

Your Voice
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Carlisle Eden Mind is a registered charity -
No. 1113549

Who is Your Voice?

Your Voice is an advocacy scheme provided by Carlisle Eden Mind.

We have provided Advocacy for over 25 years and our qualified advocates have a wealth of experience. We provide free independent advocacy to young people aged between 11-18yrs in the Carlisle and Eden area and are funded through Children in Need.

Our aim is to assist young people to speak up and ensure they are heard, assisting them to try to resolve any issue that may be causing them anxiety, emotional or mental distress.

We know that young people have good ideas about their issues and how to improve or solve them, but often they have not been able to develop the skills to communicate this effectively.

Through Your Voice advocacy we strive to help young people to learn the skills and tools to ensure their voice, views, wishes and rights are upheld. This empowers them to know that when you speak up constructively it can change your immediate and long term future. We achieve this by working from their existing strengths and developing their life skills.

If you have any questions about our Young Person Advocacy scheme or if you would like to discuss making a request for an advocate, please get in touch.

We take both self referrals and referrals direct from 3rd parties. (As long as the young person has consent to the referral).



What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is about helping young people to speak up appropriately for themselves, their views and wishes.

At Your Voice we strive to assist young people to take a active role in the decisions that others, or they need to make about their situation or life. This encourages young people to take responsibility for themselves and the decisions they make.


Helping young people to learn valuable communication skills, decision making processes and self advocacy.

Your Voice will support the young person's views, their right to make a choice and their choice-making process. As part of this we will make sure that they are as aware as possible of the likely consequences of the decisions they make.

Our independent advocate will help young people to...

- Understand the difficulties they are experiencing in their situation
- Clarify their issues, views, wishes, feelings and solutions and express these in the best way possible to be heard by others.
- Understand their rights and responsibilities and how they relate to their issues, whilst understanding other people's points of view so they can respond to them constructively.
- Develop fully informed views and make fully informed choices by talking through all their issues, options and likely outcomes in an unbiased way.
- Secure appropriate services.

We will assist them to speak for themselves and can attend meetings with them or for them if they don't feel able to do this themselves. We can also arrange meetings with other adults to ensure their views are heard.



What else can you expect from Your Voice?


You can always expect Your Voice to try to engage constructively with you and...

- to help young people to understand your views as those that are involved/working with them.
- to feedback to you on any systemic issues we encounter.
- to seek solutions wherever tension may develop between our role and the role of other adults.

Some important information for parents, carers, family and professionals

The confidential nature of the advocacy relationship

Your Voice offers a direct working relationship to young people rather than to their family, carers or professionals. The young people we work with have a legal right to confidentiality so we would ask you to understand the following points:

- We will not feedback or discuss with others the things we talk about with young people unless they give us permission to do so.
 - Often young people ask us to discuss something with a parent, carer or other adult but we will only do this with their permission.
 - Please do not be offended if we cannot give you feedback about the things we have discussed.
 - We have a Child Protection Policy (available on request). This means that if we are worried about someone's safety, we may share information that would usually be confidential. Our Child Protection Policy is explained to all young people before we start work with them.
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Young people views aren't always right...are they?

Your Voice defines issues in the terms that young people define them.

We expect that some people may find this challenging. While we recognise that the reality of a situation might be different to how a young person perceives or feels about it e.g. "I don't feel heard, no one's doing anything, they're always getting at me " may be their experience, even when everyone is listening and trying to change things for them.

Our starting point is always the young persons definition of the situation. Whether they are being listened to or not, our mission is always the same – to help them to feel and to be heard, whilst trying to help them to resolve their situation.

As an advocate we do not share our personal views or opinions with the young person we are advocating for, even where we do not agree with that young person.

It is essential that any other person/ organisation working with or aware of the young person, reports any concerns they may have about that young person through their own policy and procedures. As the advocate only knows information that the young person chooses to share with them. Advocacy does not consider 'best interests' therefore we would encourage all involved professionals to continue to work in the 'best interests' model.

