

LEARNING DISABILITY PARTNERSHIP BOARD

ADVOCACY SUB GROUP

“Effective advocacy can transform the lives of people with learning disabilities by enabling them to express their wishes and aspirations and make real choices. Advocacy helps people put forward their views and play an active part in planning and designing services which are responsive to their needs...”

Valuing People, Dept of Health, 2001, para. 4.5, p.46

Background

The Advocacy Sub Group, one of the sub groups that is part of the Wigan Learning Disability Partnership Board, was formed in 2004. Prior to that advocacy had been one of the topics discussed under the former Choice and Control sub group. However, it was recognised that Advocacy was an important topic in its own right and an Advocacy Sub Group was formed. Advocacy is also a cross-cutting issue that should be considered and included in the action plans of all the other sub groups. Each sub group therefore has an Advocacy Champion to help ensure that this happens.

The Advocacy Sub Group is guided by the vision and wishes of self-advocates who produced an Advocacy PATH Action Plan in 2005 (updated November 2006).

Since the Action Plan was produced, several key objectives have been achieved including securing three years' LDDF funding (05/06; 06/07; 07/08); the establishment of Wigan and Leigh People First self-advocacy group; and the appointment of a full time Advocacy Development Worker to help support Wigan and Leigh People First and help the Advocacy Sub Group achieve other objectives included in the Advocacy Action Plan.

Wigan and Leigh People First have recently produced their own PATH Action Plan which begins to be more autonomous and independent of the wider, more strategic aims of the Advocacy Sub Group.

With all the changes taking place and the progress that has been made to date, it now seems an appropriate time to:

- revisit the overall aims and objectives of the Advocacy Sub Group;
- clearly specify the Terms of Reference for members;
- agree the membership, including associate membership if considered necessary;
- agree frequency of meetings and who should receive minutes;

- agree how the group should continue to be guided by, and represented by, self-advocates

A separate paper will clarify the role of Advocacy Champions and how they link and liaise with the Advocacy Sub Group.

Overall Aim

In line with the Valuing People White Paper, the overall aim of the Advocacy Sub Group is to:

Promote the development of, and support for, advocacy services for people with learning disabilities, particularly self-advocacy, citizen advocacy and provision that is independent and accessible for everyone.

People with learning disabilities are the guiding influence for the group – ‘nothing about us without us’

Terms of Reference

The main functions of the group and its members are:

- To provide a strategic vision and action plan for developing advocacy in the Wigan Borough for people with learning disabilities and to report progress regularly to the Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB).
- To ensure this vision and action plan is guided by people with learning disabilities and approved by them.
- Liaising with Advocacy Champions, to ensure advocacy is considered and included in the action plans of all the other LDPB sub groups.
- To help monitor and evaluate learning disability advocacy developments and services, including financial monitoring.
- To monitor Service Level Agreements for advocacy funded by the Learning Disability Development Fund, or other funding secured by the Sub Group from other sources.
- To identify and help secure ongoing funding for the sustainability of advocacy developments supported by the sub group, eg Wigan and Leigh People First and the Drama group, and to identify and help secure funding for new advocacy initiatives, eg the establishment of a citizen advocacy scheme.
- To monitor and compare the spend on learning disability advocacy within other local authorities, particularly our comparator group.
- To identify gaps in advocacy provision for people with learning disabilities and plan ways to meet these gaps.

- To help produce protocols and guidelines in relation to learning disability advocacy (eg guidelines were produced for providing support for self-advocate members of the LDPB).
- To identify and be aware of evidence based practice and research in relation to learning disability advocacy that has taken place elsewhere.
- To help commission and oversee any research needed locally in relation to advocacy, eg the advocacy audit that will take place shortly.
- To help identify training and support needs in relation to advocacy and suggest ways of meeting these needs.

Membership

Membership of the group should include representation from:

- Wigan and Leigh People First
- Self Advocate Forum
- Adult Services, Wigan Council
- Health Services (Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust)
- Voluntary Sector organisations with an interest in learning disability advocacy (eg Wigan Family Welfare, ACE)
- Advocacy Champions from other LDPB sub groups
- Someone representing Volunteers and Transport

Frequency of Meetings and Circulation of minutes

The Sub Group meets monthly with meetings lasting approximately two hours. Increasing the frequency of meetings would be difficult due to the other commitments of members. Minutes are circulated to members and Advocacy Champions by email. If there is an associate membership, minutes will also be circulated to them by email.

Representation and Guidance of Self-Advocates

As indicated above, membership of the Group should include representation, with appropriate support, from Wigan and Leigh People First and the Self Advocate Forum that is currently being established within Adult Services. The work of the group should continue to be guided by self-advocates and future plans approved by them.