

# Parental Advocacy

## Your guide to advocacy for parents



“Making advocacy a *right* not a privilege.”



# Parental Advocacy – Fact Sheet

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Parental Advocacy – Fact Sheet .....                             | 2  |
| Introduction .....   | 3  |
| Purpose of the Parents Advocacy Service .....                    | 3  |
| Parents Advocacy Referral Criteria .....                         | 4  |
| Child In Need .....  | 5  |
| Child Protection .....   | 5  |
| PLO and Care proceedings .....                                   | 5  |
| Referral Process .....   | 6  |
| The Advocacy Process .....                                       | 7  |
| The advocate can support the parent at meetings .....            | 8  |
| Introductory Meeting: .....                                      | 8  |
| Advocacy Engagement .....  | 9  |
| Assessments (PAMS etc) .....                                     | 9  |
| Child In Need (CIN) (Section 17) .....                           | 9  |
| Child Protection Conference .....                                | 9  |
| Core Groups .....  | 9  |
| Statutory Reviews .....  | 10 |
| PLO meetings .....   | 10 |
| Legal meetings .....   | 10 |
| Court attendance .....   | 10 |
| Review .....   | 11 |
| Exit from Service .....  | 12 |
| Case Closure: .....  | 12 |
| Provide Information & Signpost .....                             | 12 |
| Gather Feedback .....  | 12 |
| Best Practice for Social Workers Referring for an Advocate ..... | 13 |

## Introduction

Section 1.5 of the Department of Health's Good Practice Guidance on Working with Parents with a Learning Disability states that independent advocacy should always



be provided to parents with learning disabilities when their children are subject to child protection and/ or care proceedings and that it should be offered from an early stage.

### *Purpose of the Parents Advocacy Service*

The Purpose of Parents Advocacy is to assist parents, who have a **significant difficulty** being involved in the process to fully engage in assessments and to understand the complex statutory processes within Children's Social Care, where there is **no one appropriate or available** to facilitate and represent their views. The provision aims to build the individuals confidence and self-esteem.

The role of the Advocate is to empower and assist parents to fully engage in the Children's Social Care statutory processes. To do this the Service Provider will focus on providing support at the following:

- Pre-meetings
- Post Meetings
- Assessments
- PAMS assessments
- Child In Need (CIN) Meetings
- Child Protection Conferences –
- Core Groups
- Statutory Reviews
- PLO meetings
- Legal meetings
- Court attendance

With respect to any of the above processes/ meetings, the Advocate will:

- Assist the Person to understand the assessment, care planning and safeguarding processes within Children's Social Care, as relevant.
- Consider the Person's communications needs, their wishes and feelings and their life circumstances, to assist the person to be involved in assessments and where possible to make decisions.
- Assist the Person to communicate their views, wishes and feelings to the staff that are carrying out the assessment, care planning and safeguarding processes within Children's Social Care.
- Assist the Person to understand their rights under relevant legislation.
- Assist the Person to make a Representation of their concerns to the Council; and where the Person cannot challenge a decision even with assistance, to challenge it on their behalf.



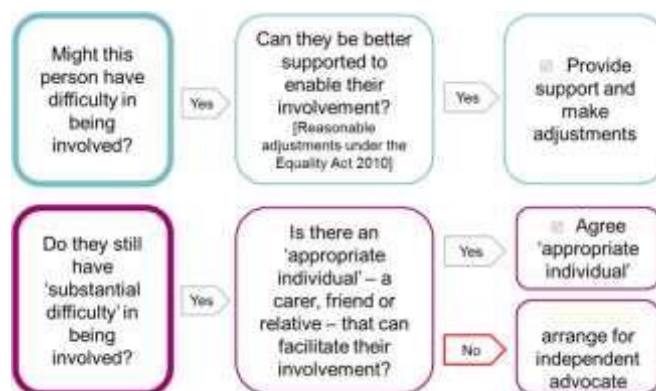
- Assist the person to engage with services, understand information provided to them and to be fully involved in the assessment process.
- Assist the person to understand professionals' concerns.
- Assist the person to understand what is expected or required of them from a social care perspective.
- Assist the person to understand their rights and state their concerns.

