



# Mind in Croydon Parenting Advocacy Service

30 - 36 months



Volunteer Peer  
Advocacy Service

April - September 2014



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## Introduction

The Parenting Advocacy Service is a 3 year project funded by Comic Relief. The service began operating in October 2011.

In July 2014, Laila Joarder, was appointed into post as the new Parenting Advocate.

This report has been compiled by Nichola Harris - Advocacy Service Manager, Laila Joarder- Parenting Advocate and a Volunteer Peer Advocate. The report focuses on the 1:1 casework and promoting the service through the Parenting Advocacy and Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service.

## Referrals

Between April 2014 and September 2014, we received 25 new referrals to the service. Of those referrals, 13 were self-referrals, 4 came from other supported agencies, 1 from Local Authority Children's Services, 1 from the Integrated Adult Mental Health Team and 6 from the Female Inpatient Unit at The Bethlem Hospital. In total, we provided advocacy support to 50 parents. This included a combination of 1:1 casework and one-off contacts.

## Current delivery of the Parenting Advocacy and Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service

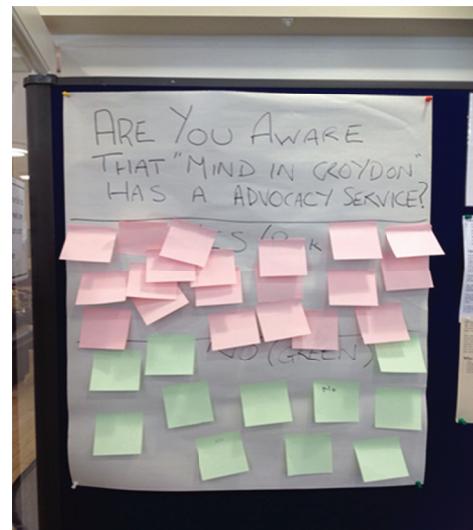
Since April 2014, the Parenting Advocacy Service, alongside the VPA Service has promoted the service and delivered awareness workshops to other agencies. From this we have targeted new parents who may not be aware of the service. The service has been promoted through leaflets, postcards and in person at various events. We have utilised a variety of settings and other various agencies including: Croydon Library Healthy Living Hub, South London and Maudsley Perinatal Team, Croydon Council Local Authority, Mental Health Substance Misuse Service, Children's Social Services, Turn Around Centre, CSV Volunteers Supporting Families, Croydon Local Authority Mental Health & Wellbeing Conference, Child & City Forum and Westminster Drug Project.

Below: photos from a workshop event



## Are you aware that Mind in Croydon has an advocacy service?

As part of a workshop event, we approached various participants (including parents) to take part in an exercise called "Are you aware that Mind in Croydon has an Advocacy Service?" Of the 15 people we approached, 9 said "Yes" and 6 said "No".





## Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service

The most significant achievements the grant has made over the last six months of the project:

A proportion of the work the (VPA) provide have been in supporting the Parenting Advocacy Service with 1:1 casework and one-off contacts. An example of this includes:

- Researching the internet to source services that are available for parents and their children.
- Maintaining and updating the directory to ensure services are still in operation.
- Providing low level 1:1 case work advocacy support to the parenting advocate, such as: correspondence with clients in writing, exploring possible options for clients, signposting to other services, sending out information in response to a specific issue/enquiry, responding to telephone enquiries, green texts and emails that result from the 1:1 casework and one off contact.
- Record all information onto the Parenting Advocacy database.
- Participating in workshops and events in the delivery and promotion of the Parenting Advocacy Service.
- Supporting the Parenting Advocate to collate monitoring and statistical data/information and capturing data for our funders as well as Mind in Croydon's annual reports.
- Compile reflective casework studies.
- Participating in progress meetings with volunteers

### Case study from a VPA.

**"This was the second meeting between the client and the parenting advocate. Issue was: The client is estranged from their partner and child who has moved away. The client wanted to establish their rights to see their child. The advocacy service provided them with a list of family solicitors. The client presented with additional issues – their imminent homelessness.**

