



Assessment Report
Quality Performance Mark
Disability Advice Service Lambeth

a National Development Team for **Inclusion** programme



Recognising quality
in independent advocacy

an  NDTi Programme

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Executive Summary

1.1 Overview of QPM

Advocacy is taking action to support people to say what they want, secure their rights, pursue their interests and obtain services they need. Advocacy providers and Advocates work in partnership with the people they support and take their side, promoting social inclusion, equality and social justice.

Based on the principles of the [Advocacy Charter](#), the Quality Performance Mark (QPM) is a quality assessment and assurance system for providers of independent advocacy in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Used by many organisations as a development tool, the QPM framework and Assessment Workbook supports organisations to think about and improve the advocacy they provide alongside the policies and procedures that support advocates to deliver the best person-centred services they can.

Working towards and achieving the QPM:

- Helps people who need advocacy services to identify organisations in their areas which will be able to support them well
- Enables independent advocacy providers to demonstrate and promote their commitment and ability to provide high quality advocacy
- Offers commissioners of advocacy services some reassurance that a QPM-accredited provider is robust and focused on ensuring delivery of quality services.

1.2 Overview of Assessment

The QPM assessment process includes a 'desktop' review of:

- A completed Assessment Workbook
- Key organisational policies and procedures
- Anonymised case files

On successful completion of the desktop review, a QPM Assessor visits the organisation and conducts a series of interviews with key staff and stakeholders.

This Assessment Report has been prepared for [Disability Advice Service Lambeth](#) following completion of all stages of the QPM assessment process, culminating in the site visit conducted by [Nicola Youens](#) on **27th November 2018**.

The assessor reviewed delivery of Care Act Advocacy and Professional Advocacy across Lambeth. At the time of visiting [Disability Advice Service Lambeth](#) there were **3 advocates** including the team leader providing these services.

The assessor concluded that it is an excellent service that has advanced practitioners who independently challenge. They work supportively with professionals to ensure the rights of

people are upheld. Advocates receive appropriate support including around best practice when supporting people that cannot consent to advocacy or lack capacity on many aspects about their needs and support planning.

1.3 Areas of good practice

- Independence – it is evident that the advocates demonstrate independence and actively challenge decisions in a supportive, assertive way to support people’s rights.
- Clarity of Purpose – the team have an excellent understanding of the advocacy role including an advanced vision of non-instructed advocacy. Their ability to communicate their role and remit to professionals effectively was also evident.
- Confidentiality – advocates are clear on how to maintain confidentiality and have an excellent understanding on how and when to gain consent to disclose information balancing a person’s rights to confidentiality against legal duties to report if they are concerned about a person’s safety or others, or for certain crimes.
- Safeguarding – the team have an excellent understanding of legislation and best practice including how to support a person to ensure any safeguarding interventions are person-centred. It is evident they are effectively identifying and responding to concerns.
- Person-led and Empowerment – these are clearly advanced practitioners that are able to support people to lead the advocacy process, be in control of decisions about their lives as much as possible and ensure that decisions for people that may lack capacity remain person-centred.
- Equality and Diversity – it clear that they are prioritising effectively and reaching many people that cannot request advocacy themselves. They regularly review the demographics and ensure they address gaps in provision.
- Accountability – it is clear that the Board of Trustees and chief executive have a really good understanding of advocacy and the issues affecting the service in order to govern effectively.
- Supporting Advocates – advocates clearly receive excellent advice and support to progress complex cases from their line manager. Advocates receive regular supervision and access training where required and report that they feel supported in their roles. It is clear that the manager is an expert in advocacy including non-instructed, which is excellent to see in a non-IMCA service. There were numerous examples of where they have challenged practice to uphold people’s rights in a constructive and collaborative manner showing their independence in practice.

1.4 Areas for improvement

- The manager would like to develop how the service utilises the outcome data that they currently collate to ensure this is used to consistently demonstrate the impact of the independent advocacy support being provided. The advocacy service is

continuing to work alongside the other organisations with which it delivers the Independent Living and Carers Partnership to strengthen its outcome recording.

1.5 Assessor's recommendations

We are pleased to recommend that Disability Advice Service Lambeth be re-awarded the Advocacy QPM for a period of three years from December 2018.

1.6 Disability Advice Service Lambeth's response to the Assessment Report

"We are absolutely delighted to be re-awarded the Advocacy QPM and for the very positive feedback that we received from our assessor, Nicola Youens.