Information you may want to give us about a young person

It is important for us not to have more information than the young person has. To do so would compromise the trust between the advocate and young person.

Sometimes we find that parents, carers or other adults want to give us information about a young person. We would ask that you have the young person's permission to do this before you speak to us.

If you do give us information, we will always share that information with the young person.

If you have information that you feel should not be shared with the young person, please do not inform us of it either.



Do you see a face or an Eskimo?

Safeguarding Young people

At Your Voice we have our own Children's & Young People Safeguarding policy and procedures (available on request) and we will always act accordingly where we receive a disclosure or believe a young person to be at risk or harm.

At the beginning of every advocacy partnership with a young person we clearly discuss the limitations to our confidentiality. Each young person is aware that they have a right to confidentiality and we will always uphold that, but that we also have a duty to appropriately pass on any concerns or information we have in relation to safeguarding.

Unfortunately Your Voice young persons advocacy is not a resource for schools and other agencies to make safeguarding disclosures to, as this is not our remit or role nor do we have the resources to allow this to happen.

Although we, as a community, have a shared responsibility for safeguarding children we will not take responsibility away from the organization or appropriate staff member to follow their own policy and procedures in terms of safeguarding children.

Where a disclosure is made to a organization or staff member and then the young person is referred to Your Voice advocacy, The responsibility for children's safeguarding lies with the organisation and we will insist that the organization follow their own protocol/ procedure.

If we feel that the appropriate safeguarding procedure isn't being followed or within the guided timescales, we will contact the safeguarding team directly for information on submission, agreements made with the school and actions to be taken.

Following our own organisational policy in conjunction with Cumbria's Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) policy, and procedures regarding safeguarding, we will request an update from the safeguarding lead and provide continued advocacy for the young person, where they are in agreement.

Advocacy & the Early Help process

How does an advocate fit into the early help process?

Our work has the voice of the young person at its centre and where there is the need for an Early Help Intervention, we are able to advocate for the young person involved to ensure their voice is heard and listened to as part of the early Help process. Where we have been involved in advocating for young people as part of the early Help process, both the professionals involved and the young person have felt this advocacy to be very beneficial.

However to protect the independence of our advocacy partnership with the young person our advocates can not take the role of the Early Help initiator or co-ordinator (of the team around the family) as this would be a conflict of interest. We believe that Young People's advocacy support should be an action agreed from an Early Help Assessment rather than the source of such an Assessment.

We remain dedicated to child protection and safeguarding protocols but should we feel there is the need for an Early Help Assessment regarding a young person we are working with, we will pass this information on to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator in your school or organisation for action as felt necessary.

Find Your Voice when it comes to....Bullying / school / relationships / health / parents / caring/ education / self harm / professionals / mental health / communication / physical health / separation / sexuality...

"I had gotten myself into a mess at school. Teachers were sick of me messing about and I was way behind on work. I felt like every time I went into class I'd argue with them. Your Voice helped me to find ways to be more responsible for what came out of my mouth and when I chose to share my thoughts. It's funny really I felt like if I didn't speak up in class it would look like the teachers were right, I realise it's my choice not to react and that gives me power and avoids detention." Sarah 13yrs

"When my parents separated I found it really hard. I was stuck in the middle and both of them wanted me to pass messages on to each other. This got really difficult as sometimes they'd get annoyed with me. Your Voice help me to think of ways to talk to them both and say what I wanted to happen in my own words." Ben 15yrs

"I been having suicidal thoughts for ages, but I had no idea how to tell someone what was going on in my head on a bad day. Your Voice were the first people to ask me outright about how low I was feeling and if I was having suicidal thoughts. I was so relived that someone asked and then was willing to help me to tell others and get help." Kate 17yrs



We take either advocacy self-requests or requests from 3rd parties (where the young person has consented to the request for advocacy).

If you wish to make a request for advocacy please complete our Advocacy Request form available at www.cemind.org -Young peoples services and send to:

Email: enquiries@yourvoicecumbria.org

Post:

27 Spencer Street

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