**The client appeared agitated and upset when they arrived; they spoke a lot and made it difficult for the advocate to establish if there had been any progress since the last meeting. It became apparent that the client's housing issue was a priority. The Parenting Advocate and VPA were able to present options, this included signposting the client to a housing floating support service for advice. When the client telephoned this provider they did not get the response they wanted and became more upset and frustrated. The parenting advocate reiterated the options and information provided, explaining the role of what the advocate in relation to this issue is able to do whilst empowering the client to take action and responsibility for their own housing situation".**

### My experience as a Volunteer Peer Advocate.

**I have remained an active volunteer since January 2013. I have assisted in delivering some Advocacy Awareness in the local library's 'healthy living hub' and participated in drop-in surgeries. I have helped at various events, shadowed the Parenting Advocacy Manager on some one-to-one case work and helped to deliver a short Advocacy Awareness presentation to some new members of staff.**

**I have contributed significantly to the Parenting Advocacy Project by also providing support to the Parenting Advocacy Manager in collating the monitoring and evaluation statistics, assisting in producing reports and providing admin support. I have also developed a 'New Staff' folder which contains useful information and contacts. This has allowed the new Parenting Advocacy Manager to have vital information at their fingertips".**

In total the VPAs have provided in excess of 400 hours of volunteering to the project between January 2013 to September 2014.

One particular volunteer has provided a total of 300 Hours in their role as a Volunteer Peer Advocate since the start-up of the VPA Service.



## Provision of Independent Mental Health Advocacy to Parents

Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs) are specially trained to work within the framework of the Mental Health Act. Anyone who is being compulsorily treated in hospital or in the community under a section of the Mental Health Act has a right to an IMHA.

Following a referral, we were able to provide advocacy support to our first parent detained under the Mental Health Act. The parent was subject to detention under Section 3 (detained up to six months), they required information about patient rights and their rights as a parent.

The IMHA service has provided advocacy support to 6 parents.

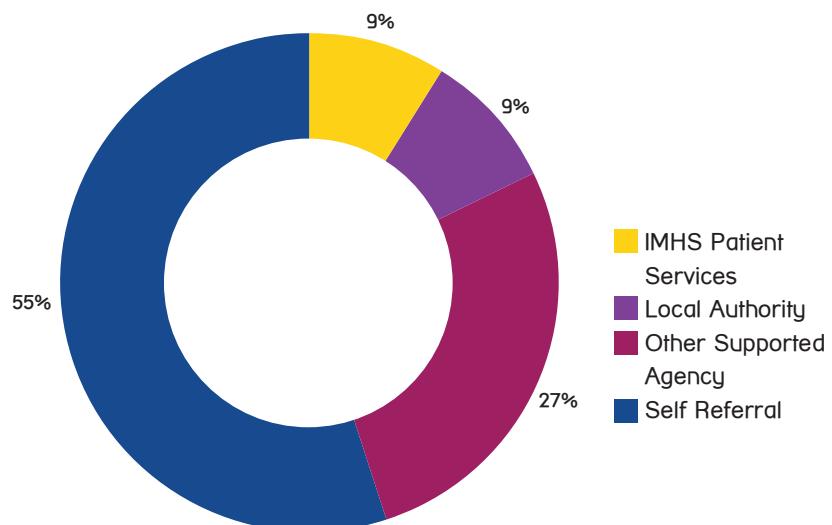


## Monitoring Information / Statistics

The charts below are related to clients who received 1:1 advocacy support casework.

### Referral Source

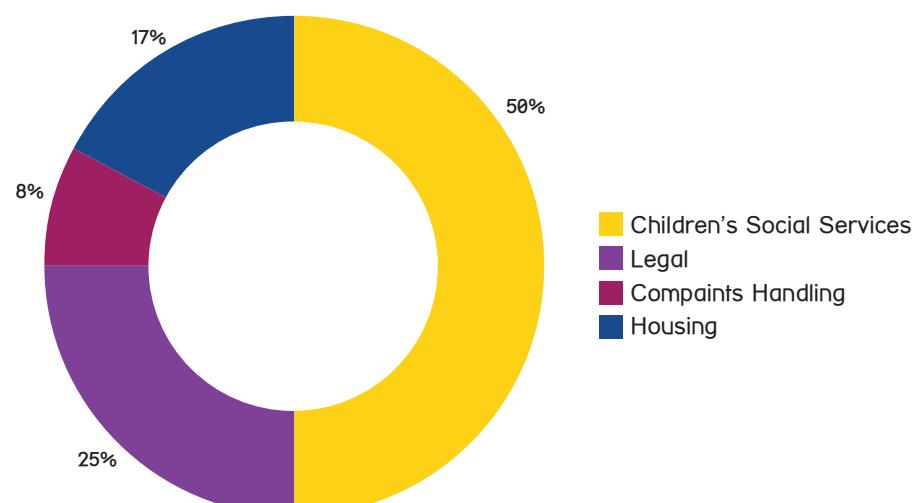
Between April 2014 and September 2014, the highest number of referral source continues to be self-referrals (55%), followed by other agencies (27%) and Local Authority & South London and Maudsley (both at 9%). This shows us that people are more comfortable in self referring. This tends to be a trend from project start up in October 2011. This leads us to further target those agencies that refer the least as they may not be aware of our service or how to make an appropriate referral.



