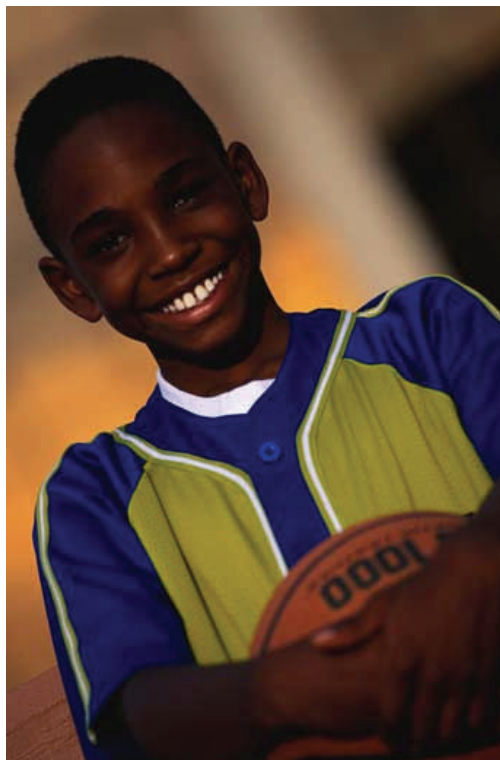


Advocacy

The Children's Legal Centre is a unique, independent national charity concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people.

Advocacy is about helping young people to express their wishes and feelings



What does an Advocate do?

The role of an Advocate is to:

- Make sure a young person can make their wishes and feelings known
- Attend decision making meetings on behalf of or with the young person
- Provide unbiased information to the young person
- Support the young person
- Make sure that the young person's legal rights are upheld and that they are fairly treated
- Help the young person to make a complaint if they wish to do so

What does advocacy achieve?

Advocacy is about helping young people to express their wishes and feelings, be fully involved in their own care and to be consulted about decisions which directly affect them. It is a process intended to assist young people to become involved in all parts of their care.

Professionals must decide what is in the best interests of the young person, but advocates are different. Advocates do not decide what the young person should think but assist them to express their wishes and feelings. Advocates should not influence decisions made about the care of the young person but should support young people's involvement in them. They are independent of all agencies involved in the young person's care. They are influenced only by the views of the young people they work with.

The sole purpose of an advocate is to reflect the young person's views and help him or her to express them. Their views may conflict with the views of their parents, carers and other professionals. The eventual decision may be a compromise between the conflicting opinions. However, the most important thing is for the young people to have the opportunity to make their views known whatever they may be.

Advocates do not decide what the young person should think but assist them to express their wishes and feelings. Advocates should not influence decisions made about the care of the young person but should support young people's involvement in them.

This information is correct at the time of writing [December 2008] The law in this area is subject to change. The Children's Legal Centre cannot be held responsible if changes to the law outdate this publication.

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Advocacy

Why choose Advocacy?

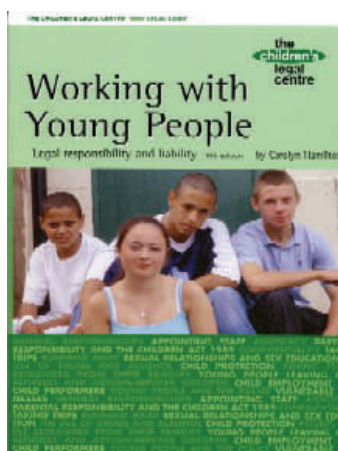
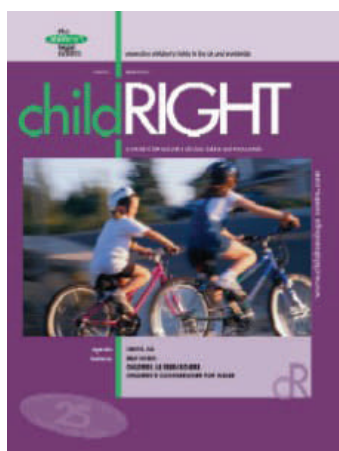
Most children already have an adult in their lives that look after their best interests. Their advocate has a different role their only concern is '*the view of the young person*'. An advocate is not part of the system. The young person has the choice whether or not to talk to and use an advocate.

Young people who are in the care of or accommodated by a local authority have the right to ask for an advocate to help them take part in decision making or to make a complaint.

It is up to the young person to decide whether or not to talk to and use an advocate



The Children's Legal Centre produces a number of publications including childRIGHT, a monthly publication and Working with Young People: Legal Responsibility and Liability. For further information about our publications please contact us.



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