



# Mind in Croydon Parenting Advocacy Service

6 - 12 months



October 2012

26 Pampisford Road, Purley, Surrey CR8 2NE  
General Office: 020 8568 2210  
[www.mindincroydon.org.uk](http://www.mindincroydon.org.uk)

Advocacy



Quality Services

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## Table of Contents

Current delivery of the Parenting Advocacy Service 6 to 12 months

- Referrals,
- In-house directory
- Green Text Service
- Development of Client & Agency Satisfaction Questionnaire,
- Certificate of Independent Advocacy NVQ level 3.

Setting up of the Peer Advocacy Service

Monitoring Information /Statistics

Outcomes & Findings so far

1 Case Study

What's Worked Well

Challenges & Difficulties

Future delivery of the service 12 to 18 months



## Current Delivery of the Parenting Advocacy Service

Following on from the first Parenting Advocacy report 0 to 6 months, there have been lots of developments within the Parenting Advocacy Service.

The following report outlines the last 6 to 12 months of the service from April 2012 to October 2012.

The project is a 3 year service funded by Comic relief. The Advocacy Service Manager Emma Turner and Parenting Advocate Nichola Harris have put the 2nd part of this report together.

### Referrals

Between April 2012 and October 2012 we have received 35 referrals and out of these there are 25 clients accessing the service.

We continue to receive a steady stream of referrals into the Parenting Advocacy Service on a weekly basis, A large proportion are mainly self referrals from parents wishing to access the service. This has come from being signposted from other agencies or they have seen our leaflets displayed at various organisations. This indicates a strong need from parents who maybe isolated in the community and who do not know that the Parenting Advocacy Service is in existence.

Other sources of referrals come from Statutory & Voluntary agencies including: Mind in Croydon, Surestart Children's Centre, Health Visitors, Victim Support in Croydon, Children's Social Services, Croydon Mental Health Teams and Perinatal Team, Children's Contact Centres and Place2be.

As part of the ongoing future development of the advocacy service we are in the process of setting up open surgeries to reach out to parents that would like to access our service. This is discussed in more detail at the end of the report under the heading of the future delivery of the service.

### Advocacy In-House Directory

Our 'in-house information directory' has grown in the last 6 months and has been a great resource within the role of the Parenting Advocate. The directory is an integral tool that advocates can tap into to access information for clients.

The Community Mapping Exercise which evolved from the initial start up of the Parenting Advocacy project and was referenced in the 0 to 6 month report, provided a platform in developing the advocacy directory which is utilised by the whole Advocacy Team.

### Green Text Service



The Green Text Service is widely utilised within the whole advocacy team and some other Mind Services. Through our internet server we are able to send a text to clients on their personal mobile which comes through to them from Mind in Croydon. This service has been very successful and instrumental in providing an alternative flexible communication tool to clients. Green Text Service has been particularly useful with certain clients as appointments

reminders.

### Development of Client and Agency Satisfaction Questionnaire

Advocacy



### Quality Services

Our advocacy service operates within and delivers services awarded with the Quality Performance Mark. This was awarded by Action for Advocacy in May 2011. It is widely acknowledged and respected by those within the social care and mental health spheres from commissioners to practitioners.

To ensure a high quality of service and to improve on our service we continue to welcome feedback from Clients who have used advocacy & agencies who have come into contact with the service.

Agency feedback below:

**"I am writing to thank you for all your help in assisting one of my clients. A CAF was completed and as part of the agreed actions, you became this parent's advocate to help her with her appalling housing situation.**

**You willingly came to the Centre to meet with the parent, listened carefully to her needs and agreed appropriate actions. Following your input,**



**Croydon Council are now taking action to re-house the family and they are able to start looking for another property.**

**I am extremely grateful to you for the input you have given and I know the family are also very appreciative of all you have done.**

**I feel this is a fine example of multi-agency working across the public and voluntary sectors that have had a beneficial outcome for a family in need”.**

Children’s Centre Coordinator,  
Thornton heath Children’s Centre

### **Awarded Certificate of Independent Advocacy**

In August 2012 the Parenting Advocate successfully gained a City & Guilds level 3 qualification for general advocacy & specialist unit in independent advocacy for adults.

In achieving the level 3 qualification this has enabled the advocate in her role to reflect on the principles of advocacy; looking at the relationship, ethical dilemmas and boundaries. Supervision and informal supervision takes place on a regular basis between the advocacy manager and the advocate relating to many issues that may arise from the advocates work. This has helped to define the role of the advocate and maintain clear professional boundaries between client and advocate thus ensuring the client receives a professional service.

