are there to listen and then to explain the options.

Advocates are independent from local authorities and health and social care professionals.

7

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Do you need to consider a referral to independent advocacy? This should be revisited and discussed with the young person regularly.

Can you think of one way you can improve a young person's right to get advocacy support?

How good is your team at making referrals and how do you audit this in your team?

6

POSSIBLE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Try to resolve the issue informally first by speaking to the relevant person.

Speak to decision-makers, Head of Service, Assistant Director, or Director of Children's Social Care where appropriate. Speak to the Children in Care Council or care leavers forum. There's support for formal complaints and helpful resources online, like Article 39 and Help at Hand.

5

ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Taking an interest into the young person's likes and dislikes is a great way of starting conversations and finding out what help they need.

Be creative! You can use things like arts and crafts, games and apps to engage with young people. Always have some paper and coloured pencils with you!

