



Office for Disability Issues

HM Government



How independent advocates
can help disabled people

Easy Read summary



Easy Read

What this booklet is about

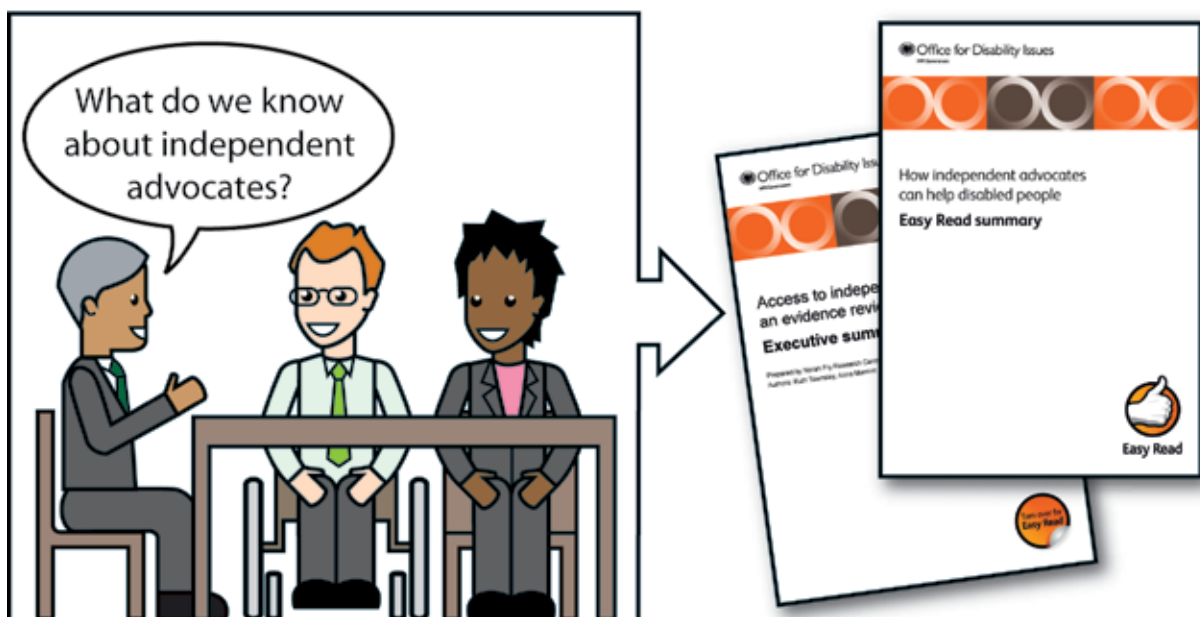
In 2008, the government set up the Independent Living Strategy.

The Independent Living Strategy says what the government will do to make disabled people's lives better.

The government said it would look at what independent advocates can do to help disabled people.

We looked at lots of work that people have done about independent advocates.

This booklet tells you what we found out.

