

Plain facts

Helping parents with learning difficulties to speak up



Many parents with learning difficulties need help to speak up for themselves.



They need help to speak up when professionals say there is a problem with how they are being a parent. Advocates help people with learning difficulties to speak up for themselves.



Beth Tarleton found out about two advocacy services that help parents to speak up.

The Child Protection System



The child protection system is there to make sure children are safe and looked after properly.



Parents can get involved with the child protection system when other people are worried about their children.



There are meetings with professionals to find out what support parents need.



Sometimes professionals think that parents still can't look after their children well enough even if they have support. Sometimes children might be taken away to be looked after by someone else for a time.



Sometimes the children might be adopted. This means they get a new mum or dad.



Parents have to go to court if professionals think that their children should be looked after by someone else.

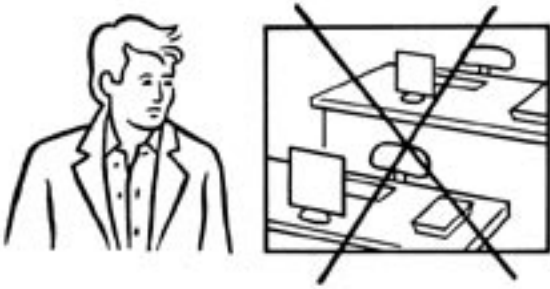


Professionals write reports about parents. These reports get talked about in meetings and in court. Parents need help to understand what is being said about their family in reports.



Parents can be very scared and very confused by the child protection system. Sometimes they get very angry about what is being said about them.

How advocates help parents



Advocates are independent. This means they are separate from services.



They help parents understand what has been written about them in reports or said about them in meetings.



Advocates help parents to think about what is being said about them and what they would like to say.



They help parents to speak up for themselves in meetings. They can also speak up for parents if parents want them to. Advocates also support parents in court.

What parents say about their advocate



Parents say that advocates help them to understand what is going on. They explain the long words and make sure that they understand what is being said about them. Advocates will explain things to parents in lots of different ways until they understand.



Parents say having an advocate with them makes them feel less scared or angry. Parents are more likely to speak up for themselves if they have an advocate. Their advocate can remind them what they want to say.



Parents say that advocates know when things are going wrong with the way they are being treated.



Parents say that having an advocate makes other professionals treat them with more respect.

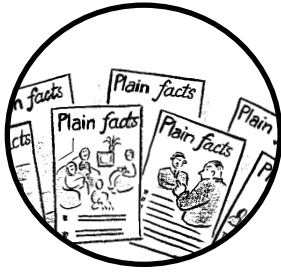


Parents say they like having an advocate. They spend a lot of time with them. Advocates listen to parents and do not judge them. Having an advocate helps parents to feel better and more confident.



Parents like it when their advocacy service runs a group for parents to get together and talk about their problems. This also makes them feel better. Parents can support and learn from each other.

Things to do



You can look at the other Plain Facts about being a parent. These are **Plain Facts 11, 38 and 47.**



You could join a self advocacy group to learn how to speak up for yourself.



If you are a parent, you could find out if there are any services to help parents in your area. You could ring your Community Learning Difficulties Team.



You could contact CHANGE about their work to make things better for parents.



You can contact CHANGE on:

0 1 1 3 2 4 3 0 2 0 2



or go to **www.changepeople.co.uk**

About the project



Beth Tarleton found out about two advocacy services that help parents speak up when they are involved in child protection.



Beth spoke to parents who had an advocate as well as the advocates themselves and other professionals involved with the parents.



The parents from the Walsall Parents advocacy group helped Beth write this Plain Facts.



You can get a summary of the findings from the project free from the Norah Fry Research Centre. You can phone them on **0 1 1 7 3 3 1 0 9 8 7**



or download the summary at **www.bristol.ac.uk/norahfry/online.html**

www.plain-facts.co.uk



Plain Facts aims to make the findings of research easier to understand. For more information contact the Plain Facts Team Norah Fry Research Centre University of Bristol 3 Priory Road Bristol BS8 1TX ☎ 0117 331 0987
Illustrations: Vali Herzer valiherzer@amsolve.com Design: Karen Gyde Audio: Redweather Productions ☎ 0117 941 5854

You can photocopy Plain Facts, or pass it on to anyone you know