### Issues

The statistics have identified that of the issues that parents raise during 1:1 advocacy support, a high proportion are related to Local Authority/Children's Social Services (50%) followed by legal issues (25%).

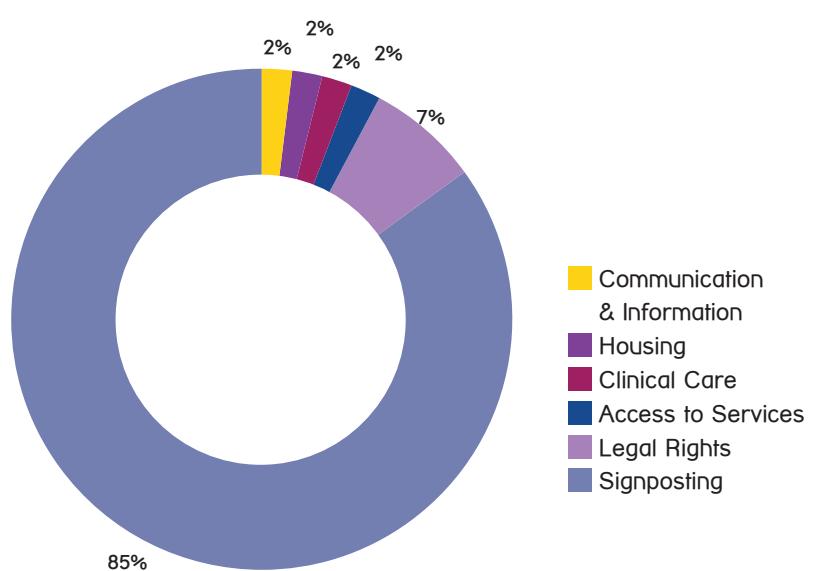
This is of note due to several reason. We are aware there is a need for parents requiring advocacy support particularly in relation to Local Authority/ Children's Social Services issues. This can be a complex area and require a professional advocate who has experience in providing support to parents facing these type of issues.



### Issues recorded as “one-off contacts”

From April 2014 to September 2014, a total number of 41 one-off contacts have been recorded. Of this 87% were female with the remainder 13% being men.

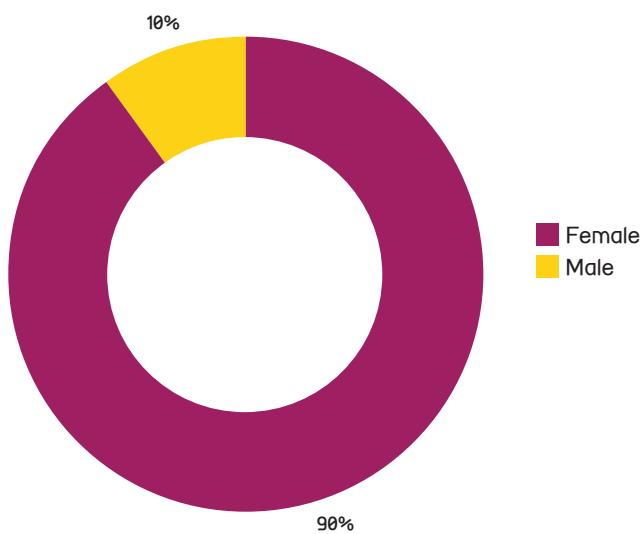
Of the one-off issues raised : 2% Communication & Information, 2% Housing, 2% Clinical Care, 2% Access to Services, 7% Legal Rights, and 85%





