

# A NATIONAL VOICE

**coramVoice** )))  
getting young voices heard

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**A National Voice**

**'Stable Homes, Built on Love'**

**Activity Pack 2**

**Building Relationships: Rethinking Independent  
Visitors, Befriending & Mentoring**

**Embracing Diversity: A Workshop on Disability &  
Inclusion**

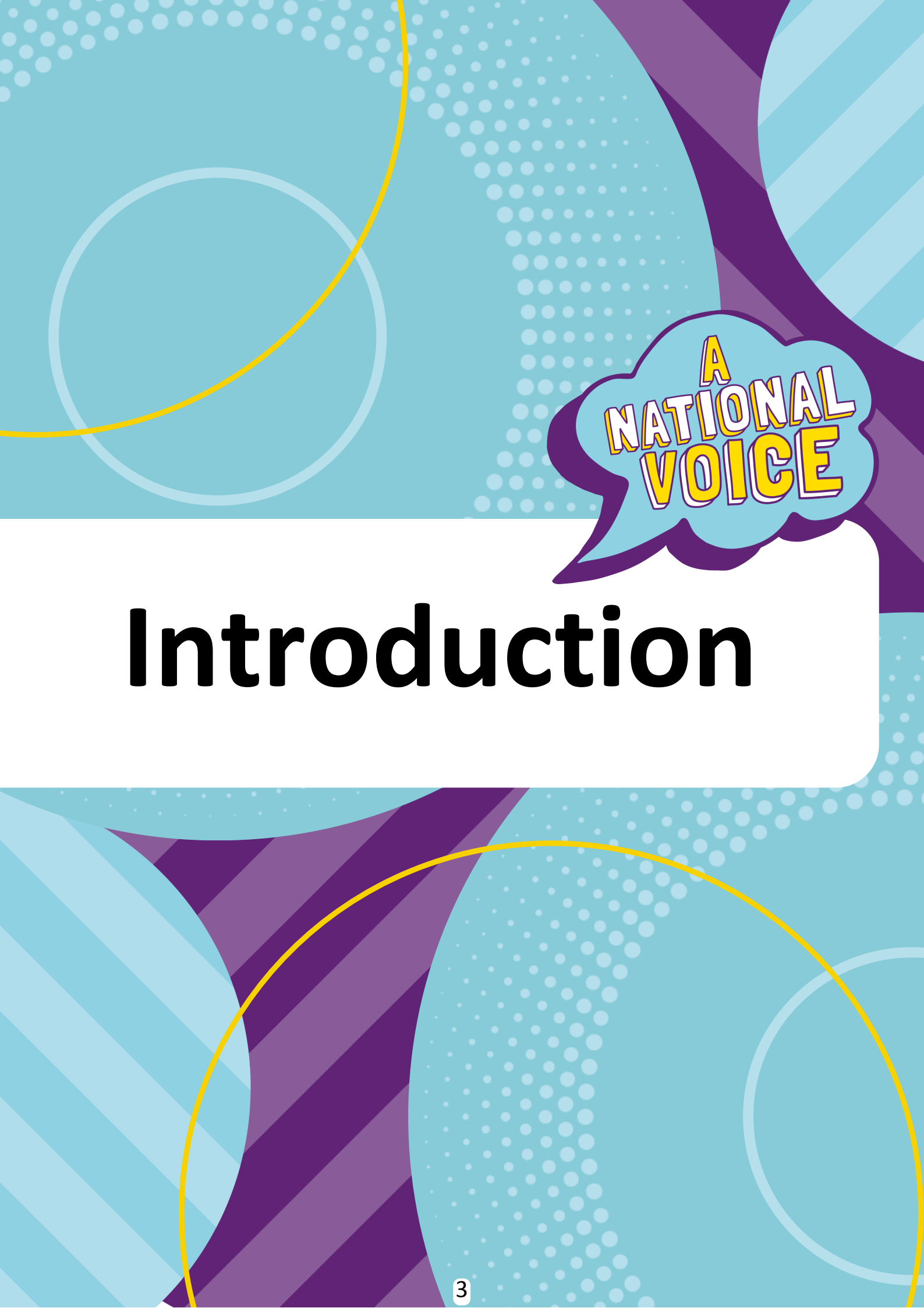
**Speak Up, Stand Out: Youth Advocacy**

# **A National Voice Activity Pack**

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# Introduction

# A National Voice Activity Pack

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A National Voice has created this activity pack to support children in care, care leavers, and participation groups in having their voices heard by the Department of Education (DfE) regarding plans for children's social care in 'Stable Homes, Built on Love.'

