

East Lothian Independent Advocacy Strategy

Have Your Say



Independent advocacy

Independent advocacy helps people to have as much control as possible in their lives. An independent advocate is a person who will support people to have their views heard.

Independent advocates:

- speak up for people and groups
- support people to know their rights and what choices they have
- support people to understand what is happening to them and change things if needed
- support people to make decisions based on all the information
- help to stop difficult situations happening or stop difficult situations getting worse.

They can also support people and groups to develop the skills, confidence and understanding to speak up for themselves.

Independent advocates help people to get their views heard. They don't offer advice.

Different types of independent advocacy

There are two types of advocacy:

- individual
- collective.

Individual or one-to-one advocacy

Individual advocacy is where an advocate is helping one person.

Collective

Collective advocacy is when groups of people get together to support each other. The independent advocate helps them to speak up about their experiences and what they want to happen. This gives them a stronger voice to campaign and make a difference to things that affect their lives.

Why is independent advocacy important?

Independent advocacy helps people to share their voice at meetings and appointments. Independent advocates build up trust with the people they support. People feel at ease knowing their voice is being shared safely.

Here is what people had to say about Independent advocacy.

'It helped me understand the choices I had'

'I feel it made a difference about my situation'

'I feel my views and wishes were heard and understood'

'I know more about my rights'

What is East Lothian's Independent advocacy Strategy?

We want to make sure that people who need independent advocacy can get it. We are going to talk to lots of different people to hear their views and experiences.

We will use this information to shape our plan for independent advocacy in East Lothian. We call this plan the East Lothian Independent advocacy Strategy. It looks at who needs independent advocacy in East Lothian and how to meet these needs.

We have made a start by making a draft strategy. This shows what we think is needed but we want to hear from you whether we've got it right.

What does the Independent advocacy strategy say?

It says that:

- we should have Independent advocacy services for people who need it
- people who need Independent advocacy should have this support for as long as they need it
- people know where to find out how to get independent advocacy.

What sort of independent advocacy can people in East Lothian get now?

People who can get independent advocacy in East Lothian include:

- People with learning disabilities aged 16 and over
- People with autism aged 16 and over
- Older people aged 65 and over
- People with physical disability aged over 16
- People with mental health issues aged 18 and over
- Children and young people experiencing an eating disorder
- Adults experiencing an eating disorder
- Adults that use drugs and alcohol
- Young adults aged 16-17 with mental health issues or drug/alcohol use
- Children aged 5 -18, experiencing a Children's Hearing and their siblings
- Children and young people living away from home.

We want to hear from you

We need your help to understand more about people's experiences of Independent advocacy. We want to know what is going well and what could be better. We'd also like to know if you think other people should get independent advocacy. Please tell us who and why.

How can you get involved?

If you have used independent advocacy, think about the questions below.

- **Do you use Independent advocacy?**
- What do you think about it?
- How easy is it to get independent advocacy?
- How did you hear about it?
- How did you know you could access independent advocacy?
- How can we help other people to know about independent advocacy?

Questions for everyone, whether they've used independent advocacy or not

- Do you think there are any other groups of people who need independent advocacy?
- How can we make independent advocacy better?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us or want us to know?

If you would like to take part in a group to talk this over or you have any ideas about this, get in touch with Jane:

jogden-smith@eastlothian.gov.uk

Thank you

