

How to get an advocate

To get an advocate, talk to hospital staff or call us. Our advocates visit mental health wards on a regular basis and by law, hospital staff must make sure you have access to an advocate.

**We're open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
We're closed on Bank Holidays.**

Freephone:

0300 303 1660

Email: helpline@voiceability.org

Website: voiceability.org

Please ask if you need this information in a different language or format. We have Easy Read information. We can provide interpreters. We can provide advocates qualified in British Sign Language.

About VoiceAbility

We make sure you're heard when it matters most. 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.

VoiceAbility

My voice still counts.

Your right to support under the Mental Health Act
We'll make sure you're heard



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Registered charity 1076630. Limited company 3798884.

Your rights

When you are detained under the Mental Health Act ('sectioned'), you have the right to help from an advocate, unless you are under one of these short term sections: section 4, 5, 135, and 136.

You also have the right to an advocate if you are:

- subject to Guardianship or a Community Treatment Order
- a conditionally discharged restricted patient
- being considered for S57 or S58A treatment, or Electro-Convulsive Therapy

If you meet any of these criteria you can still get an advocate even if you are on leave of absence from hospital.

How an advocate can help

An advocate can support you to have your say in decisions about your health, care and wellbeing.

Advocates are independent professionals. They don't work for the council, the NHS, or care providers. You don't need to pay for an advocate.

You can get help from an advocate at any time you want to during your treatment.

The type of advocate you can get is called an 'Independent Mental Health Advocate'. This is sometimes shortened to 'IMHA'.

What does an advocate do?

An advocate can help you to:

- understand your rights
- understand your treatment and the reasons for it
- say what care or treatment you want – and what you don't want
- talk to your care team about your needs
- have your say at meetings about your care and treatment
- speak to staff about any worries or problems you have
- request leave if you are entitled to it

Advocates help to make sure that doctors listen to you. This does not mean that doctors will always do everything you want them to. But your advocate will be on your side.

Support when you don't agree with your treatment

If you don't agree that you should be in hospital, it's important to speak to an advocate as soon as you arrive.

Advocates can help you to:

- get a solicitor, who may be able to help you appeal your section
- prepare for Mental Health Tribunals and Hospital Managers' Meetings
- complain if you are unhappy with your care or treatment