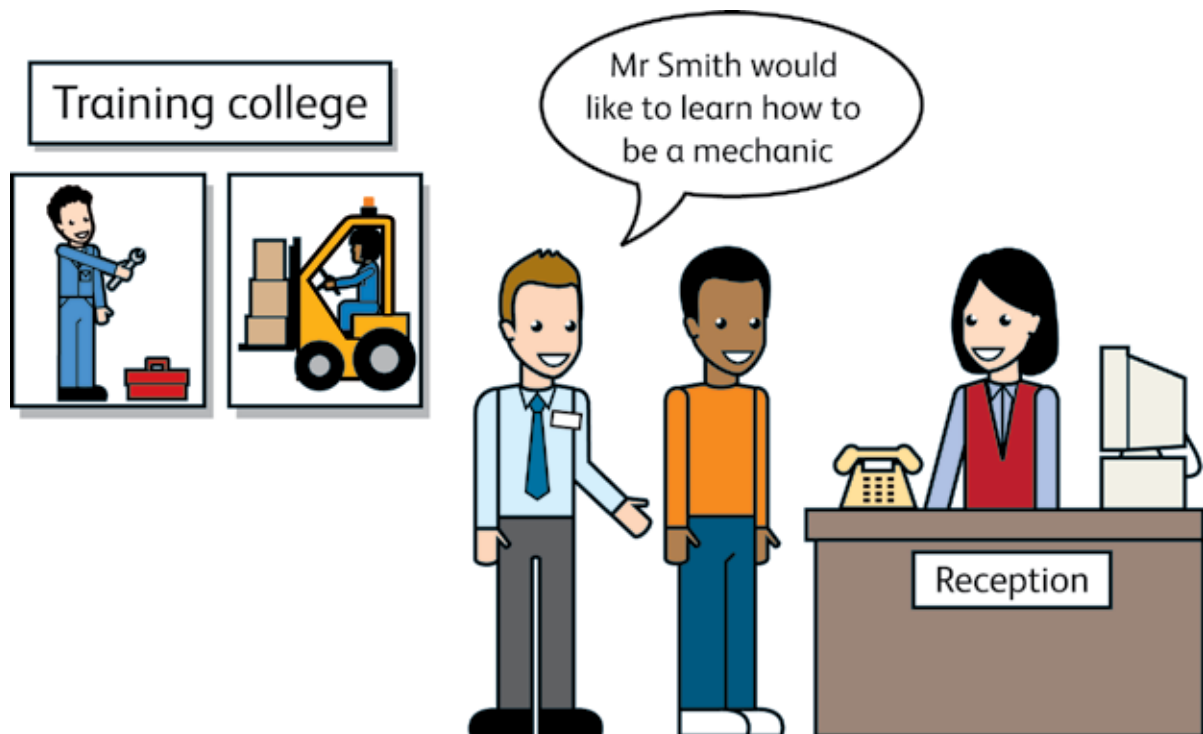


What is an advocate?

An advocate is someone who helps you get more choice and control about what you want.

Advocates tell you about things and help you speak up about what you want and need.

An advocate can talk to other people or organisations for you. Advocates can tell them what you want and what you need.



What is an independent advocate?

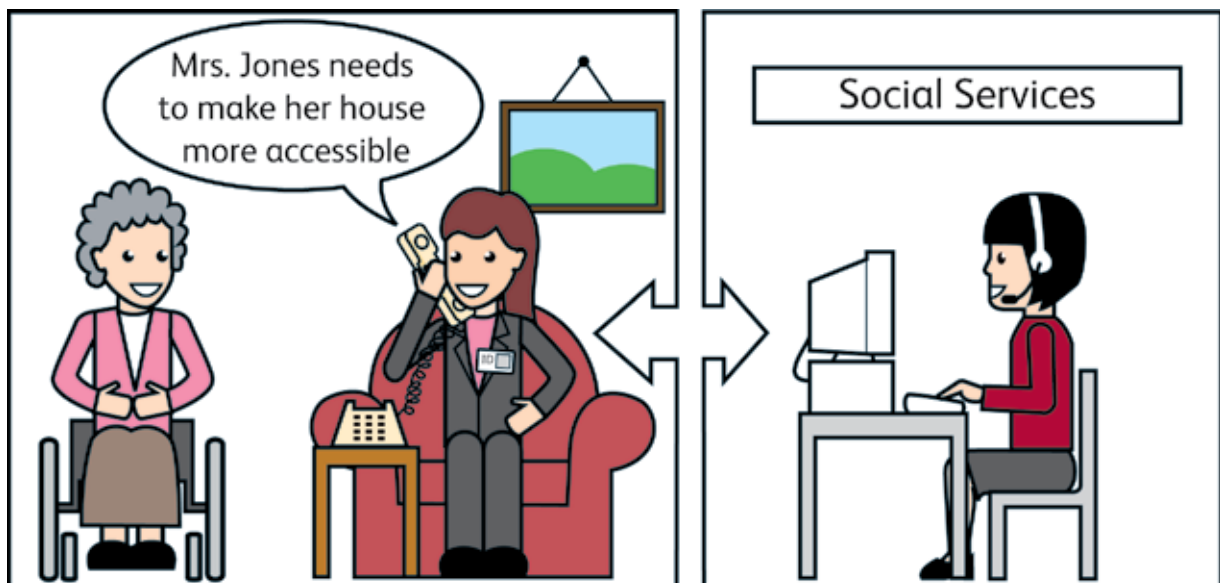
An independent advocate should not work for the local council or anyone who provides a service to you.

Some independent advocates work for no pay. Some get paid for their work.



What is good about having an independent advocate

- The disabled person can trust the independent advocate.
- The disabled person and the independent advocate can work together to sort out problems with services.
- The independent advocate can tell the disabled person about things.
- The independent advocate can act on behalf of the disabled person when needed.
- The independent advocate always asks what the disabled person wants and needs.



What we did

We looked at what other people found out about independent advocates. We looked at books and reports about how independent advocacy helps disabled people. This is called research.

We wanted to find out about 4 areas of disabled people's lives.

- Disabled young people who are becoming adults.
- Disabled parents who may not be able to look after their children.
- Disabled people who may have to go into a care home or nursing home.
- Disabled people who are victims of anti-social behaviour or crime. Or disabled people who behave badly or break the law.