### Parents Advocacy Referral Criteria

A Parents Advocate will only be provided to parents who meet the following criteria:

- The person requiring support is a parent of a child/ children that are open to Stoke City Councils Children's Social Care; and
- The person has a Learning Disability, Autism, or Complex Need **which** leads to them having **substantial difficulty** in one or more of the following areas (evidenced by a cognitive assessment or diagnosed learning disability):
  1. Understanding relevant information,
  2. Using or weighing up information,
  3. Retaining information,
  4. Communicating their views, wishes and feelings; **and**
- There is **no one appropriate** or **available** to facilitate the person's active involvement in the process.

Referrals into the Parents Advocacy service will only be accepted upon receipt of detailed referral information that outlines any risks that need to be considered.



Referrals will only be accepted from Children's Social Care staff unless authorised by the Lead Commissioner:

- Principal Managers



- Practice Managers
- Social Workers
- Assistant Social Workers
- Conference and Review Managers, Independent Reviewing Officers.

The advocate will be allocated within 2 working days, initial visit within 7 days of allocation.

A Parents Advocate will only be provided to support to people in the following meetings under each process.

#### Child In Need

- CIN Meetings
- Pre-meetings
- Post Meetings
- Assessments
- PAMS assessments

#### Child Protection

- Pre-meetings
- Post meetings
- Core Groups
- Child Protection Conferences
- Assessments · PAMS assessments

#### PLO and Care proceedings

- Pre-meetings, Post meetings, Statutory Reviews, PLO meetings
- Legal meetings
- Court attendance
- PAMS assessments

## Referral Process



**Parent of a child/ children that are open to Stoke City Councils Children's Social Care?**

Parent has (learning disability, cognitive impairment), **substantial difficulty** (evidenced by a cognitive assessment or diagnosed learning disability; the assessment should relate to issues below):

Has one or more of following issues: Understanding relevant information, Using or weighing up information, Retaining information, Communicating their views, wishes and feelings.

**no one appropriate or available** to facilitate and represent their views.?

Social Worker: Complete referral form, sign by manager, Email securely (secure portal) to [referrals@asist.co.uk](mailto:referrals@asist.co.uk)

Or give us a Call: **01782 845584**

**Asist: Acknowledges referral, telephones referral for further details (if required)**

**Asist: Allocates to advocate within 2 working days.**

**Asist: Advocate meets/arranges visit within 7 working days**

**Asist: Advocate has initial meetings with parent, provides information about Asist, the advocacy role and the process of Child in Need, PLO, and Court, Child Protection.**

