How to find a disability advocate



Finding the right support for you or your child can feel overwhelming.



A disability advocate can help and support you when you make important decisions.



Disability advocates can support with:

- School meetings
- Accessing healthcare or social services



- Applications for benefits
- Employment or education
- Making complaints or challenging decisions



Their role is not speak for you, to help you understand and navigate the social care system.

Types of disability advocates



Family advocates

- Parent, family member or carer

Many family members act as advocates without realising it.

Independent Advocate



- Trained professional (who does **not** work for the government)
- Focuses on your wishes and rights



This is best for:

- When there is a difference of opinions. This is called a **dispute.**



- When complex or complicated decisions have to made
- When you feel unheard or ignored

Education advocate



- Supports with any type of education
- Useful for SEN or EHCP's



They can:

- Attend meetings
- Help write reports
- Challenge the school's decisions

Legal advocate



- Solicitors or legal specialists.

A solicitor is someone who supports in legal matters and prepares legal documents **outside of a law court.**



Legal advocates are used for serious disputes that **cannot** be easily sorted out.

Peer advocate



- Someone with a disability
- Offers emotional and practical support
- Can more relatable and reassuring



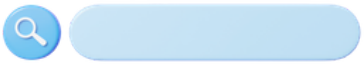
For a more detailed list on the types of advocate you can visit: Our services | POhWER

How to find a disability advocate



1. **Start Local** - Your local council will often provide or pay for advocacy services.

You can search:



- “Advocacy services” + “your area”
- “SEND advocacy near me”

2. **Contact National Organisations**



These searches can direct you to trusted services such as:

- National Autistic Society
- Citizens Advice

3. **Ask School or Healthcare Providers**



Professionals such as:

- SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)
- Social Workers
- GPs



They may point you in the direction of an advocacy service.



4. **Use Online Directories**

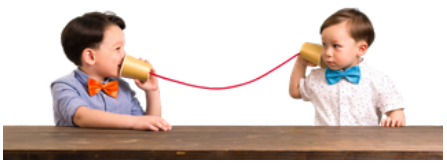
An online directory is a website that lists organisations with details such as their name, phone number or address.



When should you get an advocate?

You might get an advocate if:

- You feel overwhelmed by systems or paperwork
- You or your child's needs are not being met



- Your disability affects your communication or ability to understand information
- You disagree with a decision



- You need support in meetings
- You or your child wants help expressing their views



Is advocacy free?

Many advocacy services are:

- Free because they are funded by charities or councils.



- Available to families and young people
- Some specialists or legal advocacy might have costs, but **free options should be explored first.**

When should you get an advocate?



You might consider an advocate if:

- You are overwhelmed by systems or paperwork
- You or your child's needs are not being met



- You have a disability that affects your communication or ability to understand complicated information.
- You disagree with a decision



- You need support in meetings
- You or your child wants help expressing their views



What to look for in a good advocate

- Listens to you or your child
- Explain things clearly



- Independent and unbiased.

Unbiased means being a fair judge of things.



- Respects your decisions
- Experienced with autism or SEN needs



A good advocate can make a huge difference and can help you feel heard, confident, and supported every step of the way.

Resources

The Advocacy Project

Advocacy Project: Provides independent advocacy across London, including Care Act, Mental Capacity Act and Mental Health Act advocacy, as well as community advocacy.

Advocacy for All

Advocacy for All: Provides one-to-one advocacy for people with learning disabilities, including specialist autism advocacy, helping people understand their rights and have their voices heard.

Mind | Advocacy and mental health Mind: Provides information about advocacy and helps people understand and access different types of advocacy, including IMHA, IMCA, Care Act and NHS complaints advocacy.

People First: Provides independent advocacy to help disabled people understand their rights and articulate their wishes.

People First (Self Advocacy): Provides user-led self-advocacy services, run by and for people with learning difficulties.

POhWER: Provides free, independent advocacy including Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA), Mental Capacity Act, Care Act and NHS complaints advocacy in areas across England.

SpeakEasy: Provides advocacy for people with learning disabilities, autism and communication difficulties, helping people access appropriate services, request reasonable adjustments and have their views heard.

Mind | Advocacy and mental health Mind: Provides information about advocacy and helps people understand and access different types of advocacy, including IMHA, IMCA, Care Act and NHS complaints advocacy.

People First: Provides independent advocacy to help disabled people understand their rights and articulate their wishes.

VoiceAbility: Provides local involvement services and support for people with learning disabilities and autism.



Need more help? Contact the us at

Referrals@halowproject.org.uk