



Department
for Education

Market Engagement

Children and young people's advocacy and advice service

October 2021

Agenda

1. **Why advocacy is important and how it fits with DfE priorities**
2. **How the advocacy and advice service has operated over time**
3. **Value and impact of the service**
4. **Plans for re-procuring the service**



Advocacy and the strategic context

- **The right for all children to have their voices heard** is enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK, as an international treaty obligation, 30 years ago.
- **This principle is embedded in domestic legislation** which stresses the importance of looked-after children, care leavers and children in need being able to express their views and feelings and have these views taken into account- most recently through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Corporate Parenting Principles guidance (2018), with Local authorities having a **statutory duty** to provide an independent advocacy service for these children and young people.
- The Department for Education (the Department) gave a commitment, in [*Fostering Better Outcomes*](#) (2018), **to work with the sector to improve advocacy** support and to ensure all looked-after children are aware of their right to an advocate. There is ongoing work on a **consultation** to review the national advocacy standards and related statutory guidance, due to be launched late this year.
- Access to advocacy for eligible children and young people **aligns with the department's vision and purpose to realise potential, enable children and learners to thrive, by protecting the vulnerable** and ensuring the delivery of excellent standards of education, training and care.

Effective advocacy

Effective Advocacy:

- Represents the views, wishes and needs of children and young people to decision-makers and helps them to navigate the system
- Assists children and young people in the early resolution of complaints and concerns
- Works to ensure problems do not escalate
- Helps ensure that children and young people are protected from harm or risk of harm to their wellbeing
- Supports the identification of potential system level failures to tackle them at their earliest opportunity



How the advocacy service has operated over time

- **The Department funds a children and young people's advocacy and advice service** which ensures looked-after children, care leavers and children in need understand their rights to advocacy, are signposted to local advocacy services and provided with direct 'safety net' advocacy when unable to access local services.
- This advocacy and advice service (presently delivered by Coram Voice as the Always Heard advocacy service) provides a national helpline to eligible children and young people as well as a range of support routes outside of the helpline, including via website, WhatsApp, text, email and face to face where required.
- The Department has funded the delivery of an advocacy advice service since 2013, initially delivered by both Coram Voice and NYAS, then delivered solely by Coram Voice since July 2017.
- The service is essential in providing support to some of the most vulnerable children in England.
- Through the delivery of 'safety net' advocacy the service helps:
 - **identify gaps in provision** of local advocacy support
 - **identify barriers to advocacy** which can help drive and inform improvements to advocacy services
 - provide genuine **insights on the issues facing children** in the care of the service

Value and impact of the service


In 2020 the national advice and advocacy service:

- **provided 15,900 information and advice sessions** online or via our helpline service increasing understanding of young people's rights
- **supported 700 young people** to be provided with intensive safety net advocacy when no one else would help
- **signposted 8,500 advice contacts** or referrals to local young people's advocacy services
- shared over **300 safeguarding concerns** with 81 local authorities
- worked with local authorities to **address barriers to advocacy** at the local level.

The service continues to be important in light of continuing pressures on children and young people experiencing vulnerability related to COVID-19 and is particularly important for hard to reach children and young people.

Advocacy service market engagement - October 2021





‘Your entitlements and your rights, it’s so important you get told them. That’s what advocacy is about, to empower the young person – they have such a big impact on young people’s lives.’

Plans for re-procurement

- The current contract for the national advice and advocacy services ends on 31 March 2022.
- The service model continues to work well as an advocacy safety net provision and there are no significant planned changes to the current model. However, we do welcome suggestions on additions or enhancements to the service.
- Successful providers may also need to be able to pivot to accommodate any changes coming out of the revised advocacy standards consultation (due to conclude in February 2022).
- Pending internal approvals, we anticipate that any successful provider(s) may start to deliver in April 2022 and that delivery will be 2+1 years.
- Approximate timings (TBC):
 - Publish tender docs – **November**
 - Closing date for applying – **December**
 - Evaluation of bids and sign-off – **January**

What we are looking for

The Department is interested in organisations that have **significant expertise and experience in advocacy** for children and young people with:

- Significant experience in **delivering advocacy and advice to children and young people** in social care and/or education sectors
- **Ability to identify gaps** in advocacy provision nationally and **barriers** to accessing advocacy to help drive and inform improvements to advocacy services
- Experience in **working with local authorities** to broker local advocacy support and support systemic change in advocacy provision
- Expertise in using a wide range of methods to support and **reach eligible children** and young people
- Understanding of **child safeguarding** and experience alerting children's services to safeguarding concerns
- Added **social value** - additional value in the delivery of the contract where a wider community or public benefit can be created extending beyond the value of the contract itself.



Social Value

The additional value in the delivery of a contract where a wider community or public benefit can be created extending beyond the value of the contract itself.

Procurement Policy Note 6/20 Taking account of social value in the award of central government contracts

- From 1 January 2021, a minimum weighting of 10% of the total score for social value will be applied in a procurement
- Applies to procurements covered by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015
- **Applies to all central government departments**



Covid-19
Recovery



Wellbeing



Equal
Opportunity



Fighting
Climate
Change



Tackling
Economic
Inequality

Questions

Follow up for any questions:

Email: outcomes.CIC@education.gov.uk

Department for Education

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