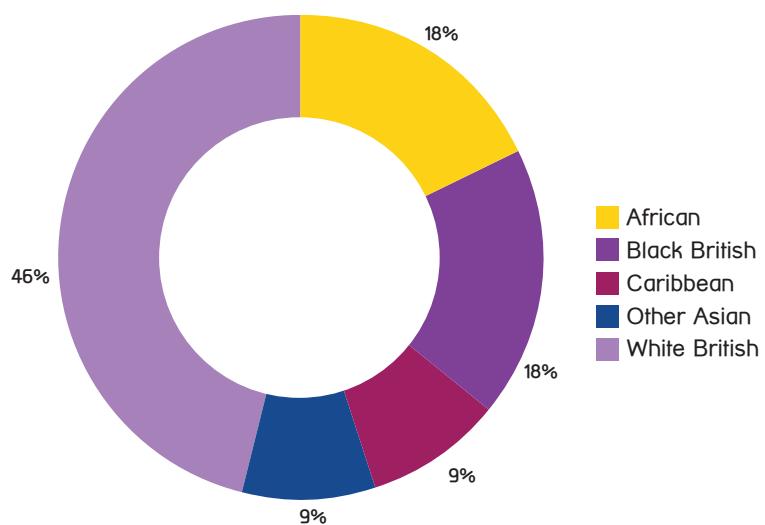
## Gender

Females in a parental role, in comparison to males in a parental role, continue to make up a higher proportion of those accessing the Parenting Advocacy Service. This is not unusual, given that this gender group is reflective of our target audience accessing the service.



## Ethnicity

Of the parents receiving 1:1 case work, we have identified that 54% of those parents accessing the service are from BME groups. Overall 46% described themselves as White British followed by Black British and African at 18%. Caribbean and Other Asian made up 9% of BME groups. This figure is compared with the ethnicity of the general population of Croydon as given in Census data.



The information below is from the period: October 2011 to September 2014

- 188 referrals.
- 1:1 casework advocacy support to 87 parents.
- Recruited 6 Volunteer Peer Advocates.
- Provided 25 drop-in surgeries within Croydon Central Library and across 7 Children's Centres from February to December 2013.
- Recorded 141.25 hours of face-to-face, telephone and email enquiries, information giving and signposting as one-off contacts.
- Provided 557 one-off Contacts including face to face and telephone enquiries.
- Completed two x 4 day workshops for the induction of Volunteer Peer Advocates in January 2013 and June 2013.
- Introduced the VPA Service across 7 Children's Centres to a total of 252 parents, 218 female and 34 male.
- Delivered 25 Parenting Advocacy Workshops.
- A total of 400 hours volunteering to the VPA Service between January 2013 and September 2014.



## What has worked well?

### Self Advocacy Booklet

The Advocacy Service has developed a 'Self Advocacy Booklet' which may aid as a useful tool for potential and existing clients.<sup>1</sup>

### Client feedback

"Hi there your project is fantastic, I am a mental health suffer myself and think the work your doing is incredible".

### Agency feedback

"I am very encouraged to hear the views of this parent and am pleased that they have been able to access the advocacy service.

The parent raised a very valid point about being a good parent and there are many areas in which they are a good parent. I take on board the process of the meetings are often problem saturated and will do my best to ensure that the parent is aware of the positives as well as the areas in which to improve. I am really pleased that the parent has been able to access this service and hope it leads to an even better working relationship in the future. Thanks for your help and support with this".

Practical outcomes: Children's Services agreed to purchase a white board, magnet and pens for the parent. The parent identified that this would support them in aspects of their parenting role. All copies of conference minutes after each meeting will also be given to the parent.

## Challenges & Difficulties

There is no legislation or statutory requirement in place to provide an advocate for parents facing local authority or legal care proceeding issues, for example: Safeguarding in Child Protection and Legal Care Proceedings. The Advocacy Service has identified that there is a need for an ongoing professional advocacy service for those parents or people in a parental role facing local authority and legal issues.