We have designed activities for you to share your thoughts and feelings with us so that we can ensure the DfE hears from as many children and young people as possible about their vision for reforming children's social care.

This activity pack includes activities for you to discuss the government's plans for Advocacy, Independent Visitors, Mentoring and Befriending, and Disability and Inclusion.

We hope that the findings from these activities can be shared with your local authority, for example, to inform what independent visitors or advocacy services should look like.

We will be sharing everything collected directly with the DfE but will also be creating our own report, allowing you to see exactly what children and young people from all across England have had to say and what the key messages for the government are.

We will also provide more activity packs for participation groups, hold online sessions to explore some topics in depth, and conduct online polls and surveys.

## What is Stable Homes, Built on Love?

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'Stable Homes, Built on Love' strategy is the Government's plan for how to make children's social care work better. The strategy was published on 2nd February 2023 and sets out plans to:

- Address urgent issues facing children and young people
- Lay the foundations for whole system reforms
- Set national direction for change

Read ['Stable Homes, Built on Love'](#) here.

## Inside this activity pack

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This activity pack will focus on three plans related to Advocacy, Independent Visitors, Mentoring and Befriending, and Disability and Inclusion.

All activities come with an objective, a step-by-step guide, and useful tips and information to help facilitators get the most out of them.

When you're done, please send us your completed activities, along with any pictures, notes, or recordings, to [ANV@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:ANV@coramvoice.org.uk) by Friday 12 January.

Please complete a monitoring form so we can keep track of how many children and young people have participated.

All feedback will be anonymised and not linked back to specific children, young people, or local authorities.

# Facilitators' notes

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Each session can open with a short icebreaker. We have provided a range of icebreakers for you to choose from. You can also use them to finish a session or provide a change of pace part way through to help maintain concentration and interest levels. Most activities will take around 20-30 minutes to facilitate but could be extended to last longer if appropriate.

It's important to recognise that care can be an emotive topic, especially for those children and young people who are in care or leaving care. Before starting any of the activities, create a group agreement with the children and young people.

## Example of things to include in a group agreement:

- Respect and celebrate diversity
- Listen to other people without interrupting
- Ask questions to help learning
- Recognise that we all have opinions and not to judge others
- Keep personal information confidential (within the boundaries discussed)
- Be clear that whilst information about personal circumstance will be respected, if there are concerns about a young person's safety or that of others, these will be treated in the same way as any other safeguarding concern.

Note: Please remember to consider different learning styles and levels of ability to ensure that all young people can participate in a meaningful way.

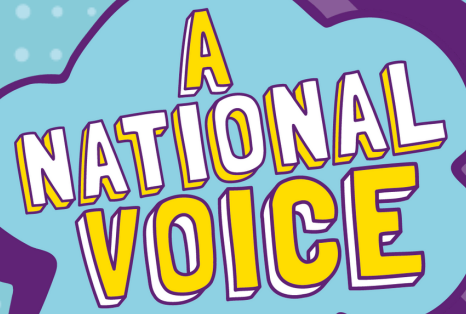
We recommend that before you deliver any sessions that you read 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' or the children and young people's version or watch our summary here <https://youtu.be/SQXp2B9h01M>. We have added the timings from this summary in each session for you to show children and young people as part of the introduction to the topic.

ANV have produced some reports on what children and young people said about the Independent Care Review.

- [Full report](#)
- [Summary report](#)
- [Video summary](#)

ANV have also produced a report on what they thought about Stable Homes, Built on Love

- [A National Voice Initial thoughts on the Stable Homes Built on Love strategy](#)



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# Getting Started

# Getting started

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## Parking lot

Before your session, create a space on the wall where participants can post their thoughts and ideas. You can provide sticky notes, pieces of paper, cards, etc. depending on your needs. You can divide the wall into different categories (e.g. 'questions'; 'ideas'; 'improvements').

There might be questions, thoughts or ideas that are generated by your discussions and we ask that you record them.

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## Showcasing ideas

We would like it if you shared with us any resources, reports or discussion that you have relating to different topics discussed in 'Stable Home, Built on Love'; this might be questions that young people have developed to recruit foster carers, a film that is included in social worker training or a policy to ensure that accommodation is suitable for care leavers.

