



Mind in Croydon Parenting Advocacy Service

12 - 18 months



Volunteer Peer
Advocacy Service

April 2013

26 Pampisford Road, Purley, Surrey CR8 2NE
General Office: 020 8568 2210
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Advocacy



Quality Services

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Registered office: 26 Pampisford Road, Purley,
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Current Delivery of the Parenting Advocacy Service

The Parenting Advocacy Service is now 18 months into a 3 year project. This report will focus largely on a significant strand of the service: The set up of the Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service & recruitment of the Volunteer Peer Advocates (VPA).

The following report outlines the last 12 to 18 months of the service from October 2012 to March 2013.

The Parenting Advocacy service is funded for 3 years by Comic Relief. The Advocacy Service Manager Emma Turner and Parenting Advocate Nichola Harris and a Volunteer Peer Advocate have put the 3rd part of this report together.

Referrals

Between October 2012 and March 2013 we have received 42 referrals into the project this is a combination of self and agency referrals. Out of these referrals 12 are open as new cases.

There has been an increase in the number of referrals received between the period of October 2012 and March 2013 in comparison to the first 0 to 6 months (35 referrals) & 6 to 12 months (35 referrals). This may be due to the service profile raised through drop ins with the volunteer peer advocacy project and better awareness locally. The service is also promoted via different sources of publication & media e.g. leaflets and posters wider spread locally, Face Book, Twitter, Slam NHS Trust Twig website, Community Care magazine and the newly updated Mind in Croydon website.

Out of the 42 referrals we

received into the project some of these were considered inappropriate referrals for the parenting advocate. Other referrals either cancelled or did not attend their scheduled appointment, although followed up by the advocate this did not result in opening as a case. The remainder of the referrals the advocate was able to address as a one off issue or signpost the referral onto a more appropriate agency. This information has been recorded in our database as one-offs and is presented in this report.

Alongside the 12 new open cases the advocate continued to manage a further 10 existing cases and close a further 7 cases.

The issues that the advocate is instructed to work on continue to be complex, lengthy and multiple. A lower case load is necessary for this reason.

Volunteer Peer Advocacy (VPA) Service

The Set Up

The initial set up of the Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service required careful preparation & planning at various stages. It began with: drafting the specification of the VPA role and VPA application forms.

The documents were initially created and partly taken from existing Mind in Croydon Volunteer Application Forms then tailored to fit the role specification of the VPA. During this process there were consultations & contributions provided by Mind in Croydon Advocacy Service, Hear-us Service User led organisation, HR

Manager from Mind in Croydon and Active Minds/Employment Support Manager who has experience of working and supervising volunteers.

Pitching the role of the VPA was necessary to ensure that the project was reaching out to parents or people in parental roles who are considered "experts by experience". This is fundamental in becoming a peer support volunteer. 1.

The application form and role specification was advertised via different sources: Mind in Croydon website including Mind's twitter and face book forums, Hear-Us Service User forum, website and newsletters, The Service User Network (SUN) Project, South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and Service User Involvement Register.

In total we received interest from 9 individual applicants who are parents. Not all of these applicants have accessed the parenting advocacy service.

The recruitment process consisted of going through the individuals application form to see if the applicant met the criteria of the role of a VPA. The interview process was informal with the advocacy service manager and parenting advocate. CRB checks and references from 2 referees were required.

We have successfully recruited a total of 7 Volunteer Peer Advocates with the second induction training workshop to commence in June 2013. Such was the successful response for potential VPA applicants we have now withdrawn the advertisement.



Below are testimonials from two people about why they applied to become a VPA.

“I felt that this was a role where I could be of some use. I feel honoured to be involved in such an important project”

“This service transformed my life, and I decided to become a Volunteer Parenting Advocate to help empower others by my lived experience”

The Delivery of the VPA Training Workshops

The first VPA Training Workshop in January 2013 ran for 4 days. This was put together in-house & delivered by the Advocacy Service Manager & the Parenting Advocate. The training was provided at a Mind in Croydon venue - Fairfield House due to the central location, training equipment & catering facilities available. The first three recruited VPAs ahead of the training were sent a welcome letter and a full training agenda of what was included on the four day workshop.

