

Your Guide to **NYAS Cymru Children and Young People's Advocacy Services**

nyas
cymru
gwasanaeth eiriolaeth
ieuenctid cenedlaethol
national youth
advocacy service



**I think it's really important that
children's voices are heard.**

Welcome to NYAS Cymru Children and Young People's Advocacy Service.

We have written this guide with the help of children and young people who have had an advocate from NYAS Cymru. The guide contains useful information on how we will work with you, what you can expect from us as well as what opportunities you can access through NYAS Cymru.



It feels good that they know it's coming from me and not someone else.

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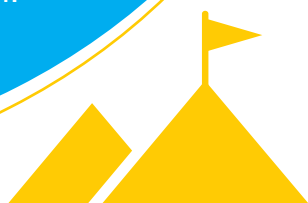


our vision

Every child and young person has the right to be heard.

Every child has the right to feel safe.

Every child has the right to be involved in decisions being made about them.



our mission

At NYAS we listen to what children and young people want, care about what they say, and empower them to get their voices heard.

We ensure their wishes and feelings are expressed and acted upon to improve their situation and help them build a better future.

We will never stop in our efforts to influence, lobby and campaign to bring about positive changes and ensure children's and young people's rights are upheld.



our values

COLLABORATIVE

We work closely with colleagues and partners to deliver an outstanding service to the children and young people who need us.



ACCOUNTABLE

We are open, transparent and accountable, taking responsibility for what we do.



RESPECTFUL

We value and respect each other and the people we work with, embracing diversity and nurturing trust.



EMPOWERING

We listen to children and young people when they feel they are not being heard, inform them of their rights, and empower them to change their lives for the better.



My advocate is kind, helpful and helps me to understand stuff.

What is Advocacy?

You have a right to be listened to and have your views taken seriously, but sometimes it can be difficult to express your wishes and feelings and you may feel that your voice isn't getting heard. This is when you might need the support of an Independent Advocate. Your Advocate isn't employed by Children's Social Services and will work just for you and is on your side.

An Advocate Can Help You:

- Understand your rights
- Ensure your views, wishes and feelings are listened to and respected
- Have a say in the decisions being made about your life
- Understand your situation and why decisions have been made
- Support you to speak up for yourself
- Speak up for you and challenge any decisions you want stopped, started or changed
- Support you to make a complaint if you are not happy with a decision made.

It really did help. I needed someone to talk for me because I'm quite a nervous person and don't like talking so I'm really happy that I had someone who could help me.



Your right to know about Advocacy

Social Services must make sure that all children and young people who are over the age of 5 and new to becoming care experienced or involved within child protection services know about their right to have an advocate. This is called the **"Active Offer"**.

You will be given the opportunity to meet with an Advocate from NYAS Cymru who will explain about how we can help you and provide you with information about your rights. If you feel you need help from an Advocate, we will work with you and help you with any issues you have, this is called **"Issue based Advocacy"**.

What kinds of issues can my Advocate help me with?

Your Advocate will be led by you and help you with whatever issue is of concern to you. Examples of the types of things we can help you with are:

- Living arrangements
- Seeing your family and/or other people who are important in your life
- Support you at your meetings
- Education
- Leaving care
- Support you to make a complaint
- Get legal advice and representation.

HAVE you ever FELT that NO ONE is LISTENING?

To find out more about Advocacy please watch this short video



Watch our Advocacy explained for young children video

How will my Advocate work with me?

Advocacy has helped with the whole situation with having lots of changes of social worker and to get my views across.

Confidentiality and keeping you safe

It is very important that you are able to trust your advocate and feel able to talk to them freely without worrying that they will tell other people what you have said. Confidentiality means your advocate won't tell anyone outside of NYAS Cymru what you have **shared with them in confidence** without your permission UNLESS they are concerned about yours or somebody else's wellbeing and safety.

If your advocate has concerns, they will have to speak with their Manager in NYAS Cymru and this information might need to be shared with Social Services or other organisations you are involved with.

If this happens, your Advocate will

- **Inform you if they need to do this if it is safe to do so.**
- **Explain why and exactly who they are going to speak to**
- **Keep you updated on what is happening**
- **Make sure you get the help and support you need.**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC) talks about all children and young people being protected from abuse and neglect. Remember this IS YOUR RIGHT and your advocate and all other adults in your life MUST make sure you are safe and free from harm and danger.

Keeping information about you

When your advocate works with you, they will write down what you talk to them about. This is to make sure they remember everything you tell them so they can help you the best way that they can and keep a record. They will check with you that they have properly understood what you have said, and this will then be put on your NYAS Cymru file.

When we stop working with you the law says NYAS must keep a record of your file for a period of time depending on your circumstances, your advocate will provide you with more information about this when you start working with them.

Nobody other than NYAS Cymru can see your file without your permission unless there are laws which require us to provide this information. If we ever have to provide information from your file, we will always speak to you about this first.

We will always keep your information safe and protected at all times.



You can ask to see your file at any time, and we will deal with your request as quickly as possible.

For more information about we keep information about you and how you can access this, please speak to your advocate.