We would love to share this with DfE and ensure that they know this idea came from your local authority and group.

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## Quotes NOT notes and how we can do that!

These sessions are not designed to go back over what needs improving about the care system, but shaping what the Government is doing to make it better. Remember, if you want to encourage others to make changes, stories and testimonials are always helpful to make this real for them; so think about capturing quotes, not notes.

Please ensure you record discussions. This may include flipcharts, photos, voice notes, video recordings etc. Before you share any photos or recordings with us make sure you have the consent of the participants to do so.



## Getting started

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## Danny Duck

### To support conversations with younger children

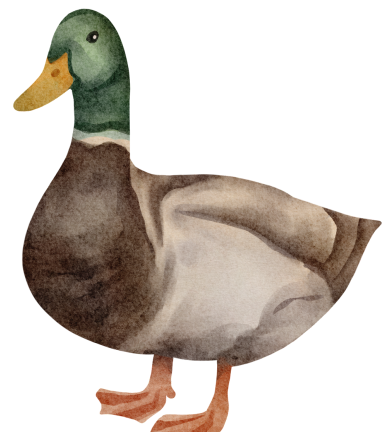
A National Voice would like to introduce Danny Duck.

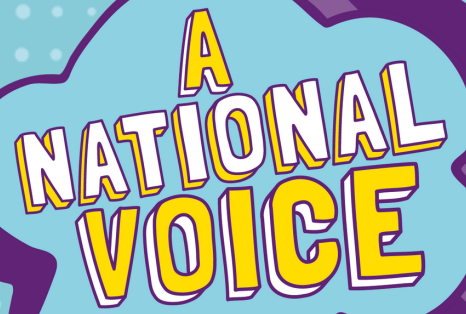
Danny Duck is here to help you with some of the activities in this pack, as a way to draw attention away from children and young people's individual experiences so they can share something without putting themselves on the spot.

Danny Duck is happy for participants to use them as an example in stories or suggestions as it may help them tell their stories and express themselves.

We suggest that Danny might be helpful for younger children and we will share how Danny can help throughout this activity pack.

We have indicated which activities are suitable for younger children using the green sign above.





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# Icebreakers

# Ice breakers

## Active Icebreakers



### Turning over a new leaf

Split the group into smaller groups of 6-8 participants. Have them all stand on similar size tarps or piece of cloth. Make sure the tarps are not so big that they make the game simple. The goal of this activity is to flip the tarp over without anyone breaking contact with it. The group that is able to do it quickest, wins!

### Chaos Throw

Test your memory by throwing the ball and saying the person's name. Choose one 'ball master' or 'leader' for the group and give them a ball. Explain that they must throw the ball to someone in the group and say that person's name. It is ok to ask for the person's name or read their name badge. The second person now throws to someone else who has not had the ball yet – and says their name. This carries on until everyone has caught the ball once and then the ball gets back to the ball master. (It is important that people don't just throw the ball to the person next to them, they should throw it across the circle to create a nice mixture.) Ask the group to throw the ball around the circle again. This time they must throw it in the exact same order. They must remember who they threw to, and say the name as they throw. Once they remember the order, give the ball master more balls. After they throw the first ball into the circle, they can introduce a new ball to the game. This means that a group may be throwing and catching 3-8 balls at once. When the groups seem energized you can stop the game.

# Ice breakers

## Active Icebreakers



### Mazinga

This is a very quick energizer to help build energy before starting or continuing with a session. Everyone stands in a circle. The leader leans into the circle with arms outstretched and sings MAAAA without stopping. This begins a chain reaction and one after the other people in the circle step one foot into the circle with arms outstretched and join in to sing MAAA. The group only end the note when the last person has joined in saying MAAA. Once the last person has joined the singing, in unison everyone steps back pulling their arms towards them shouting ZINGA.

### Swap seats if you...

Make a circle of chairs, enough for all but one of the participants. The person without a chair (this can be the facilitator) stands in the middle and says swap seats if you...() Anyone that fits that category stands up and swaps seats as quickly as possible until the last person is left without a seat. This person now asks participants to 'swap seats if you...'. Continue until the group have learned a bit about the group.

### Find your pair

Prepare word pairs, like salt and pepper, milk and honey, sail and wind etc on separate pieces of paper. Tape one to each person's back. People then have to walk around and ask closed questions (with a yes or no answer) to find out what their word is. Once they find out, they have to find their pair & by continuing to ask questions (these can be open or closed) they have to learn 3 new things about the other person.