We are very proud of our advocacy service and the high standards which we achieve consistently. To have this recognised by the NDTi is really valuable to us. We are especially pleased with the complimentary feedback we received in relation to our non-instructed advocacy support which we continuously seek to strengthen and develop.

At the time our first QPM was awarded in 2015 we had only recently been commissioned by Lambeth Council as the provider for independent advocacy under the Care Act duty. Over the three years since, demand for our support has increased greatly but our service has developed to meet this new challenge and it is both reassuring and encouraging to the team that the quality of the work we do has, again, been assessed so positively. We feel that this success also demonstrates the value of our advocacy service being an integral part of a local Disabled People's Organisation which can provide our advocacy clients with additional support and services in a holistic way".

We would like to thank Nicola for the time she invested in our assessment and for her thorough approach; it was a pleasure to meet her."



Summary of Assessment

2.1 About Disability Advice Service Lambeth (Disability Advice Service Lambeth)

Disability Advice Service Lambeth is a Disabled People's organisation which works with disabled people including those with mental health needs, older people and care across the London Borough of Lambeth. They provide Care Act advocacy and professional advocacy to people with a range of support needs. They provide information, advice, support with direct payments and various other projects e.g. hate crime. They have had a presence in the borough for many years. They work in partnership with other providers to make up the Independent Living and Carers Partnership (ILCP). Lambeth Council commission the ILCP to deliver advocacy services. They have previously held the Quality Performance Mark and have been re-assessed.

2.2 The Assessment Team

Nicola Youens was the lead assessor for this assessment. She has worked in the field of advocacy for the 11 years. She was the Head of Quality and Safeguarding for a national multi-site advocacy provider (VoiceAbility) for 7 years. Previously, she managed a range of advocacy services including IMCA, RPR, Care Act Advocacy, IMHA, NHS Complaints. The majority of the advocacy she has delivered herself is in a secure mental health hospital as an IMHA. She has conducted various assessments for small, medium and large advocacy organisations.

2.3 Approach to QPM Assessment

Nicola Youens carried out both the desktop assessment and site visit for Disability Advice Service Lambeth. The desktop assessment included review of:

- The completed Assessment Workbook
- 5 anonymised case files

Together with a detailed review of the following documents:

- Prioritisation Policy
- Non-instructed Advocacy Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Engagement Protocol
- Confidentiality Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Other documents viewed include;

- A selection of leaflets and marketing materials
- Information on the website
- Referral form
- Annual Report

During the site visit, the assessor undertook a series of interviews with the following people:

- Advocacy Team Leader
- Board Member
- 2 Service Users
- Chief Executive
- 2 advocates
- Safeguarding Lead from Lambeth Council



Summary of Findings

This section provides a summary of some of the findings against each of the themes that are set out in the Advocacy Charter and form the structure for the Quality Performance Mark. It does not seek to comment on each individual quality indicator that sits beneath each standard.

3.1 Independence

The Advocacy Provider is independent from statutory organisations and all other service delivery and is free from conflict of interest, both in design and operation of advocacy services. The Advocacy Provider's culture supports Advocates to promote their independence with individuals, professionals and other stakeholders;

Advocates will be free from influence and conflict of interest so that they can represent the person for whom they advocate.


- Disability Advice Service Lambeth constituted as an independent organisation with Charities Commission and Companies House.
- It is clear that the board of trustees together with the Chief Executive ensure that the services meet the objectives set out in the governing documents and representatives of funding bodies and/or care providers are not involved in board meetings or decisions making nor have any voting rights. Likewise, they do not have a say in any staff performance issues.
- They have a clear Conflict of Interest policy and there is a system embedded in the Board of Trustees meetings to identify and manage conflicts of interest. It is clear from talking with the managers that conflict of interest that present themselves in advocacy practice are also identified and managed appropriately.
- The service has clear publicity materials and website outlining their independence.
- This independence was described by the service user that were interviewed and by the Safeguarding Lead from Lambeth Council.
- It is clear from the examples the manager and advocates provided that they are excellent at understanding legislation and best practice and constructively raise concerns and challenge decisions where appropriate.
- The Safeguarding Lead for Lambeth, who clearly knows the service and manager well, described them as “knowing the situation and the person, and they hold people to account”.
- This is an organisation that is a beacon to demonstrate to other advocacy providers how independence and challenge can be achieved through clear and supportive relationships with other professionals avoiding unnecessary confrontation.

