



## Guidance Notes for Parent Advocacy Referrals

Parent Advocates are independent, qualified and experienced in working with parents with learning difficulties, learning disabilities, autism and mental health issues.

Advocacy is free and confidential. Advocates work under the instruction of the parent.

Advocates will not:

- offer advice
- take any action without parent's consent
- make judgements
- offer their own opinions
- make decisions on behalf of parents
- sign documents on behalf of parents

### Advocates help parents to:

- Understand information shared by professionals involved in child protection and family court
- Meaningfully participate within meetings
- Understand and secure their rights within the process
- Make informed choices
- Have their voice heard by supporting them to express their views and wishes
- Access legal representation when necessary
- Advocate for themselves

### Advocates can support parents in the following meetings:

- Child protection conferences
- Child protection decision making meetings (Pathfinder Project)
- Core group meetings
- Care planning meetings/IRO reviews
- Solicitor appointments

*\*\*Please note that advocates will not routinely attend pre-proceedings meetings unless there is a formal diagnosis of a learning disability and/or autism.*

### Advocates will prioritise the following court hearings:

- Initial hearing
- Initial Resolutions Hearing
- Final hearing
- Contested hearings but only on the day that the parent is giving evidence

*\*\*please note that if an Intermediary has been agreed within the care proceedings advocates would not attend court.*

## **Advocates will not:**

- Attend timetabling or case management hearings
- Attend additional hearings around family contact
- Provide support in any private proceedings
- Act as a Litigation Friend.

## **Making a referral**

Referrals can be made by professionals using the Parent Advocacy or Parent Advocacy Pathfinder Pilot referral form.

Consent for any referral must be obtained from the parent and recorded on the referral form.

Parents can self-refer to the service using the Parent Advocacy self-referral forms.

*\*\* Please provide as much detail as possible on the referral form that will inform our allocation process and advocacy work undertaken. For example, this may include significant meeting dates, information on any access needs or communication approaches and relevant religious, cultural or gender factors.*

Where the parent has a placement outside of Warrington a spot purchase agreement will be required. There is an expectation that where a cognitive assessment identifies reasonable adjustments are required, the local authority will ensure a spot purchase for advocacy is in place.

If you are uncertain as to whether a person is entitled to an advocate, please contact the duty advocate to discuss further.

**Tel: 01925 246888**

Referrals should be completed and sent via email to:

[referral@advocacyhub.org.uk](mailto:referral@advocacyhub.org.uk)

## **Additional Information**

Where both parents of a child/children are requesting advocacy support and meet the eligibility criteria, we will allocate where possible two advocates, in order to avoid any conflict of interest.

Advocates will connect parents to other appropriate sources of support and information if needed.

*\*\* Please note that Advocates are not support workers, counsellors, mediators or befrienders and will not give any legal advice or legal support.*

A range of bespoke self-help resources, created by Warrington Speak Up, are available to help parents develop their confidence and advocate for themselves. These can be downloaded via the website [www.warringtonspeakup.org.uk](http://www.warringtonspeakup.org.uk)