## The Future delivery of the Parenting Advocacy Service

From now until March 2015 the project will focus on service delivery to parents, analysing data, findings and outcomes relating to the overall delivery of the lifespan of the Parenting Advocacy and VPA Service. The final report will be available in March 2015.

We hope these findings may influence future change in service delivery.

- What is the best way - telephone, letter,  
What is the minimum I would accept?  
How would I like to feel?  
What do I want to change?
- 3. Solutions**

- Practice before hand.  
Have an agenda / list of what I want to say.  
Gather important documents / letters.  
Human Rights, consumer rights etc.  
Know your rights E.g. Mental Health Law,  
Gather information.
- 2. Be Prepared**

- How does it make me feel?  
What is happening that I don't like?  
What is wrong?
- 1. Identify the Problem**

- Helps to empower you.
- Your life.
- Choices and decisions that affect means you are able to make
- Knowing your rights and responsibilities, speaking up for your rights.
- Is telling people about your thoughts and feelings.
- Would like.
- Asking for what you need and important to you.
- Is the ability to speak up for yourself and the things that are important to you.

## Steps to Self Advocacy

### Mind in Croydon Advocacy Service

'Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests & obtain services they need'

*The Advocacy Charter*

FREE • CONFIDENTIAL • INDEPENDENT

**Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)**  
IMHA advocates are specially trained to work within the framework on the Mental Health Act.

#### Parenting Advocacy

For parents or those in a parental role experiencing a mental health problem.

Supports parents to address issues that may arise from their role as a parent which affect them and their family.

#### Community Mental Health Advocacy

Independent advocacy for those not in hospital or not detained under the MHA .

#### Contact us:

Tel: 0208 763 6730

Email: [advocacy@mindincroydon.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@mindincroydon.org.uk)

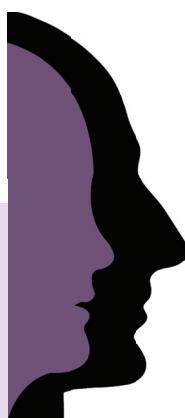
Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm



## Mind in Croydon Advocacy Service

### What is Self Advocacy?

## Guide to Being Heard



Charity no: 1073880

## Self Advocacy over the Phone

Make a note of what you want to say.  
Have a pen ready.  
Talk slowly

### Keep a record of:

Date of call  
Department / agency called  
Name of person I spoke to  
The problem  
How I feel about the problem  
What I would like to change

### My solutions

No 1 Preference  
No 2 Preference  
No 3 Preference

### Result:

By whom:  
By when:

## Self Advocacy in Writing

(This could be by letter or email)

Keep it brief no more than two pages.  
Try not to lose your points in a long letter.  
Be clear.  
Use short sentences / bullet points.  
Try not to repeat yourself.  
Keep the letter polite.

Say what the problem is.

Why you are not happy?

Explain what you would like to happen e.g an apology, a change in service, an explanation.

Keep copies of correspondence sent & received.

Try to keep letters in date order.  
Send photocopy documents not originals.  
Consider guaranteed / recorded delivery to make sure your letter is received.

## Self Advocacy at Meetings

Bring my agenda /notes to refer to.  
Bring documents relevant to the meeting.  
Plan to arrive at the meeting 10 mins early.

Try to relax and stay calm.  
Try to maintain good eye contact.  
Put forward my agenda.  
Lead with my strongest point.  
Listen to the responses.  
Ask questions if I don't understand.  
Focus on remedies not complaints.

Ask for a short break if I am feeling overwhelmed.  
Take notes of any action agreed & when it is due to take place.  
At the end of the meeting go over solutions to make sure everyone has the same understanding.  
Find out what can I do next if I'm unhappy with the result.

## Self Advocacy Sample Letter

Name agency  
Address agency  
Date

Dear .....

### Paragraph One:

Why are you writing?  
What is the problem?  
How does it make you feel?

### Paragraph Two:

Why you would like the problem to change?  
Do you have any rights relating to this problem?  
Are there any rules / laws that say this problem needs to change?

### Paragraph Three:

What is your preferred solution to the problem?  
Are there any other solutions you would consider?  
Have any solutions been tried already? Why are they not suitable?

### Paragraph Four:

Thank you for considering this problem.  
Would you like to talk / meet with the person to discuss the problem?  
How can they contact you?  
When can you expect a response to your letter?