Making an Advocacy Plan with **YOU**

Your Advocate will be led by you and help you with the issues that you say you want help with. When you start working with your Advocate, they will make an advocacy plan with you. They will:

- **Set out what help you need (what you want to stop, start or change)**
- **Inform you of what steps need to be taken to achieve your goals**
- **Review how things are going and keep you updated**
- **Discuss and agree any other steps that need to be taken to achieve your goals.**

For more information on Advocacy plans, please speak to your advocate.

My experience of Advocacy

If it hadn't been for her, I don't think I would have got my GCSEs. It was good to have someone to listen to me

My name is Becky and I am 16 years old; I went into foster care when I was 14 because there were problems at home. This is my experience of how advocacy helped me and made a big difference to my life.

My foster carer referred me to NYAS because I didn't want to change schools when I moved to a new foster home. I really liked my school and had lots of friends there and the last thing I wanted was to have to start all over again.

An Advocate from NYAS came to see me and spoke to me about what was going on and what I wanted. She explained that everything we spoke about would not be shared unless I told her anything concerning myself or anyone else being hurt. My advocate wrote down what I said, and we agreed a plan of what we needed to do – which involved all the steps we needed to take.

I met with my advocate quite a few times and it was good that she let me decide where we met which was either in school or at home; she was really flexible. Her only interest was putting forward what I wanted, and she helped me to work that out by explaining my rights and we looked at different ways we could solve my problems. I really liked that my advocate asked me if it was okay to talk to someone or whether I wanted to do it, she would always say to me “you are the boss”!

The main way my Advocate helped was by going to my social services meetings with me as this was where things really got sorted out. She would come and see me before my meetings to talk through what I wanted to put forward. She also made sure that I got to have a say about who came to my meetings. My mum tried to go along once but I wasn't comfortable with this and my advocate spoke to social services about how I felt, and my mum had a separate meeting with my social worker instead. At my meetings she made sure that everything I wanted to say was heard and taken on board and she checked out that I understood everything.

My advocate really helped me get things sorted – I was able to stay in my school even though I had moved further away. If it hadn't been for her, I don't think I would have got my GCSEs. It was good to have someone to listen to me. I never felt judged about anything and I really felt she cared. She took time to get involved and was there for me in every aspect. I think NYAS is a really good service and I would encourage other children and young people like me to get an advocate if they need one.

Having your say

Children and young people are at the heart of our service. It's important to us that you are able to have your say and get involved in how we run our advocacy services.

It's really important that you get to tell us what you think about the advocacy support you have received from NYAS Cymru so that we know how well we're doing and can improve what we do.

There are several ways you can give feedback, see the ways below:

Join our Young Person's Advisory Group

NYAS Cymru have set up a group for young people from across our NYAS Cymru services to advise us and help us run our services. They help us to devise information, recruit and train staff and ensure services are being run well. Along with helping to shape policy to make things better for other care experienced children and young people.



If you are receiving any of our NYAS Cymru services and would like to get involved, please email help@nyas.net



Making a complaint or giving a compliment

At NYAS Cymru, we are committed to improving the lives of all children and young people we work with and we try hard to give everyone we support the best possible service we can. If you are unhappy, pleased with or would like to comment on the service you have received from NYAS Cymru, you have a right to express your opinion and we would really like to hear from you.

We value and welcome all types of comments, good or bad. What you tell us helps us to look at how we do things and helps us to improve our services. Most concerns can often be sorted out on an informal basis so please feel free to ring in and have a chat with us about what has bothered you or send us an email or write a letter if you prefer.

You can make a compliment, complaint or comment yourself or you can ask someone you trust to do this on your behalf.

www.nyas.net

To do this you can:

Telephone NYAS Head Office: 0151 649 8700



Download and read our NYAS Complaints and compliments leaflet in English or Welsh.

If you have made a complaint about NYAS Cymru, a local authority or any other public service and feel that you have not been listened too and want to take the complaint to the Ombudsman you can download a **Young Persons Guide** on how to complain.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales can look into complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales. They are independent and provides a free and confidential service.

You can contact the Ombudsman by:

Telephone: **0300 790 0203**

Email: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Or in writing at: **1 Ffordd Yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ**

Further information on the Ombudsman and what they do is available at www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Other Useful Contacts and Information

Here is some information that you might find useful. If you need further information on any of our services, even one that is not listed here please speak to your NYAS Cymru Advocate and they will be able to help you find what you are looking for.

Sharon Lovell CEO /Responsible Individual NYAS Cymru

Sharon.lovell@nyas.net



Elly Jones Operations Manager / Registered Advocacy Manager NYAS Cymru

elly.jones@nyas.net

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NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service)

NYAS Website youngpeople.nyas.net

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre Wales:
childrenslegalcentre.wales

Children's Commissioner for Wales
www.childcomwales.org.uk

Meic Cymru
www.meiccymru.org

SNAP Cymru
www.snapcymru.org

Llamau
www.llamau.org.uk

Voices From Care Cymru
www.vfcc.org.uk

It's good to have someone to talk to and you can say your opinion and they go and tell people what you think.



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Telephone 0808 808 1001

Email help@nyas.net

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 [NYAS \(National Youth Advocacy Service\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nyas)

www.nyas.net

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