# Ice breakers

## Chilled Icebreakers



### Finish the sentence

Put a number of sentence starters in a hat. Get people to volunteer to pick a sentence and finish it (if the group isn't too big, get everyone else to then finish the same sentence). Repeat until all of the sentences have been completed.

#### Example sentences:

- I am...
- I have never...
- I love to...
- The best way for me to relax is...
- The most important decision I ever made in my life was...
- The most unbelievable thing...
- The thing that makes me laugh is...

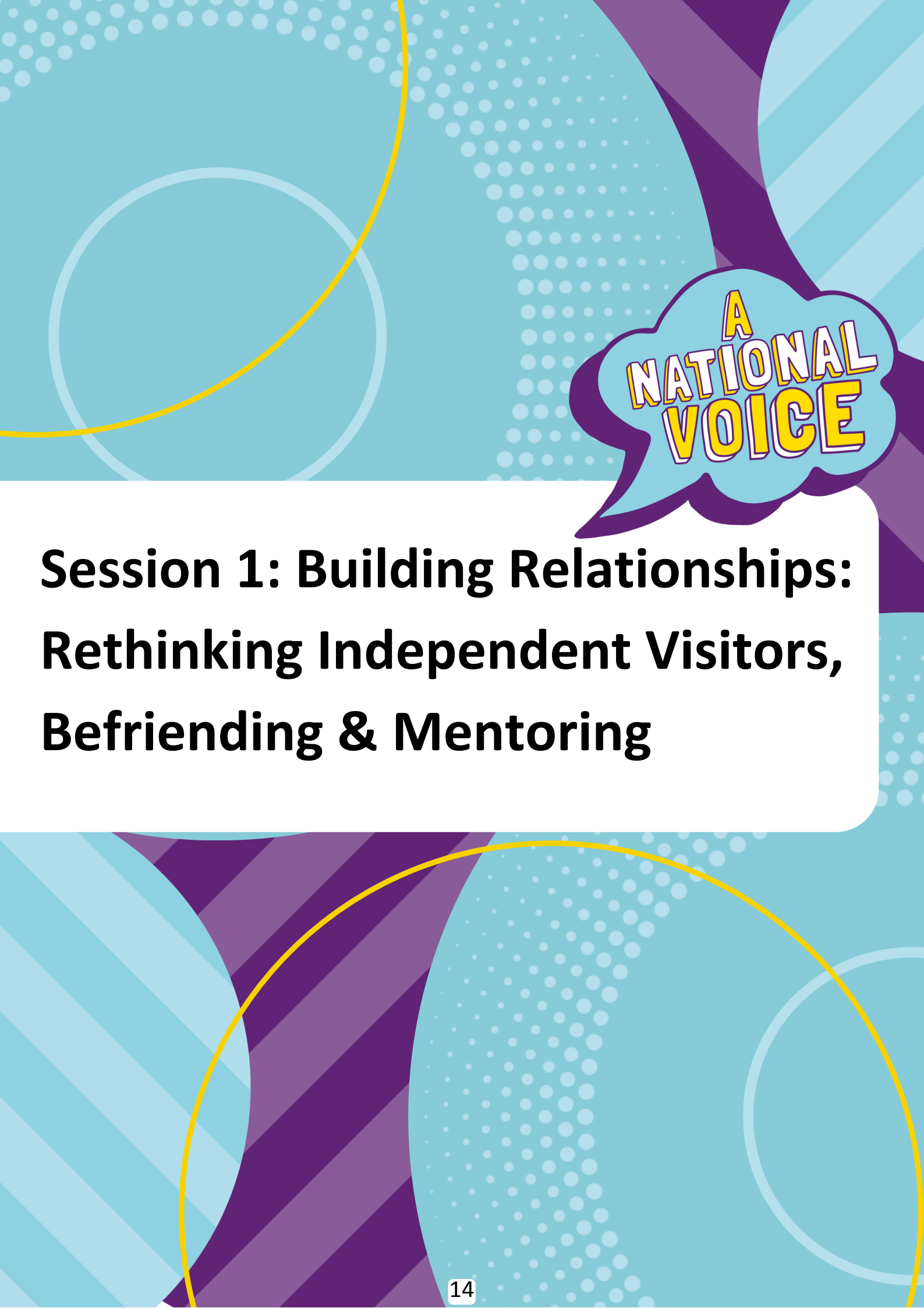
Can you think of anymore?