As part of the training, guest speakers were arranged from; Croydon Council - Safe Guarding Vulnerable Adults Team, Hear-us Link Working Project, Mind in Croydon: Chief Executive Officer, The Independent Mental Health Advocacy Service (IMHA) & Family Navigator Project. The 4 day training workshop provided a mixture of themes such as:

- “What is” and “What is not” advocacy exercise

- A Parenting Advocacy Presentation
- IMHA Service
- Infrastructure of Mind in Croydon and Statutory Services
- Exercises on Boundaries, Confidentiality & Safe Guarding
- Safe Guarding Coordinator Croydon Council
- Short Films on advocacy (Shoulder to Shoulder)
- Hear-us Link working Service (Boundaries & Confidentiality).
- Family Navigator Service

It was always the intention of the VPA trainers to focus largely on safeguarding, boundaries & confidentiality as well as the key principles of advocacy: Independence, Person Led, Confidentiality and Empowerment.

Safeguarding, Confidentiality & Boundaries can be a complex area. The interpretation can translate differently to individuals in different situations. The purpose of these themes was to

raise questions, openly discuss concerns in a transparent way. In the role of all volunteers and representatives of Mind in Croydon we are governed by policies, guidelines and principles that we have to adhere to. 2.

The VPAs were given comprehensive handouts which included a Volunteers agreement, Volunteers hand book, Mind in Croydon’s Policy & Procedures on Adult & Child Protection, Advocacy/Confidentiality policies, Action 4 Advocacy Charter, Family Rights Group A to Z information guide for parents, National Mind Advocacy information pack on advocacy. At the end of the training workshop an Introduction to Advocacy Certificate was handed out to each delegate.

Below: Photos from the VPA Training Workshop





Below are testimonials from the VPAs regarding the 1st training workshop.

“What I can say, a very well thought through training induction.

All three of us were, and are, very excited by helping to deliver this particular piece of work.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make a difference”

“Learnt so much about advocacy”

The Parenting Advocate will directly supervise the VPAs and the project overall will be managed by the Advocacy Service Manager.

Drop-In Service

We are pleased to announce that the Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service alongside the Parenting Advocacy Service has been granted the use of ground floor space in Croydon Central Library on Katharine Street next to Croydon Clock Tower. This is a major achievement and development for the service as it has allowed the project to showcase the Volunteer Peer Advocacy and raise the profile of the VPA Parenting Service as well as creating accessibility for parents or those in parental roles that may not know of the projects existence.

The initial launch of the drop-in commenced on 19th February which coincided with children’s half-term week from school. The Croydon library area manager

authorised the drop in service for the next few months which will then be reviewed to see if this is the right venue to provide this service. The VPAs and the parenting advocate will provide the drop-ins and will float between the walkway of the ground floor and inside the children’s library where various activities are provided throughout the week. There is a picture of our stand below.

The Parenting Advocate with the support of the VPAs have compiled an extensive community resource directory by utilising the current advocacy in-house directory and expanding this, by further research and community networking. The aim is to provide the VPAs with information and knowledge that they can share and communicate to parents who may require on the spot advocacy e.g. access to information and signposting to other agencies. If the enquiry is more complex and demands more input this could then potentially become a referral

to the Parenting Advocacy Service. Currently only the Parenting Advocate will continue to carry a case load.

