



# Advocacy

The Information, Advice and Support Network (IASN) that we are part of uses this definition of Advocacy:

*“Advocacy means getting support from another person to help you (parent, child or young person) express your views and wishes and help you understand and exercise your rights”*

SENDIAS (SEND information, advice and support services) do not fulfill the role of statutory advocates or provide legal advocacy as provided by a lawyer.

## **An advocate can:**

- listen to your views and concerns
- help you explore your options and rights (without pressuring you)
- provide information to help you make informed decisions
- help you contact relevant people, or contact them on your behalf
- accompany you and support you in meetings or appointments

## **An advocate will not:**

- give you their personal opinion
- solve problems and make decisions for you
- make judgements about you. The support of an advocate is often particularly useful in meetings when you might not feel confident in expressing yourself.

## **They can:**

- support you to ask all the questions you want to ask
- make sure all the points you want covered are included in the meeting
- explain your options to you without giving their opinion

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- help keep you safe during the meeting – for example, if you find the meeting upsetting, your advocate can ask for a break until you feel able to continue.

## What are my legal rights to an advocate?

In some situations you might be legally entitled to get the support of an [advocate](#). This is called 'statutory advocacy'. There are three types of statutory advocates in England and Wales.

These are:

### Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs):

These are specially trained advocates who can support certain patients under the [Mental Health Act 1983](#). It is advocacy to support people facing decisions such as their treatments, medication or being detained under the Mental Health Act. One to one support from an Advocate with specialist knowledge of the Mental Health Act, either in a hospital or community setting.

### Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCAs):

These are specially trained advocates who can support certain people under the [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#). It is advocacy to support people who lack capacity to be involved in important decision about their lives, such as where they live or about serious medical treatment. Advocates have specialist knowledge of the Mental Capacity Act.

### Social care advocates:

These can support certain people under the Care Act 2014 (in England) and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (in Wales).

**There is a list of Advocacy services in Walsall on the Local Offer website:**

**Search Local Offer Walsall and then search Advocacy.**