### Would you rather?

In a space where you are able to divide the room into two, get your group to start by standing in the middle. Then, assign a side for each other the following 'would you rather' listed below:

- Have 6 meter long arms or 6 meter long legs
- Did the chicken come first or did the egg come first
- Live in the extreme heat or live in the extreme cold
- Travel to the past or see into the future
- Have everyone have access to your thoughts or access to your internet history
- Pineapple does belong on pizza or pineapple doesn't belong on pizza
- Cats or dogs
- Cake or pizza

Can you think of anymore?



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# **Session 1: Building Relationships: Rethinking Independent Visitors, Befriending & Mentoring**

# Independent Visitors



## Objective:

Independent Visitors are like special people who are there to spend time with children and young people when they might need someone extra in their lives. These visitors are not parents or teachers, but they are friendly adults who come to hang out and have fun with a child. They can do fun things like playing games, going for a walk, or just talking. It's like having a friend who's there to make you feel happy and safe. The Government wants to understand how more children and young people can have an independent visitor and what that relationship looks like.

**Running time: 20 minutes**

## Equipment:

- Worksheet 1
- Flipchart
- Pens

## What to do:

Hands up if (before today...)

- Have you heard of an independent visitor?
- Do you know how to get an independent visitor?
- Would you want an independent visitor/ or would have wanted an independent visitor when you were in care?

## In groups to discuss:

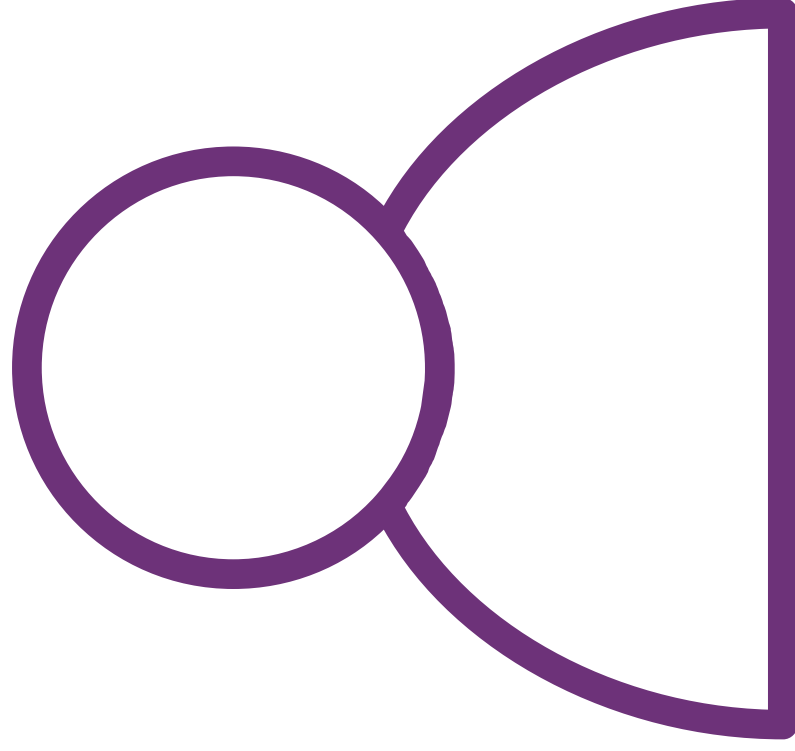
How can more children and young people get an Independent Visitor?

(Prompt: do they know about it, know how to get an IV, other things stopping children and young people getting an IV? Do children and young people want an IV? Resources)

## Independent Visitors

### How can more children and young people get an independent visitor?

- Do children and young people know about independent visitors?
- Do children and young people know how to get an independent visitor if they wanted one?
- Are there other things stopping children and young people getting an independent visitor?





# Mentoring and Befriending services

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## **Objective:**

For older young people (aged 16-15) there are different ways to support young people. This includes

## **Befriending:**

Befriending is when someone becomes your friend to help you feel better and not feel lonely. This can be a grown-up or even another young person who spends time with you, talks to you, and listens to what's on your mind. They are like a special friend who wants to make you feel happier and less alone. They can help with problems or just be there to share good times with you.

## **Mentoring:**

Mentoring is like having a wise and caring friend who guides you and helps you learn and grow. This person can be older and experienced in things you want to get better at, like sports, art, or schoolwork. They give you advice, show you new things, and encourage you to be your best self. It's like having a coach or a teacher who cares about you and wants to see you succeed. Remember, these are all about people who care about you and want to be there for you in different ways. They're like extra trusted people or guides in your life to make things better and more fun!

