What is an IMHA?

IMHA stands for Independent Mental Health Advocate.

From April 2009, the amendments to the Mental Health Act 2007 required the provision of Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHA’s).

IMHA services provide an additional safeguard for patients who are subject to the Mental Health Act, and are specialist advocates who are trained to work within the framework of the Act.

What is the role of the IMHA?

To help patients to obtain information about and understand:

- Their rights under the Act
- The parts of the Act which apply to them
- Medical treatment they are receiving or might receive
- Reasons for that treatment
- The rights which other people have in relation to them under the Act

And to support patients to exercise their rights, which can include representing or speaking on their behalf

IMHA’s may also support patients in a range of other ways to make sure they are involved in decisions that are made about their care and treatment for example in:

- Care Planning and section 117 meetings
- Manager’s Hearings and Mental Health Review Tribunals
- negotiating appropriate aftercare
- accessing other support or services
- raising concerns about their experiences/care.
Who can make a referral for an IMHA?

IMHAs have a duty to respond to a request to visit a patient received from:
- the patient
- the patient’s nearest relative
- the patient’s responsible clinician
- an approved mental health professional

Before requesting and IMHA to visit a patient, the referrer should:
- Discuss the idea with the patient
- Give the patient the opportunity to decide whether they want IMHA support

The involvement of an IMHA does not affect a patient's right to seek advice from a legal representative, nor does it affect any entitlement to legal aid.

We offer IMHA services in these areas

Birmingham
Camden and Islington
Ealing
Lewisham
Lincolnshire

Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Redbridge
South Yorkshire

Find out more about the Mental Health Act and the work of our Independent Advocates on our website

www.voiceability.org

Who are VoiceAbility?

VoiceAbility is a registered charity which provides independent advocacy services across the UK. You can find out more on www.voiceability.org or by calling your local office.

Help us improve

Want to make a comment, complaint, suggestion or compliment? Talk to any of our team members - email us on comments@voiceability.org or give us a ring on 01223 555800.