### **Setting Up of the Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service**

The Peer Advocacy Service is part of an ongoing development within the Parenting Advocacy Service. We have put together a Volunteer Peer Advocate Application Form, which we will then implement as part of a recruitment drive.

We plan to advertise the opportunity by linking in with Hear-Us Service User Organisation and South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust.

Following a recent application/ enquiry from a potential volunteer peer advocate the Parenting Advocacy Service was able to look at how we could put together a bespoke training package as part of the peer advocates induction. This included looking at what relevant skills & experience they may have. We have also begun the process of contacting Cool Tan Arts who provide free peer advocacy training and looking at how to manage any possible issues that may arise regarding ethical dilemmas, boundaries and the relationship between the peer

advocate, the service user and agencies.

### **Monitoring Information Statistics**

All monitoring information is based upon statistics over the last 6 months.

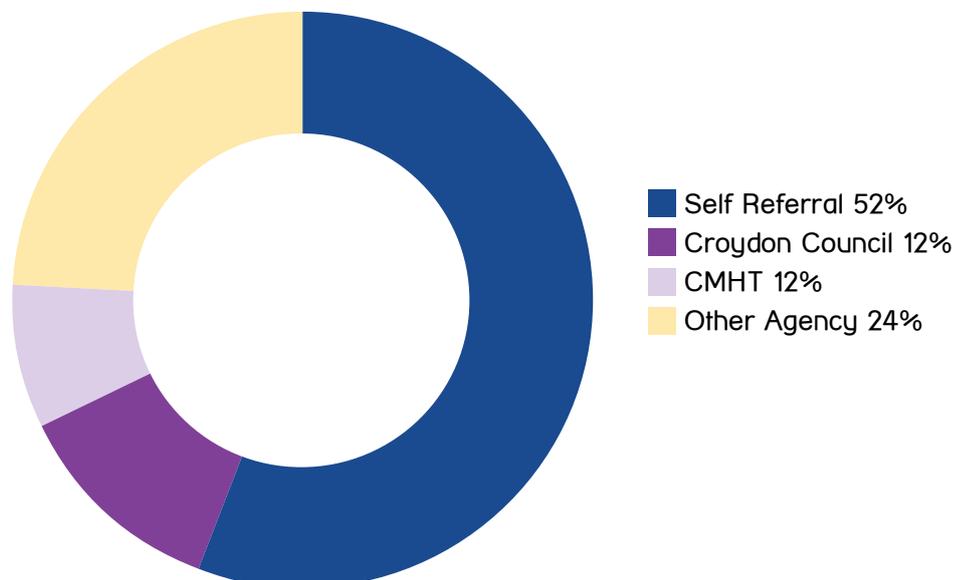
### **Referral Source**

Following on from the last report the highest number of referral source continues to be self-referrals at 52%. The second largest is other agencies at 24% Surestart Children’s Centre, and Contact Centres. This would suggest that the project is being promoted and raising awareness outside of statutory services. We expect to see an increase in these referrals via other sources as the project develops during the course of the next 6 to 12 months. This information can be seen on the chart below.

### **Citizenship**

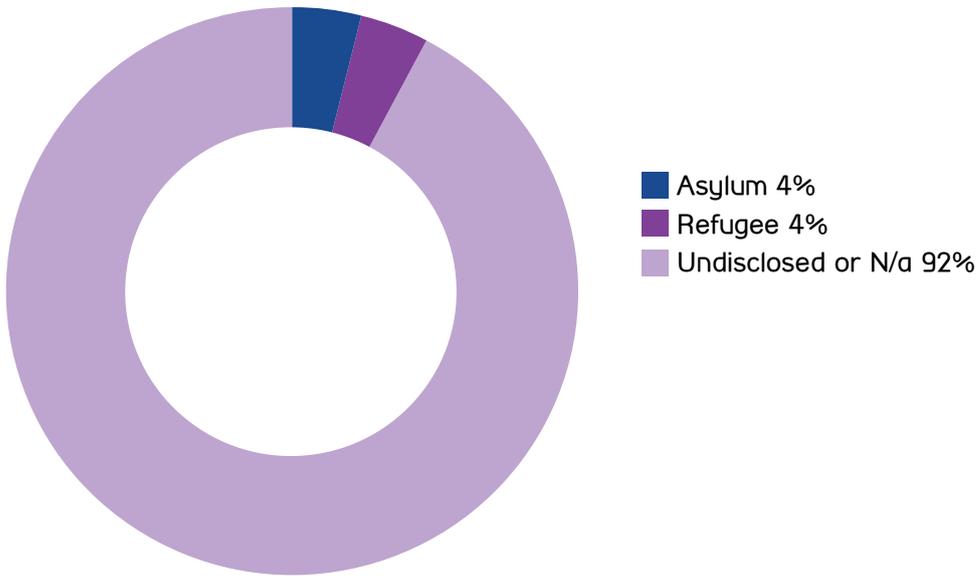
From looking at the data on Citizenship, 92% is unknown, this could be interpreted that this particular group of people have chosen not to disclose their citizenship status or it is not applicable to them.