**Running time: 20 minutes**

## **Equipment:**

- Worksheet 2
- Flipchart
- Pens

## **What to do:**

In groups to design your own befriending and mentoring service:

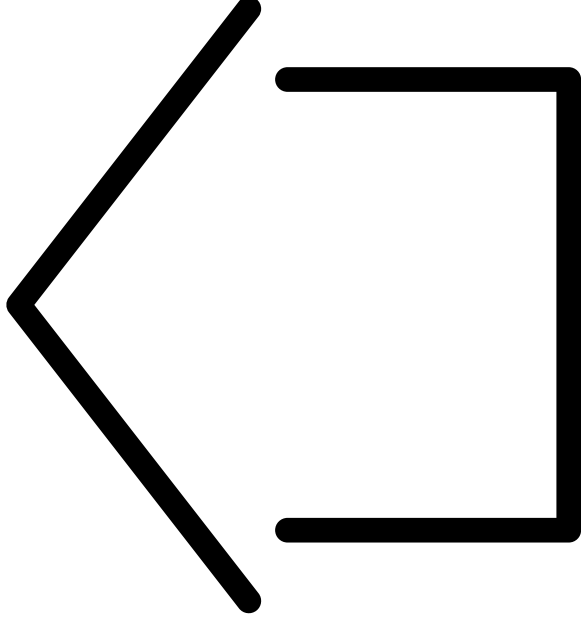
- Who should the befrienders and mentors be?
- What would they do with young people?
- Who are befriending and mentoring services for? (age, interests)
- What resources does your service need?
- How would you let young people know about befriending and mentoring?

## **Befriending and mentoring**

You have been asked to design a new mentoring and befriending service. The aim of befriending and mentoring is to build relationships, and provide support to young people aged 16-25.

Here are some questions for you to think about.

- Who will be befrienders and mentors?
- What would they do with young people?
- What resources do you need?
- How would you let young people know about your befriending and mentoring service?



# Building Relationships: Rethinking Independent Visitors, Befriending & Mentoring

What would you like to tell the Department for Education?

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# **Session 2: Embracing Diversity: A Workshop on Disability & Inclusion**

# Embracing Diversity: A Workshop on Disability & Inclusion

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## Objective:

In Coram Voice's Bright Spots Survey (for young people aged 18-25) we ask:

Do you have a long-term health problem or disability that limits your day-to-day activities?  
(By 'long-term' we mean lasting at least 12 months.)

24% care leavers reply 'yes' to question

NB: we ask questions in this way as it is the same wording as the government question, which means can compare to other young people in general population - 14%

What do you think of this? Are you surprised/ not surprised?

**Running time: 30 minutes**

## Equipment

- Flipchart paper (stick several sheets together for larger groups)
- Pens

## What to do:

Using the flipchart write in large letters 'disability'. As the group discuss

- **What does disability mean to you?**

When you hear /see words 'disability' or 'long-term health condition' – what sort of things do you think of?

Young people to use words or drawings e.g. a wheelchair, health care, physical disability, hidden disability. Add to one large flipchart paper.

Let the group know that there is no right or wrong answers to the question. Ask for feedback from the group and discuss common themes.

# Embracing Diversity: A Workshop on Disability & Inclusion

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## Objective:

In Coram Voice's Bright Spots Survey. (for young people aged 18-25) we ask:  
Do you have a long-term health problem or disability that limits your day-to-day activities? (By 'long-term' we mean lasting at least 12 months.)

24% care leavers reply 'yes' to question

NB: we ask questions in this way as it is the same wording as the government question, which means can compare to other young people in general population - 14%

**Running time: 30 minutes**

## Equipment

- Worksheet
- Pens

## What to do:

Split the group into smaller groups. Ask them:

- **How can disabled children and young people be best supported?**

Groups to think about the following headings:

- Health service (GP's, hospitals, specialists)
- Education service (schools & colleges)
- Social care service (social workers/ PA's)

**How can children and young people with a disability be best supported?**

**Health**



**Education**



**Children's social care**

# Embracing Diversity: A Workshop on Disability & Inclusion

What would you like to tell the Department for Education?