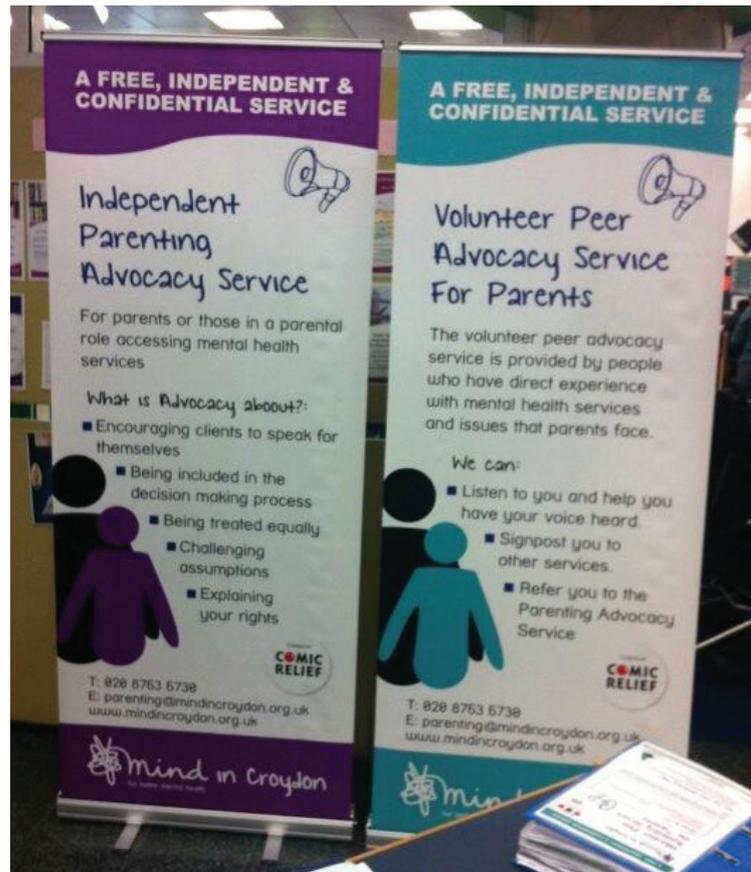
All enquiries that have required actioned pieces of work will be recorded on the VPA drop-in form including client evaluation.

The intention initially is to trial the drop-in surgeries and assess the level of interest and response the project receives. Currently we are providing the drop-ins one morning on a fortnightly basis between 9.30am to 12pm. The days may rotate and increase to a weekly basis or an occasional Saturday (to target Dad’s groups) depending on available resources and capacity of advocates.

Monitoring Information & Statistics

The information to the right, “Referral Source”, is taken from

Below: Banners for the VPA Drop In Service





the new clients that have accessed the service. The parenting advocacy service continues to receive the highest amount of referrals directly from the service user. This demonstrates parents requesting a need for advocacy support. The service continues to receive enquiries and referrals from Children’s Centres, Children’s Social Services, Health Visitors, Schools and other outside agencies. We aim to actively request agencies wanting to refer service users to the service that they encourage the service user to self refer directly. This promotes independency with the client and advocate from other referral sources.

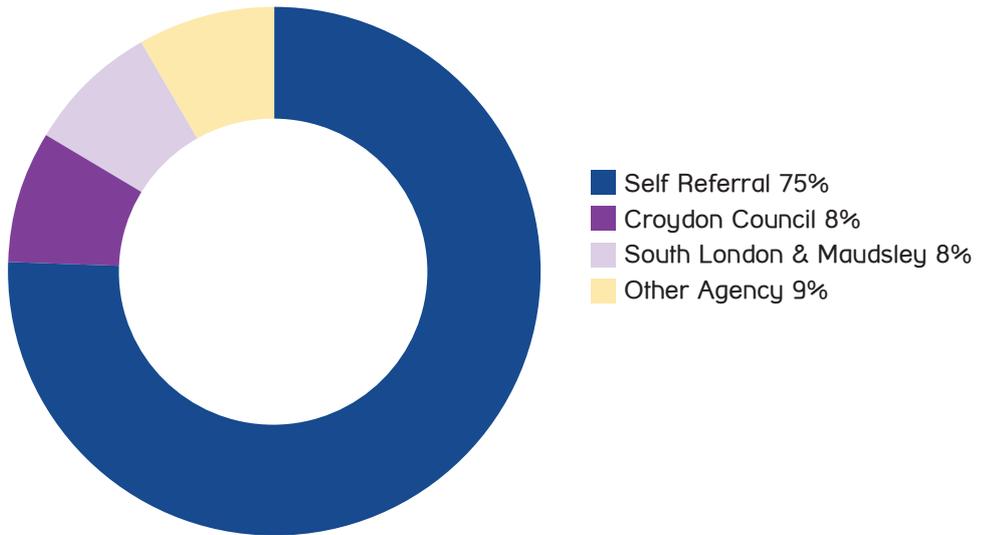
The chart, “Outcomes” is reflective of what work the advocate has provided over the last six months not what the outcome is for new and existing clients.