### Referral Source





## Citizenship



piece of work. This is shown on the chart on the next page.

## Outcomes and Findings So Far

The issues presented to advocacy range from; Legal, Housing, Immigration, Children’s Social Services e.g. Looked after Children, Child in Need, Child Protection, Team Around a Child, Family Court Hearings, Care Proceedings and access to other services. Within the work the issues continue to be multiple and complex.

This is recognised as being particularly prevalent with clients where there are ongoing issues relating to the family.

Cases can remain open between one month and beyond 6 months depending on what the nature of the issue is. In these instances it often can be Child Protection or Care Proceedings that impacts on cases remaining open for longer periods.

We can see that through there being an advocacy involvement at statutory meetings it has demonstrated that this may strongly influence outcomes or make a difference for clients.

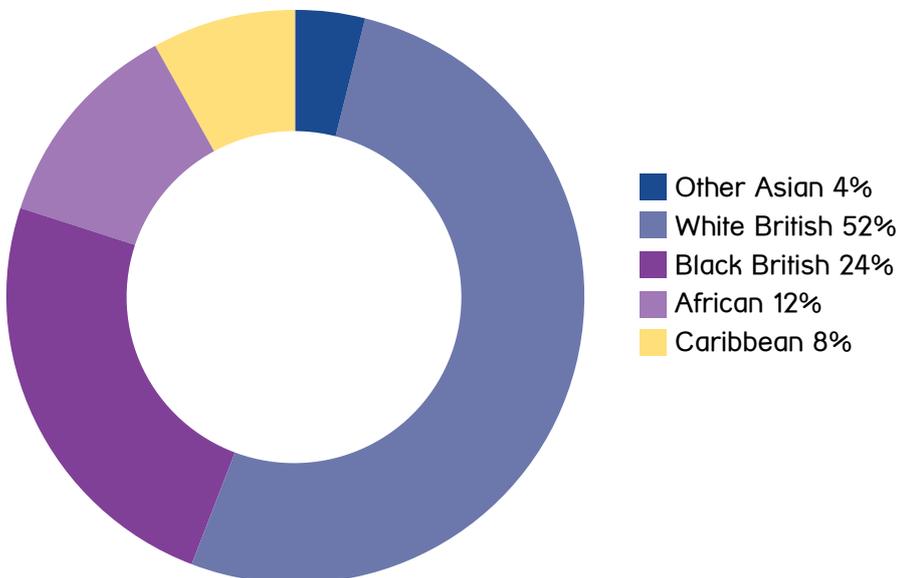
## Case Study

An example of this is shown in the client testimonial below this paragraph:

*“My involvement with Mind in Croydon began in early July when my teenage daughter was taken into care under section 20 voluntary care basis after a year of her experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties. I sought help and support from various different agencies including her school, whilst many of them acknowledged their difficulties we*

## Ethnicity

The below information shows the ethnicity of people referred to Mind in Croydon in the last 6 months.



