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Someone to speak on your behalf

Having someone to speak on your behalf is often known as advocacy. Advocacy means having someone who will express your views and wishes, secure your rights and represent your interests if you have substantial difficulty doing this yourself.

It safeguards people who are vulnerable by speaking up for them. It enables people with physical or learning disabilities, older people and those with mental health needs to make informed choices and decisions about their own health and social care.

Advocacy helps you to access information and services, like benefit entitlement, and to explore choices and options. Advocacy is completely independent from the organisations that provide social care services. Advocates act only according to the wishes of the person they are speaking for. They do not take their own view of what is best, or try to influence the person to make a different choice. Advocacy services are not offered by the Council but there are a number of local organisations that can act as independent advocates and their contact details are below.

[Total Voice \(http://www.totalvoicecp.org/\)](http://www.totalvoicecp.org/) offers advocacy support to adults and carers, as well as children and young people, looked after or in need. The service supports people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, autism, mental ill health, sensory impairment, social or health care needs and NHS health complaints.

Total Voice is commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council and is a partnership led by Voiceability in association with Cambridgeshire Deaf Association and the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)

Total Voice provides an independent safeguard to support particularly vulnerable people who lack capacity to make important decisions and who have no-one to act for them.

The Council must consult an IMCA when making decisions for a person who lacks mental capacity.

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)

Total Voice provides an independent advocate to people experiencing mental health problems in Peterborough, Fenland and across Cambridgeshire.