🎤 Your Voice. Your Rights. Your Relationships.

Dorset Advocacy & Independent Visitor Service – 2026 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:** September 2026 (covering April 2025 to March 2026)

👋 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

✅ **More children and young people** received advocacy support.

✅ **More children** now understand their rights.

✅ **More children** said adults listened to them and took their views seriously.

✅ **More children** are benefiting from an Independent Visitor.

✅ Children told us that having trusted adults who listen and stick around really matters.

🗣️ 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

💬 💬*"You are the only one that is listening to me and calls me to help and find out how I am."*

🧑‍🤝‍🧑 What is an Independent Visitor (IV)?

An **IV** is a volunteer who chooses to be in your life and spend time with you.

An IV can:

✓ Spend time with you regularly

✓ Do activities together

✓ Help you try new experiences

✓ Be someone you can talk to

✓ Stay involved even when other things in life change

💬"He's always there for me."

📊 What happened this year?

Advocacy

During 2025/26:

🎯 **203 children and young** people received Issue Based Advocacy support.

📣 613 advocacy referrals were received.

 Advocates delivered more than 3,700 hours of support.

❤ 97% of young people aged 12-25 and 99% of children aged 11 or younger said they were happy with their advocate.

What changed?

Children and young people who had an Advocate told us:

📈 More understood their rights.

📈 More felt able to share their views.

📈 More believed adults listened to them.

📈 More felt involved in decisions about their lives.

💬*"Having an advocate definitely helped to speed up the process of getting me a home."*

Independent Visitors (IVs)

During 2025/26:

 34 children and young people were matched with an Independent Visitor.

🎉 16 new matches were created.

🚶 225 visits took place between children and their IVs.

💬 100% of children told us they felt comfortable talking to their IV.

🎯 80% tried something new.

🎯 60% learned a new skill.

Children and young people who have an IV told us:

💬*"My IV makes me feel less angry about stuff and we end up laughing."*

💬*"When I moved into a hotel… I got freaked out. My IV made me feel better."*

💬*"He said he would still see me even if I moved… he's kind."*

🔍 What's next?

Next year we will:

✨ Keep improving how children's voices shape our services

✨ Recruit more Independent Visitors and reduce waiting times for children who want an IV

✨ Continue helping children understand their rights

✨ Help more children find trusted adults and feel a sense of belonging.

💡 Want support?

📞 **Call NYAS free:** 0808 808 1001
🌐 **Visit:** www.nyas.net

💬 *"I know you have my back."*

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