## Sexual Orientation

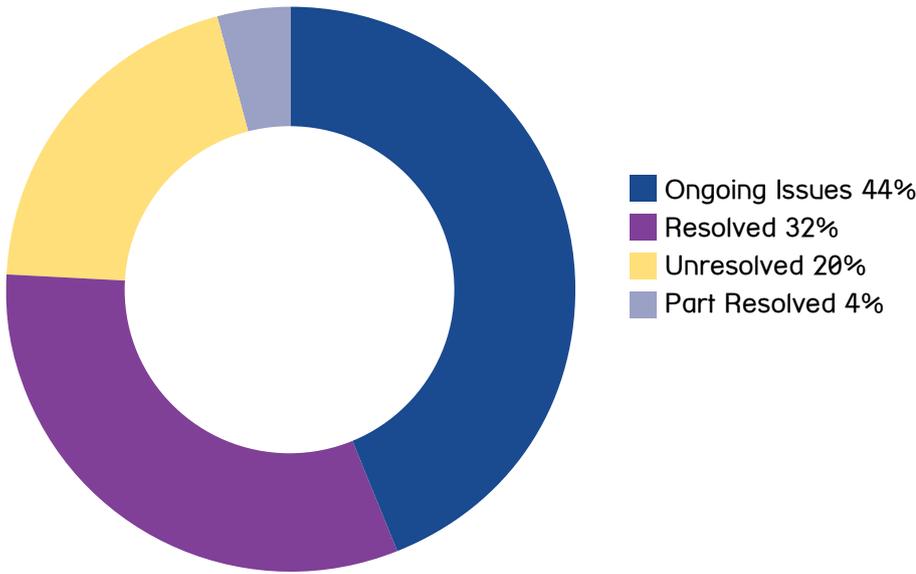
Gaining information on sexual orientation is identified through the parenting monitoring form. In some instances where sexual orientation is unknown this information may be based upon what clients wish to disclose this is not compulsory to answer. This information can be seen on the chart on the next page.

## Outcomes

The information shows that of the initial issues presented 32% of these had resolved outcomes. This translated into advocacy terms means outcomes that are identified as resolved are not necessarily the desired outcome for the client but that the client has instructed the advocate to do a piece of work and there is an outcome from this



## Outcomes



*that social services had the right to overrule any, in the so called 'interests of the child.' With the exception of one individual professional from a voluntary sector charity, I had up until this point felt unheard.*

*I was concerned about my daughter's vulnerability and felt this was not being taken seriously. It was the advocate who stepped in at the meeting and calmly sat beside me, providing moral support as our lives were scrutinised by professionals from various agencies.*

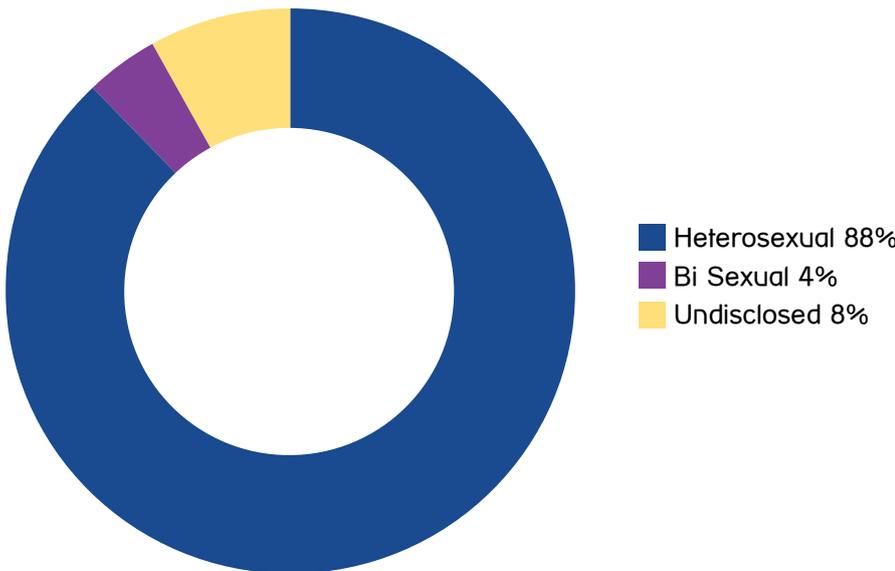
*It was interesting to note that due to time constraints the nature of the complex issues being discussed were to my mind being rushed through.*

*The number one priority for me was to get my daughters mental health assessment authorised. She had not helped her case by refusing to engage with mental health services earlier on. When she bravely voiced that she was feeling suicidal during the course of the meeting, it was the advocate who reiterated the importance of my daughters cry for help.*

*Obviously it was very difficult to hear this information, and when I was too upset, the advocate asked for the meeting to be halted until I was able to compose myself. She came out of the LAC review with me for 5 mins, was kind and compassionate and gently offered me the possibility of counselling for myself, although Mind has its own counselling service, I was not surprised that in the current economic climate that there was a waiting list.*

