



Advocacy Action

Developing Advocacy in Wakefield District

Management Committee Meeting - Friday 13 January 06

At the Children's Advocacy Service, West Mead, Castleford, 10am-12noon

Meeting Notes

Present:

Ben Brown	Urban Space Community
Maggie Clarke	Children's Advocacy Service
Henry Fisher (notes)	Advocacy Action Project Coordinator
Fatemeh Shabram	Rasa Advocacy Project
Paul Wright	Cloverleaf Advocacy

Apologies: Glynis Stirling

1. The notes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.

2. Coordinator's Update

Unfortunately both of the last minute applications we submitted were unsuccessful. Most of the applicants to the NRLAP were rejected, leaving a considerable underspend. And some specialist consultants got the Involving Children and Young People's Strategy Implementation contract.

As a result of this Henry's employment officially ended on Friday 18 November. Since then he has been looking for a new job, but also hoping to find something that will allow him to continue working in Wakefield in a similar role. Since the new year, he has also been back at the Advocacy Action office quite consistently - aiming to get some more work for Advocacy Action.

The main opportunities coming up at the moment is a potential contract with Connexions to provide some training for their PAs. This would help us to get known and to develop contacts for future work - either with Connexions and other local organisations working with children and young people in the area, or by extending our training provision.

Henry is also continuing to work on the Policy and Practice Guidelines for Children's Complaints, and Advocacy Action remains the responsible body for developing advocacy provision to meet potential future needs once this policy is adopted across the district (it says every child or young person wishing to make a complaint should be offered advocacy support).

The final opportunity to note is the forthcoming Local Area Agreements pilot. Advocacy has been listed as a key element of Community Leadership in the Framework for Community Governance, and Advocacy Action has been asked by the Council what it can offer to support this. Having read through the papers it appears that the meaning of advocacy in this framework is somewhat different from the meaning we use. We haven't worked out how to respond yet.



3. There is still a lot of work that Advocacy Action can do.

- Some advocates can feel like they're spending more time explaining what advocacy is to Council and support staff than they do actually supporting their partners
 - there is a clear need for additional information and training for statutory and service sector staff who might meet advocates in their work.
- There is still an increasing demand for advocacy support for a variety of different people who are not covered by existing services. The most obvious gaps are:
 - children not in the looked after system
 - people in prison (esp. those with learning disabilities)
 - older people
 - disabled people
 - people without specific special needs (who need community advocacy services)
- All the other things in our business plan are still very relevant, including:
 - helping to develop an Advocacy Plan for Wakefield District
 - developing engagement protocols and good practice guidance
 - supporting local advocacy projects
 - raising awareness of advocacy and its benefits
 - etc

It was agreed that Advocacy Action should become more flexible in the short term and do what is necessary to keep working and get some of these targets met. For example we should relax our restriction on not doing direct advocacy work, because there is a demand, and if existing projects don't have the capacity to take on work we wouldn't be creating conflicts at this stage. Taking on some ad hoc advocacy work would also help us to gradually develop new services like the Community Advocacy Project for example.

Henry to develop a pricing structure that will enable us to take on these sorts of work.

4. Code of Practice for Advocates

Here is an example of some productive work that Advocacy Action can do with relatively little effort.

The Code of Practice aims firstly to describe advocates' work, particularly highlighting the unique aspects of advocacy work. Secondly it places this in the context of good practice.

The final document should be reasonably straightforward and could be a useful resource for advocates, advocacy schemes, and other people who need to know how we work.

Once we have agreed the final text we will ask the Council, the WDP, and/or the Health Trusts to endorse it. This will help them to understand and monitor our



work more effectively, and it will give us a common basis for dealing with any misunderstandings or disputes that might arise.

It was agreed that this was a good thing to try to do. Henry should produce some notes about other Codes of Practice and some possible amendments and we should ask everyone connected with Advocacy Action to make any comments on quite a short timescale. We would then distribute the final draft widely around the District to try to get as many people on board as possible, before approaching the relevant statutory bodies for formal endorsement.

5. Next meeting

The next meeting will be on Friday 17 March, 10am-12noon, at the Children's Advocacy Service in Castleford again.