

Your Voice. Your Rights. Your Relationships.

Dorset Advocacy & Independent Visitor Service – 2025 update

 **Who wrote the report:** This report was written by Rob Elkins, Emma Collings and Sara Mullen.

We are the manager and senior team members in the Dorset Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service, part of NYAS.

 **Date written:** October 2025 (covering August 2024 to March 2025 – 8 months)

What's this?

- Every year Dorset Council & NYAS report how advocacy and Independent Visitors (IVs) are helping children and young people in Dorset.
- It shows what's working well and what we're doing next to make things even better. 😊
- We share it with the **Corporate Parenting Board** (the people who make sure children in care in Dorset are supported).
- This update is for *you*.

What are the key messages of this report

- Advocacy helps you speak up and be heard.
- Independent Visitors are kind volunteers who spend time with you and do fun things.
- More children are getting support than last year.
- Your feedback helps us improve the service.

What is Advocacy?

An **advocate** is someone independent who is on *your side*.

- ✓ Helps you share your views in meetings about your life
- ✓ Makes sure adults listen to you
- ✓ Explains your rights
- ✓ Supports you to complain if needed
- ✓ Works to *your* views and wishes, not anyone else's

💬 "I know you have my back."

What is an Independent Visitor (IV)?

An **IV** is a volunteer who chooses to be in your life.

- ✓ Meets you once a month
- ✓ Does fun activities you pick together
- ✓ Always turns up, even if workers or where you live change
- ✓ They're there because they *want* to be, not because they're paid

💬 “She always turns up.”

🏠 What happened this year?

Advocacy

- 156 children and young people supported
- Ages 4–24
- 13% had a disability, 12% with mental health needs
- 97% say they are happy with their advocate

Changes thanks to advocacy:

📈 More children knew their rights (37% → 78%)

📈 More children said their views changed their plans (up to 77%)

💬 “Thanks for everything. You’re the only one who is doing anything to help me.”

Independent Visitors (IVs)

- 23 children had an IV (more than last year!)
- 18 waiting for a match (we’re recruiting!)
- 9 children told us about their IV after 12 months:
 - 📊 100% felt comfortable talking to them
 - 📊 80% tried something new
 - 📊 60% learned a new skill

💬 “The best days out.”

🗨️ What’s next?

In 2025/26 we’ll:

- ✦ Make sure more children know about advocacy & IVs
- ✦ Recruit more volunteers so no one waits too long
- ✦ Listen to your feedback to keep improving
- ✦ Support young people leaving care with lifelong links
- ✦ Use fun and creative tools to help you share your views

💡 Want support?

📞 Call NYAS free: 0808 808 1001

🌐 Visit: www.nyas.net

💬 “If it wasn’t for your support I don’t think I would have made it this far.”