*Again written information on useful websites for mediation, family rights groups and family law help lines was sent to me and this saved me a lot of legwork, which*

## Sexual Orientation



*were experiencing as a family and as a result of her erratic behaviour, it was passed off as normal teenage antics and apart from one individual in the voluntary sector, who left after a couple of months.*

*I could not get the support I felt we so desperately needed. I felt alone, unheard, fearful and isolated and was very worried about my ability to cope and how it was impacting on the whole family.*

*I sat in the foyer of Croydon Social Services one day, waiting for a*

*meeting with a social worker and felt a complete failure as a mother and racked with guilt that I had not been able to find the support she so desperately needed. It was then I found Mind In Croydon's' Independent Parenting Advocacy Service.*

*We arranged to meet early the following week, the day before I was due to attend a LAC review for my daughter. It felt very daunting to me as this was a situation I was unfamiliar with and I did not even know whether I had any rights because it appeared*



*was such a blessing when you have no pc and two small children too.*

*My concerns around the care system and how parents are often kept in the dark about issues concerning the child or being the last to know were niggling me. The advocate found out about the complaints procedure, who the appropriate people to contact were and she even offered to attend this potentially daunting meeting with me, and although in the end this did not happen, the letter Mind drafted helped me to differentiate what was important and what things I had perhaps magnified in my own mind. This 'holding' has continued to support and sustain me until today.*

*The fact that it was echoed by a professional advocate, seemed to hold more weight, sadly.*

*Thank you Mind for providing an essential service".*

It has been identified that many parents remain isolated in their community and do not know what support services exist and how to access the support they need.

In order for advocacy to reach out to this client group it is important to identify where and how we do this. The advocate is currently at a discussion stage with other Mental Health, Social Care professionals to set up open surgeries on a fortnightly or monthly basis rotating between Jeanette Wallace House (the hub of children's social services) and Surestart Children's Centres in Croydon. The aim is to provide surgeries to parents who can drop in and meet with an advocate and go through what their issues are. This may take the form of on the spot advocacy or longer-term advocacy.

## Reflections on what has worked well

The introduction of the welcome pack which are given to clients at their initial meetings with the advocate contain information relating to Code of Conduct, The Provision of Advocacy, Parenting Advocacy leaflet and Advocates Business Card. This information describes how the advocacy service works and what the advocate does. It provides the contact details via email, text or telephone are available.

Part of the strategic vision since the advocate has been working on this project in the last 12 months is the development of the service. The parenting advocate within the advocacy team has been part of the implementation of newly developed advocacy tools used to provide a better quality advocacy service e.g. Green Text Service providing a more flexible approach in communication via text message service.

Many clients communicate via email, which can be a very empowering tool to use. For example clients that may want an advocate to send a letter on their behalf can sometimes outline the contents of this letter via an email. The advocate will then draft a letter back to the client for approval before it is sent to the appropriate destination. One particular client accessing the service has a visual impairment. Following instructions to write a letter the client will call the advocate and request them to read out the contents of the letter. Then the client will approve this via telephone. The advocacy work is always instructed by the client; from what the issue is to how they wish to address it.

## Challenges & Difficulties

The main challenge of the Parenting Advocacy Service is that there is only one parenting advocate providing this type of service throughout the borough of Croydon, therefore fulfilling demand is curtailed by supply constraints. However through bringing on board The Volunteer Peer Advocate(s) it is anticipated that this will create more resources for the project and enable more clients to access the service.

It is important that the principles of advocacy are reinforced to clients as this could threaten the relationship between the advocate and the client if they are not. There have been some clear instances whereby the principles of advocacy have been challenged. For example, we have learnt from case work that a client can often issue instruction to the advocate which compromises the effectiveness of the working relationship. This had to be closely monitored by the advocate and service manager in order to maintain boundaries so as to achieve a clear outcome for the client.

## Future development of the Service in the next 6 months.

The proposed plan to set up and run Open Surgeries based at Children's Social Services and Children's Surestart Centres throughout the next phase of the project, has been identified as a potential need. There are many parents that are isolated in the community and considered 'hard to reach families'. Introducing advocacy via the open surgeries will promote accessibility to these potential clients.