- The organisation has specific paperwork for non-instructed advocacy action planning, outcome setting and checklists which supports their independence when working on behalf of someone that cannot instruct the advocate.
- They have an advocacy handbook which supports advocates to be independent.
- The team work closely together talking through complex cases on a day to day basis in addition to supervision to ensure they are maintaining their independence and supporting people's rights.
- The organisation secures funding from various sources to reduce the reliance on one main funder.
- There is commitment at Board level to understanding and effective governance of the advocacy service. This allows the board to ensure all advocates are in line with the aims of the organisation.
- From talking with managers and the trustee, it sounds like there is a robust decision-making process which is overseen by the board of trustees.
- The board of trustees are kept up to date on the progress of the advocacy service and seek clarification where needed on a monthly basis.
- It is clear from talking with the advocates about their practice that they do not feel or act in any way that suggests they have to compromise their independence when representing people particularly when raising concerns with the local authorities about their support they are receiving.
- The Chief Executive and chair have a thorough understanding of the need to protect and promote the independence of the service.

3.2 Clarity of Purpose



Advocacy Providers ensure that the individuals they advocate for, referrers, health and social care services and funding agencies all receive information that helps them understand the advocacy service and the role of the advocate, including its benefits and boundaries.

The Advocacy Providers objectives and activities must align with the principles set out in this Charter. 

- The staff and manager have an excellent understanding of the role of advocacy including an extremely advanced vision of non-instructed advocacy for a non-IMCA service.
- They are effective in building relations with different stakeholders, so that stakeholders understand who would benefit from advocacy and when to refer. This is evident by the number of non-instructed advocacy cases they have.

- Their advocacy handbook supports advocates to embed the Advocacy Code of Practice in their work.
- They monitor the trends and demands and work collaboratively with commissioners and heads of services within Lambeth to ensure issues are addressed and unmet need is considered.
- As an information and advice centre with a prominent profile in the borough, they have excellent connections with other services and appropriately refer where possible.
- They take a very holistic view of the support they provide ensuring that people receive as much support from one worker to avoid the service user having to work with various advocates or workers. This holistic model, quite rightly, supports people to look at all aspects of their life and supports them to access support where they need it.
- The service has developed accessible documents to outline the role of advocacy in consultation with service users.

3.3 Confidentiality



Information held by the advocacy service about individuals will be kept confidential to the advocacy service. The Advocacy Provider will have a Confidentiality Policy that reflects current legislation. It will be clear about how personal information held by the Advocacy Provider will be kept confidential, under what circumstances it may be shared, the organisation's approach to confidentiality in the delivery of Non-Instructed Advocacy and how the organisation responds if confidentiality is breached.

Advocates will ensure that information concerning the people they advocate for is shared with these individuals unless there are exceptional circumstances, when a clear explanation will be recorded.

Advocates must also be aware of situations that require making a child or adult safeguarding alert. 

- The organisation has a robust Confidentiality Policy in place that is up to date and is clearly embedded in practice. This is further supported by the updated NIA policy.
- Advocates were clear how to maintain confidentiality and when they need to breach confidentiality.
- They are clear that they need to get consent to share information and where they might need to share information without the person's consent.
- It was evident they have an excellent understanding of the Mental Capacity Act and when to make best interests to decide when to share, obtain information or withhold information about a person who lacks capacity to instruct an advocate.

- Their Non-Instructed Advocacy Policy is excellent - clear, concise, comprehensive and user-friendly.

3.4 Safeguarding



As part of supporting people to realise their Human Rights, the Advocacy Provider will have a thorough understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and processes as set out in law and best practice guidance.

The Advocacy Provider will have clear, up to date policies and procedures in place to ensure safeguarding issues are identified and acted upon.

Advocates support people to have their rights upheld and will be supported to understand and recognise different forms of abuse and neglect, issues relating to confidentiality and what to do if they suspect an individual is at risk.




- Advocates and their manager have an in-depth knowledge of safeguarding legislation and best practice and it is evident they identify and effectively respond to concerns in a person-centred manner.
- Advocates receive training and coaching to keep them up-to-date and their safeguarding policies are robust. Staff were clear on what action to take if they are concerned and it sounds like a supportive environment to discuss their concerns.
- They have an excellent understanding of the Mental Capacity Act, Care Act and Making Safeguarding Personal. This is enhanced by the manager supporting a sub-committee of the Lambeth Safeguarding Adult Board.
- The manager is active in gathering feedback about what people's understanding of abuse is as well as developing easy read documents to explain what abuse and safeguarding is.
- They have a clear process in place that reports to the local authority concerns, confirms their receipt and communicates the outcomes the person wants, where possible.
- They work with safeguarding professionals to ensure an appropriate protection plan is in place.
- They have excellent working relations with the local safeguarding managers and practitioners which supports their practice and resolve any concerns or themes that are identified. They have on occasion followed their escalate policy where they have felt an inappropriate response to the safeguarding concern was identified.
- They track and monitor all safeguarding concerns so they can take appropriate action.

