



## Independent Advocacy Service



**Independent Advocacy Service** is a free service for people with a disability. An advocate helps people with a disability access and apply for Social Security Scotland benefits.



This could include people with:

- a sensory disability
- a mental health condition
- a learning disability.

The service is provided by VoiceAbility. They are a charity and are separate from Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland.



VoiceAbility have been delivering independent advocacy services for 40 years.



The **Independent Advocacy Service** is also available to:



- parents or carers with a disability who need help accessing benefits for a child
- parents or carers accessing benefits for a child with a disability. Particularly if the child wants to be involved and needs help to say what they want, think and need.

An advocate can help people with a disability to:



- make sure they are understood
- say what they think, want or need
- understand and ask questions about benefits
- understand how to apply for benefits
- understand letters, application forms, phone calls and meetings with Social Security Scotland
- make sure they have information they need to help make decisions
- tell Social Security Scotland what they about their benefits
- understand what to do if they are not happy.





### An advocate will:

- find out how a person finds it easiest to understand
- communicate with a client in a way they find easiest
- only speak or write for a client if they ask them to
- get information from other people to support them to say what they want, think or need. An advocate will only do this if the client tells them they can, unless they are unable to give consent.



### An advocate will not:

- provide advice about benefits
- offer legal advice
- make decisions for the client
- share their own views or opinions.



### Clients can ask for an advocate's help at any time, including:

- before they apply
- when they apply
- if they want to challenge the result of their application
- if they want to make a complaint.





Clients can contact VoiceAbility for free on 0300 303 1660 or by visiting [www.voiceability.org](http://www.voiceability.org). They can also email [SocialSecurityAdvocacy@voiceability.org](mailto:SocialSecurityAdvocacy@voiceability.org).



Clients can also get this help by contacting Social Security Scotland. They can be contacted in many ways, including:

- by phone, on 0800 182 2222, and asking to be put in touch with the Independent Advocacy Service
- by web chat
- by Text Relay Service on 18001 +0300 244 4000
- or British Sign Language users can go to [contactscotland-bsl.org/device-direct](http://contactscotland-bsl.org/device-direct).



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After a client gets in touch, an advocate from VoiceAbility will contact them. This will happen in the way the client prefers and will be within 5 working days. The advocate will communicate with the client to find out their needs.



The **Independent Advocacy Service** is totally free to clients. Any travel costs to use the service will be refunded by VoiceAbility.