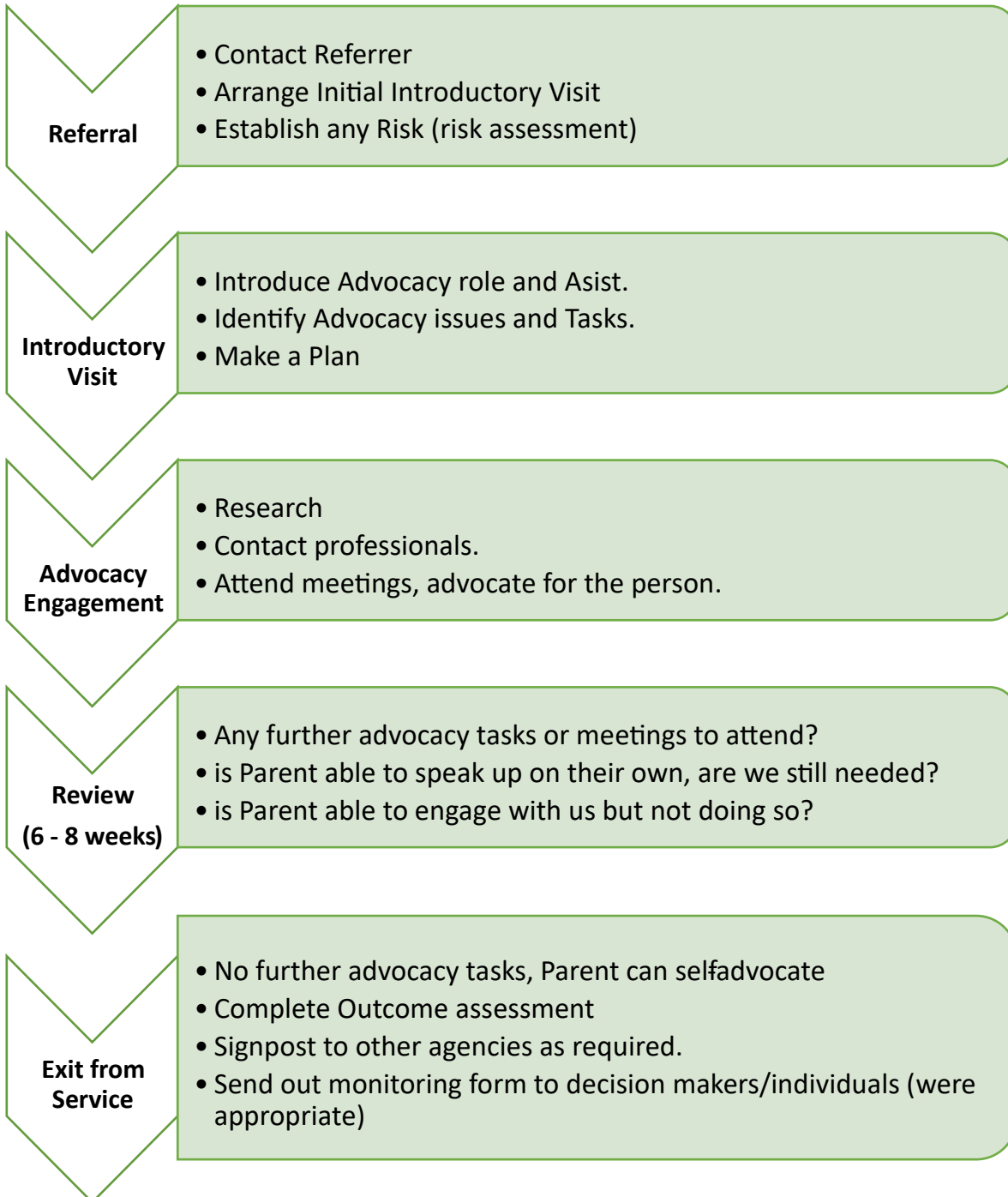
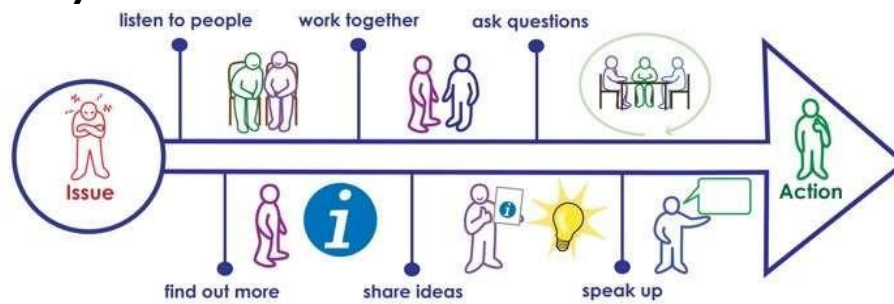
**Advocate establishes if the parent wants us to be involved in providing support**

**Asist: Advocate provides support within the process and parent can withdraw at any time.**

**If the advocacy partner can engage with advocate, but not doing so, e.g., not responding to calls and contacts being made, requesting support at meetings**

**advocate will inform social worker that we may need to close case but will inform the parent beforehand, via letter/telephone/SMS, etc.**

# The Advocacy Process



## The advocate can support the parent at meetings.



The advocate can spend a maximum of **30 minutes pre and post meetings**, to support the parent before and after the meetings.

The specific advocacy support is around the meetings as detailed on page 5.

### **Introductory Meeting:**

The advocate will arrange to meet the parent and support them. understand the advocacy role and provide information about the support we offer.

We provide Information in easy read.







## Advocacy Engagement

The advocate will support the parent at meetings, the advocate would need to know when and where they are taking place, so it's important that professionals and the parent let us know. This helps us better support the parent and can plan around them before and after the meeting takes place.

### Assessments (PAMS etc)

Advocates can only provide moral support at these meetings due to the process as assessing the parents understanding, it may not always be appropriate for an advocate to attend.