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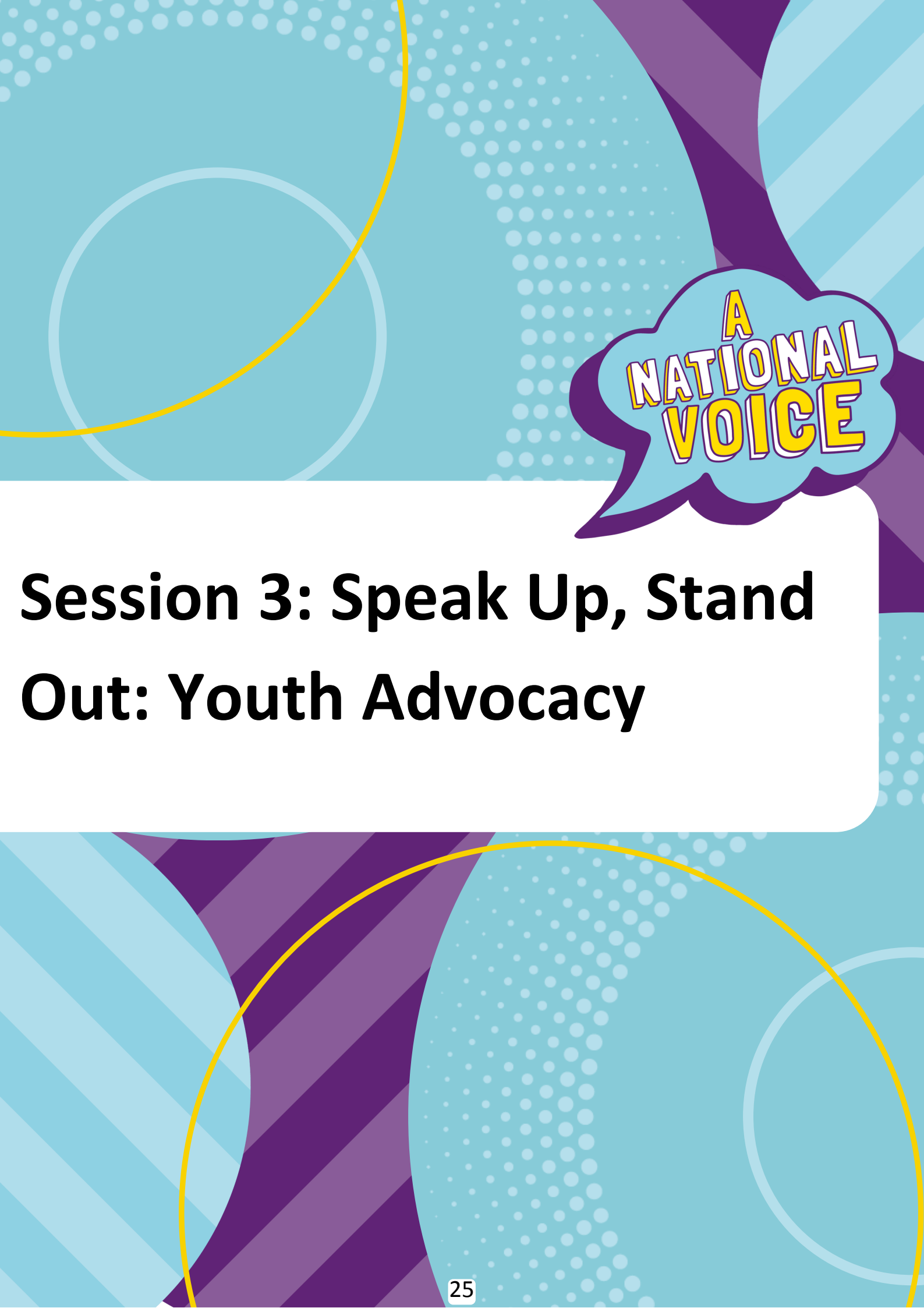
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# **Session 3: Speak Up, Stand Out: Youth Advocacy**

# Speak Up, Stand Out: Youth Advocacy

## What are we talking about?

What is advocacy? – show video <https://youtu.be/? 05jEsIBPJ3E?si=Fk5D6HfIP5080Vzg>  
Or use below blurb.

An Advocate is different from any other professional.

They are there to help and support you and to make sure you are involved in all decisions about your life. Advocates also help you speak out when things go wrong. They make sure you know your rights and help you to get the support you need from Children's Services.

