**Advocacy Guidance**

**Knowing when to instruct and select the most suitable Advocate**

This will depend on who you consider to be **the most appropriate individual** to consult and/or represent the person. If the person already has built up a good relationship with an existing advocate (generic or statutory) and this is the best person to support them (because they know them well and have developed a strong rapport) this should be respected. You may come across cases where you think the person is most appropriately supported by an IMCA working alongside an IDVA or Care Act Advocate.

## Care Act Advocate

You must assess the person’s ability to understand and engage in the process. If you assess they are having ‘substantial difficulty’ and do not have an appropriate person to support them a referral should be made to a Care Act Advocate to **facilitate** their involvement. Substantial difficulty relates to understanding, retaining, using or weighing relevant information and communicating views, wishes and feelings. This may apply where a person is assessed as having mental capacity to make safeguarding decisions but where you judge them as having difficulty engaging in the process.

## Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA)

You should consider appointing an IMCA where an individual lacks mental capacity to understand one or more **protective measures**. This will help to ensure the persons wishes, feelings and beliefs are taken into account when best interest decisions are being made about them. You can still refer to an IMCA even if the person has family or friends to support them. IMCAs aim to establish that all possible protective measures have been considered (including, not to take protective measures) and whether this is the least restrictive option. They can access relevant records and will meet the person (if possible) and relevant others (eg professionals, paid carers, family). IMCAs will also find out whether the person has been given as much support as possible to participate in the decision making process. When you refer to the IMCA service make sure that you explain the decisions that the person needs to be supported with.

## Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA)

The main aim of an IMHA is to support people detained or subject to the **Mental Health Act** to understand their legal rights. IMHAs can support people in a range of other ways to ensure they can participate in decisions about their care and treatment and this includes safeguarding activity. If a person already has an IMHA and you consider that they are the most appropriate person to support the person they can be used.

## Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA)

You should consider referring to an IDVA in **domestic violence and abuse** cases which are high risk. IDVAs work very closely with the person to assess the level of risk, discuss protective measures and implement protection plans (including MARAC). They help a person decide what solutions are available and what they entail and support and represent them in meetings. As solutions are often multi-agency in nature

IDVAs can work with a range of organisations such as the Police, Housing, Courts and Solicitors.

## Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA)

You should consider referring to an ISVA if you are working with a person who has been subject to **rape or sexual assault**. An ISVA will work very closely with the person to help 19 them understand the criminal justice process, for example what will happen if they report an offence to the Police, if they go to court, the process and importance of forensic evidence. This enables them to make empowered and informed decisions. They can also provide independent support through a criminal investigation and court proceedings, emotional support through a period of crisis with face to face and/or telephone support and liaise with other services and agencies on someone's behalf.

## How to refer

Voiceability is our provider for independent advocacy services (Care Act, IMHA & IMCA)

E-mail [helpline@voiceability.org](mailto:helpline@voiceability.org) Phone 0300 303 1660

Web [www.voiceability.org/support-and-help/services-by-location/coventry](http://www.voiceability.org/support-and-help/services-by-location/coventry)

Refer by completing online form [www.voiceability.org/make-a-referral](https://www.voiceability.org/make-a-referral) Please call 0300 303 1660 if you need to discuss the referral

* ISVA - Refer by contacting Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (CRASAC) helpline on 024 7627 7777 or visit [www.crasac.org.uk/need-help/advocacy](https://www.crasac.org.uk/need-help/advocacy/)
* IDVA - Refer by contacting Coventry Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnership on 0800 111 4998 or visit [www.safetotalk.org.uk/servicedirectory](http://www.safetotalk.org.uk/servicedirectory)

Also see: [Advocacy Factsheet](https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/file/31285/advocacy_under_the_care_act_fact_sheet)