Why young disabled people may need an independent advocate

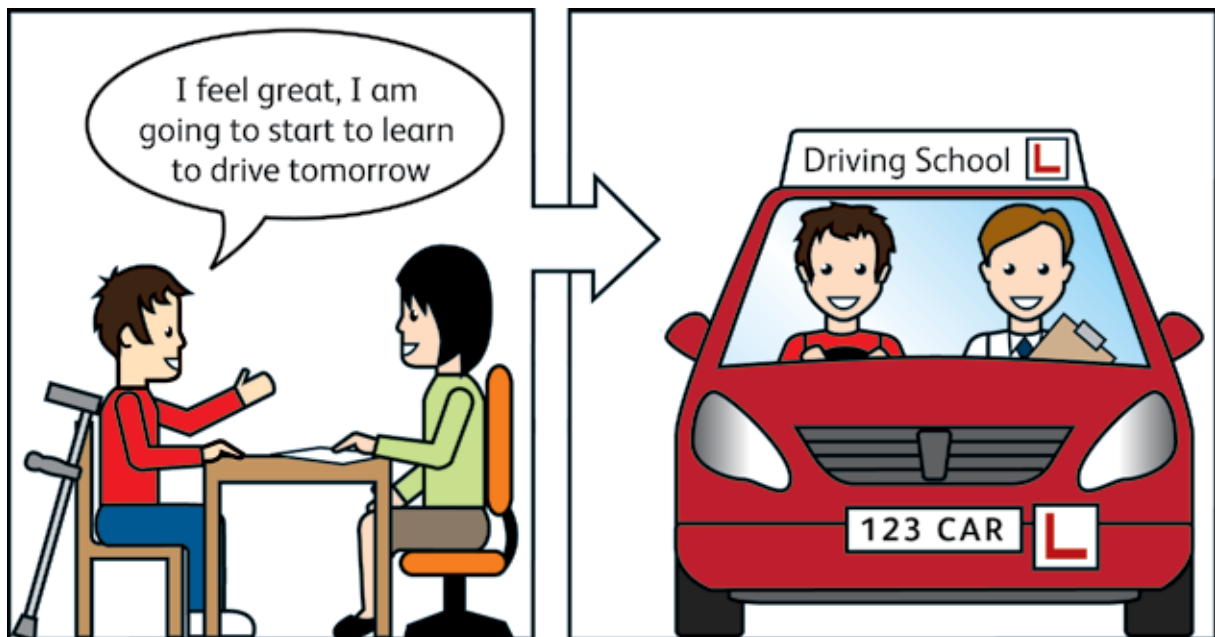
An independent advocate can do these things.

- Tell young disabled people about the choices they can make.
- Make sure other people know what young disabled people want and need.
- Support young disabled people who do not live with their parents.
- Help young disabled people to take part in making decisions about their lives.
- Help young disabled people with their feelings. This is called emotional support.



What young disabled people can get from an independent advocate

- They can feel better about themselves and have more confidence.
- They can learn that they can do more and better things in their life.



Why some disabled parents need an independent advocate

- Sometimes children are taken away from their parents and looked after by other people. This may happen if children are not being cared for properly or they need to be protected from harm.
- Most disabled parents whose children are being looked after by someone else are from 2 groups of people.
 - Parents with learning disabilities.
 - Parents with mental health support needs.
- People who work with disabled parents, like social workers, need to learn more about the help disabled parents need.
- Disabled parents may need help to take part when people, like social workers, are talking about how to keep their children safe.
- A lot of disabled parents want independent advocacy.



What disabled parents get from an independent advocate

- Disabled parents understand why their child may need to be looked after by other people.
- Disabled parents may get more support to look after their children better themselves.
- Disabled parents have more say in decisions about what happens to their children. Advocates can make sure that people making decisions know what disabled parents want and need.
- Social workers and other people who work with disabled parents find out more about what disabled parents need to look after their children better.
- Disabled parents and people who work with disabled parents find it easier to talk to each other.



Why disabled people who may have to go into residential care may need an independent advocate

Sometimes, when people become ill, or old, they cannot get the support they need to live in their own home. They may have to move to a care home or nursing home. This is also called residential care.

A lot of older disabled people go into residential care.

People have a lot of questions about moving into residential care.

Often, older people do not know very much about independent advocates or what they do.