## How can my Advocate help me?

- They will always be on your side.
- They will tell you about your rights and give you information and advice about the things you should get from Children's Services, your social worker, foster carer or where you are living.
- They can go with you to meetings with your social worker, such as your Pathway Plan meeting or Looked After Child (LAC) review, to help you say the things that are important to you.
- If you are unhappy about how you are being treated by Children's Services or if you are worried about what is happening, they can help sort out any problems or concerns.
- They can make sure people listen to you.
- They will make sure you understand what professionals are saying and help you to say what you want to say.

## What is a standard?

Standards are like rules or guidelines that help make sure things work well and are safe. Think of them as a kind of agreement that lots of people agree to follow. For example, think about the rules we follow when playing a game. We all agree to these rules so the game is fair and fun for everyone.

Standards can be for all sorts of things. There are standards for making toys, so they're safe to play with. There are standards for making food, so it's safe to eat. And there are standards for building houses, so they're strong and won't fall down.

So, standards are like the rules that help make sure things are good, safe, and work the way they should. They're like a set of instructions that people follow to make sure everything is the best it can be.

## Advocacy standards

The DfE really want to hear what children and young people think about the most important idea in our new standards about advocacy. It's all about making sure that children and young people are the most important part of advocacy. It's all about making sure that everything we do is for you, to help and support you.

# Speak Up, Stand Out: Youth Advocacy

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## Objective:

To explore 'Standard 1: Advocacy is led by the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people – How do we make sure young people know about advocacy?'

**Running time: 15 minutes**

## Resources:

- Flipchart
- Post it notes
- Pens

## What to do?

Ask the group, before today,

- **Had you heard of advocacy?**

Ask young people to move into two groups and ask them to discuss the questions:

### Yes

- How did you hear about advocacy?
- Did someone tell you, did you read about it?
- How would you get in touch with one? Are there other ways that would help?

### No

- When and how would it have been useful to find about it?
- Prompts – type of info (leaflets, posters, videos etc) , who tells you (foster carer, IRO etc), when
- Do you know how to get an advocate if you need one?
- How would you like to be able to get in touch with one?

# Ducksbury

**Ducksbury is a small town in the North West of England**

**Ducksbury has a Children's Social Care Service:**

- They care for 50 children in care
- They care for 50 care leavers
- Ducksbury has foster carers who care for children and young people
- Ducksbury has a team of social workers, PA's and IRO's
- Ducksbury has two residential home
- Ducksbury has semi-independent accommodation for care leavers
- Ducksbury provide advocacy, independent visitors and a mentoring programme
- Ducksbury has a Looked After Children Nurse
- Ducksbury has a virtual school to support children in care at school



# Speak Up, Stand Out: Youth Advocacy

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## Objective:

To explore 'Standard 2: Children and young people are active partners in the design, delivery, promotion and evaluation of advocacy services'

**Running time: 15 minutes**

## Resources:

- Flipchart
- Post it notes
- Pens

## What to do?

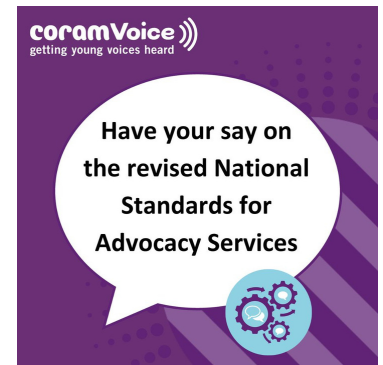
You are the new Director of Ducksbury Advocacy Service, you are setting up a new advocacy service to make sure that all children and young people in Ducksbury get help to be heard in the decisions made about their care.

Groups to discuss:

- How do you think children and young people could be involved in making sure advocacy services work for them? (e.g. training of advocates, interviewing new staff, deciding how the service works, promoting the service, knowing the service is good and works for children and young people etc.).

## Advocacy: revised National Standards for Advocacy Services

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Coram Voice welcome the Department for Education's consultation on proposed updates to the National Standards and statutory guidance for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services.

It has been over 20 years since the last standards were published so this is a rare opportunity for professionals and young people to give their views on how children's advocacy should be delivered.

The deadline for responses is 18th December 2023.

[Find out more about the consultation and share your views here](#)

# Speak Up, Stand Out: Youth Advocacy

What would you like to tell the Department for Education?

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**Coram Voice, Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London  
WC1N 1AZ**

**Tel: 020 7833 5792**

**Email: [ANV@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:ANV@coramvoice.org.uk)**

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