

Advocacy at Child Protection Conferences – Referral Criteria

Purpose for advocacy referral:

Advocacy is about speaking up for children and young people and helping them take part in decisions that affect their lives. It involves making sure their rights are respected, and their views and wishes are heard and listened to. Advocacy can help children and young people decide what they want child protection conferences to know about their life at home. It is not a substitute for good social work practice and neither does it negate the crucial role social workers and others have in speaking up for children and protecting their rights. The Advocate is there just for the young person and focuses exclusively on their wishes and feelings / voice.

Criteria – You can make a referral if:

- The child / young person's voice is absent or weak
- A child / young person feels misrepresented
- Parents aren't allowing their child to engage with the social worker
- A case is in proceedings and the child / young person would like to voice their views independently
- A child / young person wants to attend the meeting with support to speak for themselves.

The Advocate will not attend ICPCs but will work with children once they have been made the subject of a Child Protection Plan.; however, the service aims to be flexible and responsive to individual need and so where necessary requests for work with children before Initial Child Protection Conferences and core group meetings will be considered.

The child (if old enough) and parent(s) must give their consent for Advocacy to take place. This consent needs to be obtained by the Social Worker prior to the referral.

The Advocate takes no part in the decision making in the Child Protection Conference as they are the voice of the child.

Role of advocate: The Advocate will meet with the child before the child protection meetings and work with them to ensure their voice is captured independently, they will then support the child if they are old enough to attend the meeting or they will present on behalf of the child if they are not able to attend the meeting.

- **To contact Wokingham's Children's Rights and Advocacy Officer please email childrensadvocacy@wokingham.gov.uk**