From January 2013 to March 31st 2013 we have recorded monitoring information for one off contacts/enquiries that have come into the service. This includes a combination of communication & information provided over the telephone and face to face to parents, agencies and practioners through the Volunteer Peer Advocacy Surgeries and events including St Mary’s Secondary School Roadshow and International Women’s Day.

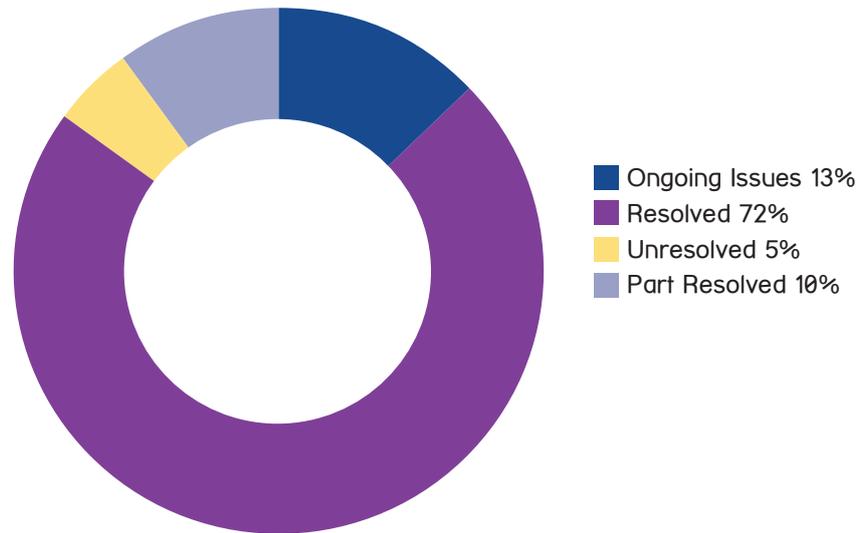
The monitoring information recorded as one off pieces of work comes to a total of 51 ½ hours. We see the trend of issues referred in our ongoing client case work also.

From looking at the data for Citizenship we continue to receive a high amount of unknown or not applicable to this group of people. This could be interpreted that they have chosen not to disclose