### Child In Need (CIN) (Section 17)

Advocates will meet the parent before and after the meeting and support the parent to speak up or ask other professionals to clarify things to the parent if they feel the parent does not understand the information. The advocate will go through the CIN Plan and check they understand this and request further clarification from Social Worker (if required) after the meeting.

### Child Protection Conference

Advocates will support the parents; any reports should be provided to the parent at least 48 hours before a meeting (per government guidance). This will enable the advocate to support the parent and go through the reports prior to the meeting itself.

### Core Groups

The advocate will support the parent to understand the child protection plan and what the concerns are, the advocate will ask for points to be clarified if they feel the parent does not fully understand.

## Statutory Reviews

The advocate will support the parent understand the "Consultation document" and help to record views ahead of the meeting. The advocate will support with meeting the Chair to get views and answer any questions the parent may have about the process of the meeting.

## PLO meetings



Advocate will support parent with legal meeting with the parents' solicitor, to help them understand the plans that have been identified by social care.



### Legal meetings

Advocates will support parents attending meetings with solicitor, to help their understanding of legal information and process.

### Court attendance

Advocates can support parents within the court setting, however if there is an appointed *intermediary*, this may not always be appropriate.

Parents need support understanding the legal/court process – the parents solicitor explains this, and the advocate helps them to understand. The advocate supports the parent in weighing up of options and supports decision making.

Directions hearings are not always appropriate for advocates to attend as this relates to when/how things are to proceed, social workers should contact the advocate and inform them the dates of court hearings.



## Review

The advocate will review each advocacy relationship every 6 – 8 weeks during supervision with their manager.

Identify whether the parent is able to engage with the advocate, if they are not doing so by choice and choosing not to, asking if the parent still requires our support.

Is the Parent able to self-advocate and speak up for themselves? can they proceed alone if they have information available to them?

Does the Parent still meet the referral criteria?



## Exit from Service

The advocate close the advocacy case normally when there are no further advocacy issues, or the parent no-longer fulfils the eligibility criteria.

### **Case Closure:**

Advocate can close case if the parent does not want us involved.

The Parent is choosing not to engage with us, the advocate has made many attempts, but has been unsuccessful.

The parent no longer fits the eligibility criteria for the service.

The Parent can self-advocate and speak up for themselves and feel they can do this without advocacy support.

### **Provide Information & Signpost.**

Prior to closing case, advocates provide further information to parent regarding the current issues.

Where appropriate provides information on other services which may be helpful

Inform Social Worker

### **Gather Feedback**

Advocate will request digital feedback from advocacy partner on the service we have provided.

A Case study maybe written as part of this.

## Best Practice for Social Workers Referring for an Advocate.



Referrer earlier on in the process e.g., Child In Need – with an advocates support earlier on, the parent can be supported to understand earlier in the process and may not escalate to Child Protection or PLO & Court with our help.

Only refer if the individual really needs us and meet the criteria, we have limited number of advocates, don't refer parents that are not engaging with your service by choice, we are not mediators.

Prior to making the referral, ensure that the parent has significant difficulty engaging in the process, either through a learning disability or cognitive assessment and they have no one suitable to speak up for them.

If a **cognitive assessment** has been carried out, local authority should request the following questions from the psychologist. ***Is there a need for an advocate, how would an advocate help the person to be involved in the process?***

Remember we are independent and maintain confidentiality (breach if there is a safeguarding concern), our advocates are fully trained and qualified professionals who work to a code of practice.

Help us to help you and the parent by keeping us informed about meetings, parents don't always let us know everything.

If you had a positive or negative experience with our advocates, let us know we are always striving to be a better service.

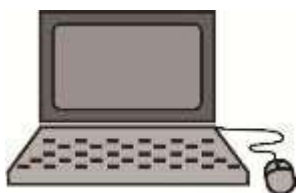
asist



# Advocacy

**Parental referral forms are available from our website.**

**Office hours are Monday to Friday 08:30—17:00  
(Answerphone available outside these hours)**



[referrals@asist.co.uk](mailto:referrals@asist.co.uk)

[www.asist.co.uk](http://www.asist.co.uk)



Asist, Winton House, Stoke Road,  
Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2RW.



Phone 01782 845584 or text 6077 and  
start your message with Asist (call charges  
may apply)

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