



Guidance Notes for Parent Advocacy Referrals

Eligibility criteria for parent advocacy is for individuals who have a diagnosis of or are experiencing significant challenges with learning difficulties, learning disabilities, mental health issues, neurodiversity, ABI, substance misuse or cognitive impairment.

Advocacy is independent, free, confidential, issue based and person led.

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:

- Initial decision-making meetings
- Core group meetings
- Pre proceedings 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
- Issues 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:

- 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
- provide support in any private proceedings
- act as a Litigation Friend within Family Care Proceedings

Making a referral

Referrals can be made by professionals using the Parent Advocacy 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 form.

*** 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

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