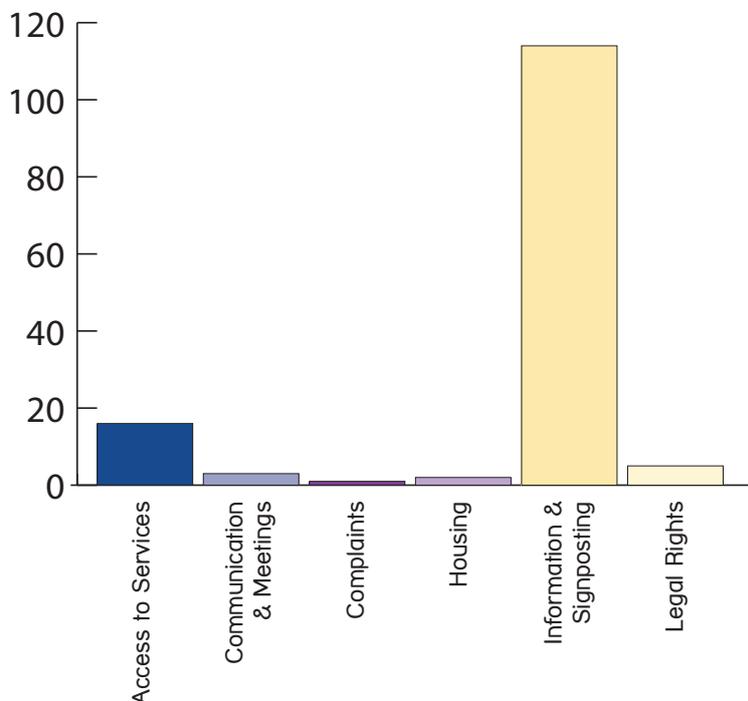
Referral Source



Outcomes



Issues from one off contacts





their citizenship status as it is not applicable to this group of people. Although the service continues to actively target groups of people that may be more isolated in the community with other citizenship status. Our aim is for the project to begin working closely with the community development worker from the BME Forum.

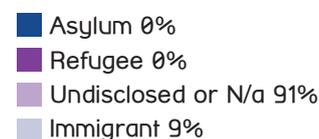
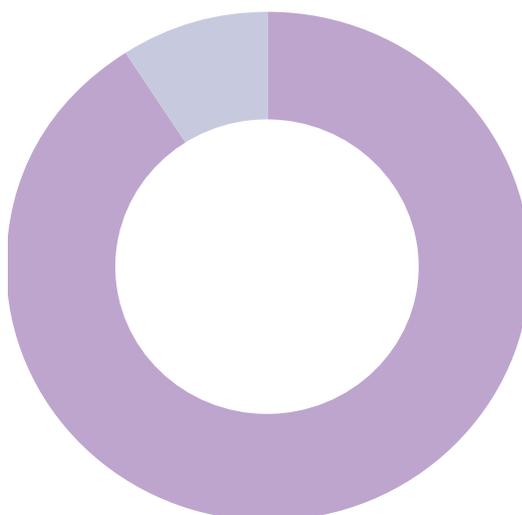
For ethnicity Croydon as a community is changing demographically. In comparison to the last six months report we have seen an increase in people accessing the service from more diverse communities e.g. Other European countries. White British continue to make up the majority percentage of clients accessing the service.

Clients completing the monitoring form on sexual orientation appear to more open in sharing this information although this remains not compulsory for them to answer.

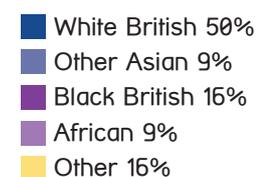
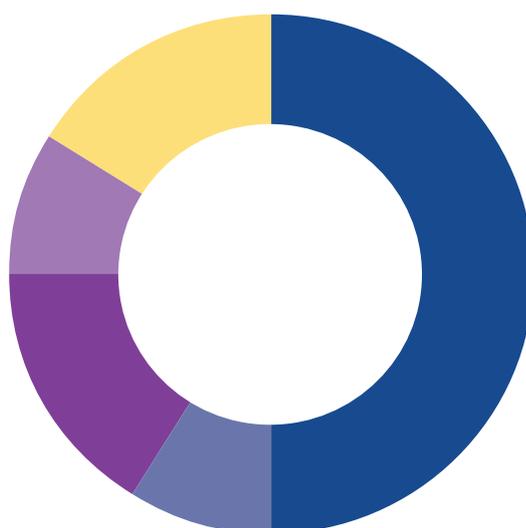
For gender the service continues to have significantly smaller amount of fathers or men in a parental role accessing the service in comparison to females. We are aware there is a need to target fathers/men in parental roles by providing drop-in surgeries to Dads' groups. (This graph is shown on the next page.)

To conclude, when looking at the monitoring data set out above, we anticipate that with the set up of the volunteer peer advocacy strand of the project, including the 7 recruited VPAs who are representative of both male & female with ages ranging from 26 to 59 years and who come from varied cultural backgrounds, alongside their own personal experiences, we hope this will provide an increase in resources.