## APPENDICES:

1. Code of Conduct
2. Client Consent Form
3. Agency Satisfaction Survey
4. Volunteer Peer Advocate Application Form
5. Volunteer Peer Advocate Role Description



For better  
mental health

## Code of Conduct for Service Users of Mind Advocacy

### **Respect.**

Service users are expected to treat those working with Mind advocacy with respect. This includes Mind staff, professionals who are contacted by the service, and users of services at Mind in Croydon.

### **Cancelled Appointments**

There may be circumstances where a service user is unable to keep an appointment. Whenever possible the service user should contact the advocate to cancel the appointment so as to enable the appointment to be offered to someone else.

### **Inappropriate behaviour.**

Mind advocates understand that users of mental health services may be fearful, angry and distrustful. However, certain behaviour is inappropriate and unacceptable. Inappropriate behaviour includes: verbal abuse; threats or actual physical abuse; using racist, sexist or homophobic language; making demands which cannot be met by an advocate (*this is not an exhaustive list*).

### **Resolution.**

If a service user acts inappropriately, the following procedure will be followed:

#### Stage 1.

The advocate will discuss the inappropriate behaviour with the service user to try and solve the problem. The Advocacy Project Manager may be involved in these discussions if the service user and advocate think it would be useful to involve a third party.

#### Stage 2.

If the problem is not resolved or if the service user continues to act inappropriately, the advocacy service will be withdrawn until the Advocacy Manager can meet with the service user. This meeting will be arranged as quickly as possible, within *14 days* of the service being stopped. The aim of the meeting is to reinstate appropriate use of the service, not to exclude the client.

### **Exclusion.**

However, after these discussions, if the Advocacy Manager believes that a client will not use the service appropriately, they may be excluded from the service. If a service user is denied access to the service, this may be for the following periods of time: *1 month, 3 months, 6 months or 1 year*. The length of time will depend on the nature and extent of the service user's inappropriate behaviour.

### **Complaints.**

At any stage, if a service user thinks that they have been treated unfairly by the Mind advocacy service, they can complain using the Mind in Croydon complaints procedure. A copy of this is available from the Advocate or Advocacy Manager or from the reception staff upon request.

*It is sincerely hoped that the MInd Advocacy Project will not have to follow the procedures in this policy. The aim of Mind advocacy is to support, not exclude service users. All efforts will be made to resolve difficult issues without denying advocacy to clients.*



**CLIENT CONSENT FORM**

1



**Working in Partnership** - Mind in Croydon Parenting Advocacy Service works in partnership with you. We may also work alongside many other agencies that are involved in your care and support.

2.



**Information about you shared between other people** - In order to assist you we will need to gather information about you and speak to other agencies (3<sup>rd</sup> parties) e.g. Doctors, health care professionals, Social Services and other outside agencies. We can only do this with your consent.

3.



**Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults** - In an emergency, for example, if there was a serious risk to yourself or somebody else, we might have to share information about you with the relevant people. We would always try and consult you about this first.

4.



**You are able to access and look at your case notes on file.**

If there's anything you're not happy about, we have a complaints procedure available. The opportunity to make a complaint or grievance is an essential right for all those who use the services provided by Mind in Croydon. Complaints can be a valuable way of evaluating and improving our services and of ensuring they are responsive to the needs and preferences of users.

**Please make sure you can understand the information provided before you sign the consent form.**

I give my consent and agree to Mind in Croydon Parenting Advocacy Service to obtain and record personal information about myself, and if necessary share this information with other people / third parties on my behalf.

Name of client.....

Address.....

Signature.....Date.....

**This Consent form is inline with Mind in Croydon Policies & Procedures.**



# Agency Satisfaction Survey

## Mind in Croydon Advocacy 2012

We would be grateful if you would take the time to complete this short questionnaire and email it back to us at : [evaluation@mindincroydon.org.uk](mailto:evaluation@mindincroydon.org.uk)

By doing so you will be helping us to make sure we are really listening to people and offering a service that makes a big difference to their lives.

Agency Name (Optional) .....

Your Role (Optional) .....

### What were the main issues that the advocate supported the client with?

E.G. Aspects of clinical treatment, Consent to Treatment, Discrimination, Personal records, Hospital Admissions, transfers and discharge, complaints handling, staff attitudes, Adult Community Mental Teams, Children & Families or other Social Services Depts, Communications and information, Employment, Privacy & Dignity, Housing, Policy E.g. Government or Local Authority Policies, Finance, Crime and Other

**For each of the following statements please tick a number from**

**1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree)**

#### 1) I found the advocacy service easy to contact

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

#### 2) I found the referral process easy (If applicable)

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

**3) The advocate seemed to understand the client's issue**

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

**4) Did you feel that the advocate was listening to what the client wanted?**

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

**5) Did the advocacy service support the client with the relevant issues**

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

**6) Do you think advocacy made a difference to the outcome of the clients issues**

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

**7) Would you recommend Mind Advocacy Service to other clients?**

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

**8) How did you hear about the advocacy service**

Please State.....