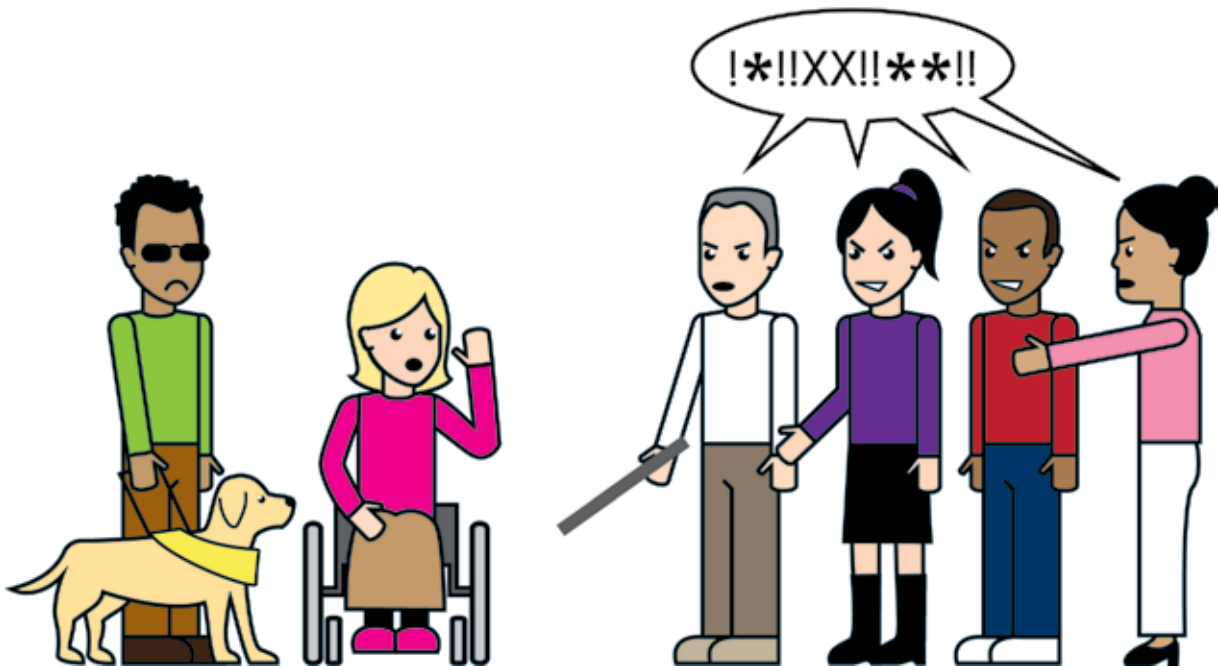
What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour is when people behave badly. They do things that scare or upset other people.

Shouting in the street or writing graffiti can be anti-social behaviour.

What is crime?

Crime is when people do something that breaks the law. Stealing, setting fire to things like buildings, rape and murder are all crimes. Calling people names because they are disabled is a crime too.



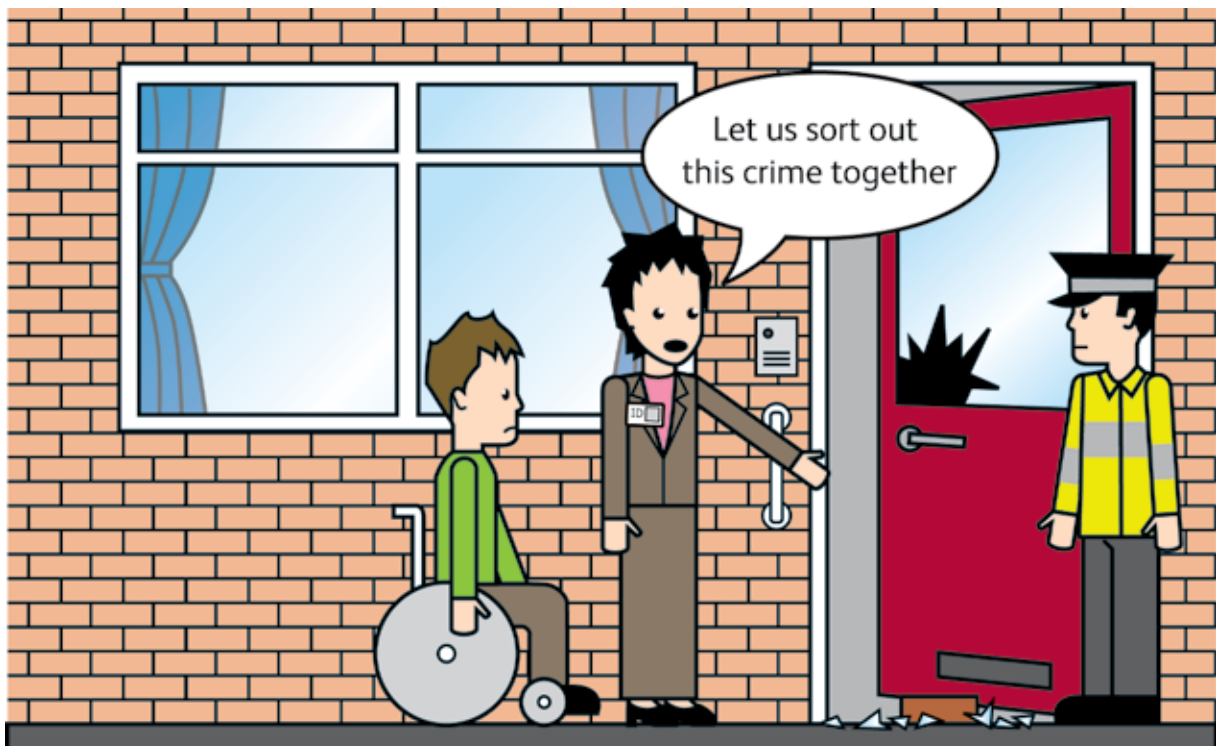
Why disabled people who are victims of crime may need an independent advocate