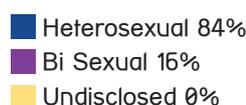
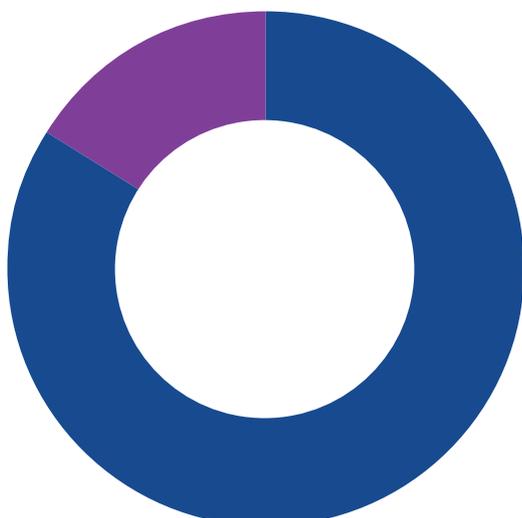
Citizenship



Ethnicity

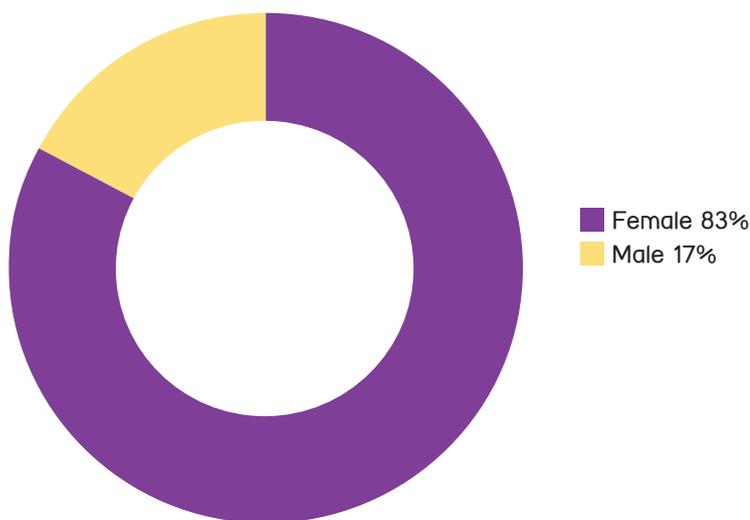


Sexual Orientation





Gender



Outcomes & Findings So Far

The issues presented to the parenting advocacy project continue to be: Housing, Legal, Contact with Children, Care proceedings, Child Protection, Looked After Children, Education, responding to Local Authority reports about families and Aspects of Clinical Treatments. In the future there may be an increase in the advocate's caseload working with issues regarding legal matters this could be due to the significant cuts and decrease in funding for legal aid.

A large proportion of the parenting advocate's work consists of providing communication and information to parents this may include signposting the parent on to other services or agencies, informing them of their rights. The parenting advocate often engages in reflective discussions with parents. It is not uncommon for the parenting advocate to work in this way particularly if the cases are complex. The advocate will employ reflective practice listening skills, discussions, giving information and options to parents.

We quantify this data as to reflect the complex nature of the case

work.

Feedback from parents stated that this type of advocacy work can be very beneficial and empowering to the parent in helping them make informed choices and decisions

Below is a client testimonial of their experience in accessing the service:

"I'm really glad that I have found an advocate as now I feel I found my voice, very helpful. More people should have one"

The service had carried out some extensive research following an enquiry from a parent who does not live in Croydon. We were unable to identify a similar service that was free specifically aimed to parents experiencing mental health problems.

Community Care Article, Facebook & Twitter

The use of media via different sources has raised the profile of The Parenting Advocacy Project.

One of the VPAs who had not accessed the service previously discovered that the service was looking for volunteers via Mind in Croydon's Facebook page.

