



The IMCA service

From 1st April 2007, the Mental Capacity Act makes it a legal right for people lacking mental capacity to have independent advocacy from an **Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA)** when there are no known relatives or close friends to speak for them, in relation to certain specific decisions or situations.

Local authorities are required to commission independent advocacy from independent organisations.

In preparation for April 2007, the Department of Health commissioned seven projects around England to provide independent advocacy as a pilot from January 2006 – March 2007.

Skills for People was the only advocacy organisation in the North of England chosen to run one of the pilot IMCA projects. The IMCA at Skills for People has been very successful, quickly developing systems and knowledge, as well as raising awareness widely among local service providers.

The role of the IMCA

- IMCA is for people who lack the capacity to make the decision themselves and who do not have family or friends who are able to support them.
- This may be people with either a learning disability, who have had a stroke or head injury, an illness such as dementia or mental health issues.

- These people will be entitled to the support of an IMCA in relation to only a limited number of situations, particularly when a decision is to be made about serious medical treatment, or a move to other accommodation, in specified circumstances.

The IMCA will:

- Help the person be involved in the decision
- Talk to other people who know them
- Ask questions
- Find out about the person's views, wishes, values, religion, spiritual and cultural beliefs
- Make a report about what s/he has found out which will be used when a decision is made.

The IMCA has the right to:

- Interview the person in private
- Examine and take copies of health and care records
- Hold discussions with professionals providing treatment or care for the person

About The IMCA Project

- Skills for People is an independent registered charity.
- Skills for People offer a high quality responsive IMCA service provided by trained professional advocates, within a long established, well managed organisation, known for its high quality inclusive services.
- The IMCA service will be available on weekdays, except public holidays. Initial contact can be made between 9 and 5, but the advocate can work outside these hours as appropriate.

- Referrals will be made by Decision Makers, usually social workers or doctors.

The Project will also provide:

- Awareness raising materials for those working for service providers or commissioners.
- Training sessions for those likely to provide referrals.
- Comprehensive recording and Outcomes focused monitoring of referrals and of awareness raising.

IMCAs will have to respond within very tight timescales, to carry out their responsibilities. The service will sometimes be provided outside office hours, although referrals will be taken only within office hours.