Disabled people are more likely to be victims of anti-social behaviour or crime than other people.

Disabled people are less likely to report a crime than other people.

An independent advocate can help do these things.

- Tell disabled people how to report anti-social behaviour or a crime.
- Help disabled people to report anti-social behaviour or a crime.
- Explain how the police work and how they will try to sort out the crime.



Why disabled people who behave badly or break the law may need an independent advocate

A lot of people in trouble with the police have learning disabilities or mental health support needs.

They may not understand what is being said at the police station or in court.

An independent advocate can help explain things to them.

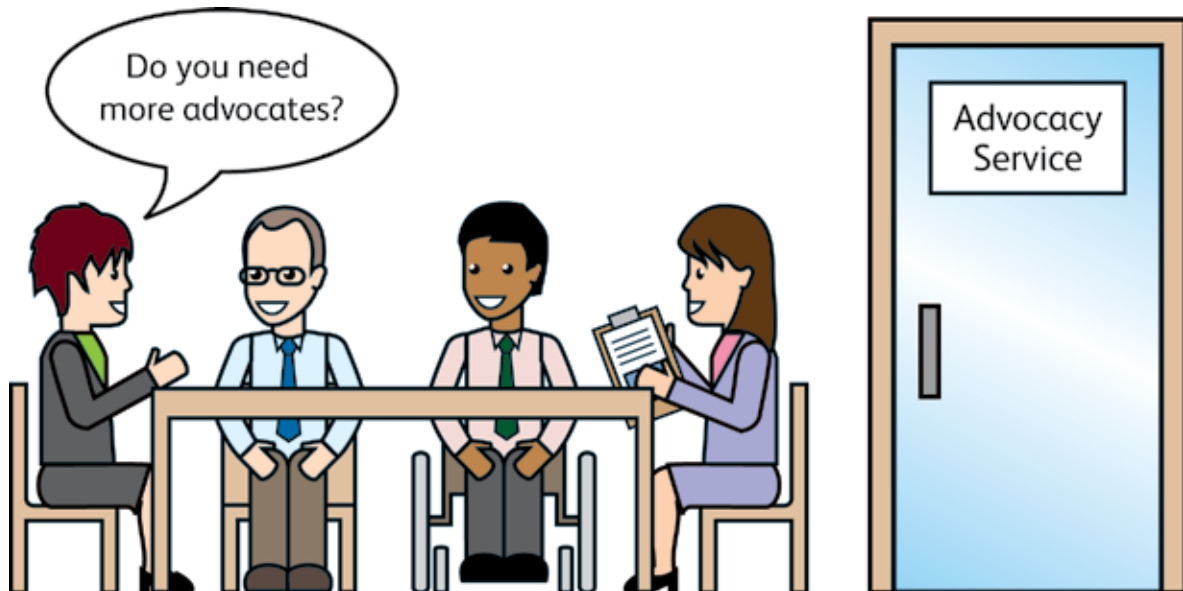
The independent advocate can explain what hard words mean and help them to fill in forms.



Things we still need to find out

We need more research to find out these things about independent advocacy.

- How many disabled people need an independent advocate?
- Are there advocacy services that already help disabled people?
- Are there are enough advocacy services and advocates to support all the disabled people who need help?



New research

We need to understand advocacy better by finding out about more advocacy services.

We need to talk to lots more people who use advocacy services.

We need to find out how much it costs for disabled people to have advocates.

We need to find out how independent advocates make a difference in disabled people's lives.



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