**9) Are you aware of a similar type or other advocacy service/s in the Croydon Borough**

YES  NO

Please State.....

**Further Comments ( Optional )**

Date .....



**MIND IN CROYDON ADVOCACY SERVICE  
VOLUNTEER PEER ADVOCACY APPLICATION FORM**

**We are looking for volunteer peer advocates:**

- **Who are between the ages of 18 to 65 years old**
- **Who would be expected to volunteer for a minimum of half day every two weeks**
- **You must be a parent or a person in a parental role who has experienced or is experiencing a mental health problem**

**What is a 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.

Operating with a peer advocate can make it easier for advocate and user to have an equal relationship.

The relationship is based on mutual support and empowerment. The primary qualification is their own experience of mental health problems, exclusion or using services

**Surname**..... **First Name**.....  
**Address**..... **Telephone**.....  
..... **Mobile**.....  
..... **Post Code**..... **Email**.....

**Please tell us briefly why you would like to become a volunteer peer advocate?**.....  
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**It is not essential but you may have previous advocacy/related experience, (this could include accessing an advocacy service, supporting another person with their issues in an advocacy role)? (Please specify)**  
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.....  
**Have you any particular skills or interests that you would be prepared to share as a volunteer peer advocate? (E.g. able to support people at meetings, writing letters, supporting yourself or somebody else to speak up in exercising their rights, familiar with issues that parents may face).**  
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**Please indicate the day(s) and times you would be available to volunteer by Circling the relevant Am or PM**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Am .	Am .	Am .	Am .	Am .
Pm .	Pm .	Pm .	Pm .	Pm .

**Comments** (Is there anything else you would like to tell us e.g. other commitments, etc?)

.....  
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**REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS ACT**

**Please note that all applicants are required to undergo criminal record checks as provided by the Criminal Records Bureau. This record check will include details of cautions, reprimands or final warnings, as well as convictions. A criminal record will not affect your chances of becoming a volunteer, unless it makes you unsuitable for the position. In making this decision, we will consider the nature of the offence, how long ago and what age you were when it was committed, and any other relevant factors. We will keep in strict confidence any information we receive and will store it securely. If these checks reveal evidence that makes you unsuitable, Mind in Croydon, will discontinue the volunteering relationship at anytime. By signing this application you are giving your consent to these checks being carried out at any time as a volunteer with Mind in Croydon.**

**Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Yes . No .**

**If you have answered YES, please give details of date(s) of offence(s) and sentences passed:**

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**Your application will be subject to references. Please give the names and addresses of two character referees, neither of whom should be related to you.**

<b>REFEREE 1</b>	<b>REFEREE 2</b>
Name.....	Name.....
Position.....	Position.....
Relationship.....	Relationship.....
Address.....	Address.....
.....	.....
Postcode.....	Postcode.....
Contact no.....	Contact no.....

**I declare that I have completed this form to the best of my knowledge, I understand that any information regarding service users of Mind in Croydon received as a result of my voluntary work must be regarded as confidential.**

**Signed.....**

**Dated.....**

**Thank you for applying to be a volunteer peer advocate. All information on this form will be treated as confidential.**

**If you would like more information regarding this application or wish to find out about Volunteer Peer Advocacy further you can contact the Advocacy Service Manager below:**

**Please return the completed form to:**

**Emma Turner  
Advocacy Service Manager  
Mind in Croydon  
26 Pampisford Road  
Purley  
CR8 2NE  
0208 6682210**



## 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 post**

The role will require 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 peer advocacy 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
- Receive a lunch allowance (a maximum of £2.50 if you volunteer 10am to 4pm)
- Receive a reference for future employment

**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 on 0208 763 6730. [Application Form](#) can be posted to Advocacy Service Manager, Mind in Croydon, 26 Pampisford Road, Purley, CR8 2NE or you can email [parenting@mindincroydon.org.uk](mailto:parenting@mindincroydon.org.uk)

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