Reducing health inequalities and increasing fairer health and wellbeing in Scotland
for **disabled people and unpaid carers**, through **advocacy**,
empowerment, access to entitlements,
stakeholder partnership working, and education in rights and equality

VoiceAbility



What we do

We make sure people are heard when it matters most.

We've been supporting people to have their say in decisions about their health, care, and wellbeing for over 40 years.

We're an **independent voice and rights charity** and **one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.**

In 2022, we started working in Scotland.
Since then our team and services have continued to grow.

What do we offer?

Free, independent support to **involve people in decisions** about their **health, care and wellbeing.**

What is advocacy?

Advocacy means working with someone to help them understand their options, know their rights and say what they want.

What do our advocates do?



An advocate can support someone to:

- understand their rights
- understand any processes and decisions they are subject to
- understand the options they have
- challenge a decision

An advocate can support an **unpaid carer and the cared for person(s)** to have their rights upheld.

That might mean support with:

- Guardianships
- Mental Health Act tribunals
- Communicating with health and social care professionals, including by letter and at meetings
- Making a complaint, for example about a care provider, a care package, direct payments or healthcare
- Housing
- Resolving problems
- Signposting to other services



How do we do this?

Our advocates can speak to our advocacy partners on the phone, by text, email, over video call, or might meet in person.

Each advocacy partner is supported in a person-centred way regarding their preferences for communication and for modality of how to meet.



Accessibility

Our advocacy services are supported by interpreting services, and our website has read aloud and translation software.

We have Easy Read guides available, too.

Referrals to VoiceAbility advocacy services

People can refer by phone, email, website, or in person at a drop-in. We have KPI's for prompt response times for our enquiries and cases.

Drop-ins are run by advocates regularly in accessible community locations.

We welcome referrals from stakeholder partners and advocacy partners.

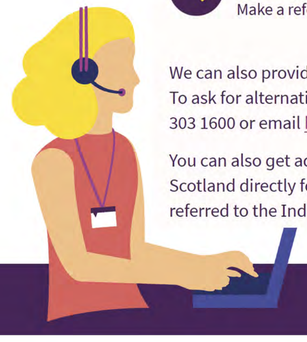
Who are you trying to get help for?

We process and protect data according to our Privacy Notice.

- A patient or client
- Myself
- A friend or family member



Get an advocate
Make a referral, for yourself or someone else.



We can also provide information in other languages and formats. To ask for alternative languages or formats, call us for free on 0300 303 1600 or email helpline.scotland@voiceability.org

You can also get advocacy support by contacting Social Security Scotland directly for free on 0800 182 2222 and asking to be referred to the Independent Advocacy Service.

Our services in Scotland

Benefits advocacy in Scotland

Anyone in Scotland who self-identifies as disabled, is entitled by law to free, independent advocacy support to understand and access Social Security Scotland benefits.

We work with people as advocacy partners in a person-centred way where they lead their advocacy journey.

Support is also available for parents, guardians, or carers, who are accessing benefits for a disabled child. And for parents, guardians, or carers who are disabled and want support to access social security benefits for their child.

"It's taken me 53 years to get benefits support, which I should have had from birth. I cannot thank VoiceAbility enough for what they've done for me and my son."
- advocacy partner feedback

Our advocates can support with completing forms, understanding entitlement, and with any associated appeals and complaints processes.

For the most up-to-date information about benefits from Social Security Scotland visit the socialsecurity.gov.scot website.





Unpaid carers advocacy

Unpaid carers advocacy is for people who are aged 18 or over, who are caring for an eligible adult or child.

- Does someone in your family need support with their health and care?
- Do you live with someone, and help them with everyday tasks?

Even those who don't think of themselves as carers, are likely entitled to support.

"You can access advocacy without the role of 'carer' defining you. You're not alone, you don't have to be alone." - Unpaid Carers Advocate



Our advocacy services in Scotland include:

Social Security Scotland Advocacy – Nationwide

Edinburgh - Unpaid Carers Advocacy
Shetland - Adults and Older People
Moray - Adults and Older People
North Ayrshire - Adults and Older People
Fife - Adults, Older People and Children's Advocacy





Empowering others

Empowering through our referral pathways

Our provision offers options for self-referral and stakeholder referral, via phone, email, webform, or in person with an advocate.



Empowering via our Outcomes

Our outcomes are part of a holistic approach of how we engage in a person-led and person-centred way, focusing on partnership where the advocacy partner's voice is at the centre of the advocacy cycle.

Empowering via our toolkits

For those who do not seek to engage with an advocate, we can still offer support.

We have a self-advocacy toolkit that is full of helpful guidance that you can use to access benefits from Social Security Scotland.

This is available via our short referral form on our website or get in touch with us by email or phone and we can send one out to you.



Empowering via our Schools Placement Programme

In our schools programme, pupils typically spend a school week with advocates from **VoiceAbility**, with learning including:

- how independent advocacy upholds people's rights;
- provides them with knowledge about their rights, and the rights of others;
- understanding how this can empower people to speak up for themselves.

"I enjoyed learning about advocacy as my future job to involve support to those who need it."
Student feedback, Schools Programme



Activities include:

- discussing what qualities and skills an advocate should have,
- using interactive techniques such as mind-mapping;
- engagement in a fun, non-verbal communication game acting out different emotions.

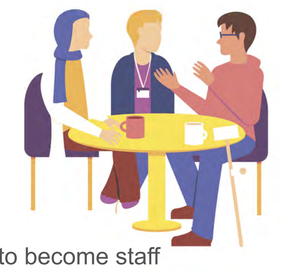
The programme also supports the students to develop useful life and career skills, like goal setting, and identifying their own strengths and values.

"I love how you guys made this experience so fun for us... we enjoyed it so much."
- Student feedback



Empowering via volunteering

We have recently appointed staff in dedicated roles to oversee our volunteering programme, which welcomes former clients, as well as anyone interested and creates meaningful and engaging opportunities including:



- case work shadowing
- research
- training opportunities
- networking opportunities
- induction
- progression

We have welcomed some volunteers to go on to become staff members, following a full interview and induction process.

Empowering via Group Advocacy

We deliver regular advocacy group sessions that address common concerns such as:

- housing issues
- NHS and Social Care services
- access to other benefits and support

Group advocacy brings people together to **share their experiences in powerful ways.** Our sessions **support people to come together in a group setting** and **discuss a problem or issue that affects them.**

With the support of an advocate, participants:

- have the **opportunity to have their voice heard,**
- speak about their own personal experiences; and
- interact with people who are facing similar challenges.

How to get involved is offered accessibly; sessions are facilitated to be face-to-face and online.

Further advantageous opportunities include:

- Make connections with other **people with lived experience;**
- Raise awareness of issues which affect a collective group;
- Influence professionals who **make decisions that affect everyone.**