On 26th November 2012 Community Care online magazine published a front page article which included a written testimonial that we featured in the last 6 to 12 month parenting advocacy report from a parent. It is our aim to have a follow up community care article.

Below is a testimonial from the community editor at Community Care magazine.

"It was really good to get an insight into the service user/advocacy perspective on social services meetings too. Really interesting article"

What's Worked Well

The Parenting Advocacy Service continues to go from strength to strength. The planning, preparation, contributions from everyone involved in the set up of VPA service, alongside the workshops and training has been a great success.

Being granted a hub space at Croydon Central Library has provided the service and the Volunteer Peer Advocates with an opportunity to reach out to a wider audience in an accessible location. We hope this will continue to raise the profile of the service and Mind in Croydon as an organisation. 5.

Challenges & Difficulties

We would like to reach out to parents who may not be aware of our existence. There are many



reported to us that are not aware or their parental rights and feel isolated.

Future Delivery of the Service 18 to 24 months

The next six months will look at the progress of the Volunteer Peer Advocacy strand of the project; the role of the VPA and the impact this has on the Parenting Advocacy Service. We will then review what the findings and outcomes of this next phase of the project are.

Depending on the demand for the drop-ins we would like the opportunity to extend outside of the library and possibly place the service into children's centres and target BME communities and Dads' groups.

We would like to secure further funding to extend the service and consolidate the work which has already been achieved.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all the Volunteer Peer Advocates who have contributed to the service so far.

Appendices

1. VPA Role Description
2. VPA Introductory Programme and welcome pack inventory
3. VPA Drop in Poster



MIND IN CROYDON PARENTING ADVOCACY SERVICE VOLUNTEER PEER ADVOCACY ROLE DESCRIPTION



Volunteer Peer Advocate

Would you like to give something back to the local community by volunteering as a Peer Advocate ?

We are looking for parents or people in parental roles who are experiencing or have experienced a mental health problem who would like the opportunity to become a volunteer peer advocate.

What is Peer Advocacy?

Peer Advocacy refers to "experts by experience", and is used to describe advocacy relationships where both the advocate and the advocacy partner share similar experiences, difficulties or discrimination.

Peer advocates can draw on their own experiences to understand and empathise with the person they are working with. The relationship is based on mutual support and empowerment

Description of the Volunteer Peer Advocacy Role

The role will request you to volunteer a minimum of half a day every two weeks. You will partly be based at our head office in Pampisford Road as well as providing information and some advocacy support at various open drop-in surgeries across the Croydon Borough. The advocacy service is particularly interested in targeting parents through Children's Centres, Black Minority and Ethnic Groups, dads groups, faith groups and Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender groups (LGBT). For those parents or people in parental roles who are isolated and not currently accessing any advocacy services or aware of the Parenting Advocacy Service existence.

Main role of the Volunteer Peer Advocate

We would like the Volunteer Peer Advocate to play an instrumental role in promoting the Parenting & Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service alongside the Parenting Advocate to various organisations and other service users by talking to people on a 1:1 basis or as a group of people in the form of a presentation / workshop event and the open drop-in surgeries.

The Volunteer Peer Advocate will be meeting with potential new clients who may wish to access the service or require information about what advocacy is and how advocacy works. We would like the Volunteer Peer Advocate to support parents to access the advocacy service, take referrals, sign post, and give information that may support a parent in exercising their rights, and empowering them to make an informed choice.

The Volunteer Peer Advocate will receive training in their role by shadowing the Parenting Advocate and attending free Mind in Croydon in-house advocacy workshops and outside free workshops.

