

Amplify

A
NATIONAL
VOICE

ANV National Voices Networking Event

coramVoice)))
getting young voices heard

Coram Voice

**‘Stable Homes, Built on Love’
Engagement Work - Feedback**

**Session 6 Speak Up,
Stand Out: Youth
Advocacy**

Session 6 - Speak Up, Stand Out: Youth Advocacy

The in-person workshop took place on Wednesday 25 October as part of the Amplify event.

The workshop focused on advocacy. We started by explaining advocacy and ANV Ambassadors interviewing Lisa from the Department for Education (DfE) about DfE's work around advocacy at the moment. Lisa talked about the current consultation on Advocacy standards.

Who we heard from:

A total of 25 young people attended the session. They were aged 15-25+ and were from across England.



Advocacy is led by the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

How did you hear about advocacy?

Those who already knew about advocacy described how they had heard about it:

- Told by professionals: PA, social worker or Foster carers.
- Advocates coming to visit Children in Care Council.
- Being assigned one for children in need meetings for general understanding.
- Through information packs and pathways.
- During hospital stay (Mental health advocacy).
- Posts at college and school and social media.



Raising awareness about advocacy

How would you like to be informed about advocacy?

Those who had not heard about advocacy described how they would like to be told:

- Emails and updates from other professionals, not just carers.
- More teachers and tutors to learn and inform students.
- Links / websites.
- Videos.
- Lessons or assemblies.
- Social worker updates on advocacy.



Raising awareness about advocacy

When would it have been useful to find out about them?

Young people wanted advocacy support when they had issues with:

- Curfews, internet restrictions.
- Family & friends relationships.
- Freedom.
- Considering post 16/18 options and transitions.
- School and/or college.
- Social workers or Personal advisers who did not listen.
- Social workers, carers or support workers who say something offensive.
- Making a complaint.





Design a service – How do you think children and young people should be involved in making sure advocacy services work for them

What advocacy/advocates should look like ?

- Face to face interaction.
- Make it fun – an activity young people likes.
- More regular meetings if you need them.
- Casual meetings, like a coffee or a walk.
- Active listening/ better communication.
- Re-assurance.
- Thick skinned.
- Experienced.
- Understanding of young people's views.
- Regular updates.
- Check ins with young people (of all types).
- Children and young people involved in interventions.



Design a service – How do you think children and young people should be involved in making sure advocacy services work for them

When and how you should get advocacy?

- Young people should be involved in deciding when and how you can get an advocate.
- Young people should be able to say when they don't need an advocate.
- Young people should be able to access advocacy directly – not just through social services (“I was told I didn't need an advocate by social services”).

How to recruit advocates

- Social media adverts.
- Children and young people involved in interviews – e.g. youth panels.
- Hire care experienced people to do the job.
- Consider traineeships and paid opportunities for young people to develop skills, not just volunteering.
- Focus on capabilities rather than specific experience.
- Hire people with the best skills.



Design a service – How do you think children and young people should be involved in making sure advocacy services work for them

What young people need to know about advocates and advocacy

- Knowing when they work & how to communicate so you get a reply.
- Clear understanding of confidentiality between the young person and the advocate.

Describing advocacy

- 'Professional friend' more appealing and more caring language – but make sure boundaries between advocate and 'friend' is kept.

How should you be able to say what you think about services?

- Young people wanted multiple ways of getting involved.
- Feedback forms, so advocates are aware of what needs improving or online surveys.
- Young people designing posters to voice their opinions.
- Get feedback from young people as part of probation review of advocates.



Design a service – How do you think children and young people should be involved in making sure advocacy services work for them

How to communicate about advocacy

Using a range of tools to communicate was important, as was recognising that not all children and young people would have access to mobile phones and internet, especially younger children.

- Business cards with important / key information – more descriptive and age dependent.
- For younger children or people without internet use books, leaflets, posters.
- Emails – (better for some younger people)
- Inform safeguarding teams, SEN teams and designated teachers.
- Include in Children in Care and Personal Education Plan Review meetings with IROs.
- Include in pledges.
- Social media i.e. Instagram.

Key messages for policy teams:



There is not one way of making children and young people aware of advocacy. Information should be shared in many different formats (videos, links, booklets, posters, business cards, emails etc). Lots of people need to know about advocacy and tell children and young people about it, including social workers, Personal Advisers, IROs, safeguarding teams, SEN teams, & teachers.



It was important to be made aware of and offered advocacy when there are things about your care you are not happy with, for example you have issues where you live, in school, with your workers or carers, with family time and when leaving care.



Young people wanted to be involved in the recruitment of advocates, reviewing how well advocates do their jobs, how you can access services and how advocates work with young people.



Young people suggested that care experienced young people could be involved in making sure services work for them through feedback forms, online surveys, sitting on interview panels, giving feedback for probation reviews.



Young people wanted advocates to include people who are thick skinned, understand young people's view, see them in person and communicate well with them. They thought that care experienced people could be great advocates and wanted chances for them to get into advocacy such as paid traineeships.

Further information

Check out other [online session](#) dates for future sessions

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch at: ANV@coramvoice.org.uk