Attributes and Capabilities useful & must-have

1. Good communication skills (must-have)
2. Good organisational and time management skills (must-have)
3. Competent levels of literacy (useful)
4. Good IT skills (useful)
5. Familiar with issues that parents may face (must-have)
6. Support somebody in speaking up and exercising their rights (useful)
7. Have a good understanding of advocacy and the principles of advocacy (useful) **but in-house training will be given as it is a specialist subject**

In return you will:

- Receive an opportunity to develop in your role as a volunteer peer advocate.
- An opportunity to meet with Comic Relief who are the funders of the project
- Receive free in house training from Mind in Croydon to learn about the principles of advocacy, develop new skills and gain confidence.
- Be reimbursed for travel expenses (receipts must be obtained)
- Receive lunch expenses on production of receipts (a maximum of £2.50 if you volunteer 10am to 4pm)
- Receive a reference

The Volunteer Peer Advocate will be supervised by the Parenting Advocate & Advocacy Service Manager and managed by the Advocacy Service Manager.

For more information please contact Emma Turner - Advocacy Service Manager or call 0208 763 6730. [Application Form](#) can be posted to Advocacy Service Manager, Mind in Croydon, 26 Pampisford Road, Purley, CR8 2NE or email to parenting@mindincroydon.org.uk

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Mind in Croydon Volunteer Peer Advocacy Introductory Programme

Day 1-

Task	Date completed	Volunteer Signature	Trainers signature
Ice Breaker “What is Advocacy”			
Parenting Advocacy Presentation			
IMHA Workshops			

Day 2 -

Task	Date completed	Volunteer Signature	Trainers signature
Richard Pacitti Chief Executive about Mind in Croydon and the infrastructure of Mind and Statutory Services.			
Exercise - safeguarding Boundaries, Ethical Dilemmas and Confidentiality			

Day 3-

Task	Date completed	Volunteer Signature	Trainers signature
Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Training & handouts with Vincent Docherty			
Introductory Packs, Monitoring, Record keeping & referral process			
Advocacy Film Shoulder to Shoulder			

Day 4-

Task	Date completed	Volunteer Signature	Trainers signature
A visit to Croydon Central Library			
Family Navigator Project – Abbi Green			
Hear-us/Link working Project			

VPA Introductory Pack Handouts

Task	Date completed	Volunteer Signature	Trainers signature
A guide to Mind in Croydon services, Annual Report, Parenting Advocacy & IMHA leaflet, Family Navigator access to service pathway & leaflet and Advocate trainers business cards			
Mind in Croydon Volunteer Guidance Note (to be signed)			
Volunteer Handbook Volunteer Equal Opps statement			
Provision of Advocacy			
Code of conduct for service users of Mind Advocacy			
Mind in Croydon Confidentiality Policy			
Mind in Croydon Child & Adult Protection Policy			
Parenting Advocacy presentation handouts			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VPA Poster • VPA Customer Satisfaction Drop in Service Forms • VPA Drop in Sheet 			
Client Consent Form			
VPA Progress Report VPA Expenses Form			
VPA Evaluation of Training Workshop			
Boundaries, personal disclosure info			
Family Rights Group A to Z guide on information for parents National Mind - a guide to advocacy			
List of solicitors			
Advocacy Charter			
Introduction to advocacy certificate			



Volunteer Peer Advocacy Drop In

Drop ins held at: Croydon Central Library	Date:	Volunteer Peer Advocate:
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Male / Female	Issue raised	Action
	TOTAL	MALE FEMALE

Involvement:

Leaflet Given = LG	Referral to Family Navigator Project=ref FN	Information given = IG
Signpost = SP	Referral to MIC Parenting Advocacy = ref PA	Existing Client = EC
Aware of Service = AS	Refused Contact = RC	

*** A FREE, INDEPENDENT & CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE ***



Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service for Parents



Drop in times...

Croydon Clocktower...

The volunteer peer advocacy service is provided by people who have direct experience with mental health services and issues that parents face.

How can Peer Advocacy Help?

- Listening to you and helping you have your voice heard.
- Signposting you to other services.
- Referring you to the Parenting Advocacy Service.

Tel: 020 8763 6730

Email: parenting@mindincroydon.org.uk

Web: www.mindincroydon.org.uk



Volunteer Peer
Advocacy Service