3.5 Person Led and Empowerment



Person led - The Advocacy Provider and Advocates will put the people they advocate for first, ensuring that they are directed by their wishes and interests. Advocates will be non-judgmental and respectful of people's needs, views, culture and experiences.

Empowerment - The Advocacy Provider will support people to self-advocate as far as possible, creating and supporting opportunities for self-advocacy, empowerment and enablement. Advocates support people to access information to exercise choice and control in their lives and the decisions affecting them.

People will choose their own level of involvement and the style of advocacy support they want. Where people lack capacity to influence the service, the Advocacy Provider will ensure the advocacy remains person led and enable those with an interest in the welfare of the person to be involved. People receiving advocacy will be involved in the wider activities of the organisation up to and including the Board. 

- Disability Advice Service Lambeth is a membership organisation with over 350 members and people that have used the service are active in shaping the services.
- For example, a significant proportion of these members attended workshops to shape the organisation's strategy.
- They work alongside People First to consult service users and access user forums via their Direct Payments and Hate Crime projects to evaluate and develop the advocacy service.
- It is clear from the examples the advocates gave and talking with two service users that they support people to identify what outcomes they want to achieve, support them to understand the pros and cons of each option, and support them to feel in control of their life.
- The manager supports advocates to continually review the progress of cases as well as during supervision to ensure cases are reviewed regularly.
- Advocates were clear when and how to close cases with the people they support including for those complex cases and non-instructed advocacy.
- The advocates explained how they support the person to identify the specific issues they want support with and support them to capture outcomes as much as possible.
- The manager wants to focus some of her attention on how the service captures outcomes so that more outcomes are captured.
- The discussion with the Safeguarding Lead of Lambeth Council illustrated how advocates remain focussed on the needs of the person e.g. stopping the meeting to help the person decide on what action they want to take next, asking what the least restrictive option is, and asking practitioners to balance rights and risks.

3.6 Equality, diversity and accessibility



The Advocacy Provider will have an up to date Equality and Diversity Policy that recognises the need to be pro-active in tackling all forms of inequality, discrimination and social exclusion so that all people are treated fairly. Advocates time will be allocated equitably.


Advocates make reasonable adjustments to ensure people have appropriate opportunity to engage, direct and benefit from the advocacy activity.

Advocacy will be provided free of charge to eligible people. The Advocacy Provider will ensure that its premises (where appropriate), policies, procedures and publicity materials promote full access for the population that it serves. Advocates will provide information and use language that is easy to understand and accessible to the person.




- The advocacy service has an excellent profile across the borough which ensures referrals are made. In addition, they have a central accessible office.
- The manager supports the service to deliver advocacy where a contingency plan is required.
- All staff receive a raft of training including equality and diversity training to embed their policies.
- The service users reported they found referring to the service easy as did the professionals that were interviewed.
- The manager keeps abreast of the demographic information of the service users so they can address any gaps in provision.
- A significant proportion of their work is non-instructed advocacy which demonstrated they are receiving referrals from professionals for those people that are eligible for the service.
- Outreach and awareness is undertaken where necessary and reasonable adjustments put in place to support the service.
- The team clearly work collaboratively with other professionals to identify how best to communicate with people with limited communication, requesting information from Speech and Language Therapists and asking for communication passports.

3.7 Accountability


 *The Advocacy Provider is well managed, with appropriate governance arrangements in place, meeting its obligations as a legally constituted organisation.*

People accessing the service will have a named Advocate and a means of contacting them. The Advocacy Provider will have systems in place for effective recording, monitoring and evaluation of its work, including identification of the impact of the advocacy service and outcomes for people supported. In addition, it will be accountable to people who use its services by obtaining and responding to feedback and complaints.

The Advocacy Provider will address systemic issues in health and social care provision or other services. 

- Each person has a named advocate and it is clearly communicated how to make complaints about the service.
- Clear and useful information is provided to commissioners to identify trends and address gaps in service provision.
- The manager explained that all referrals are responded to within a couple of days and are prioritised appropriately.
- They work with people that use the service to gather information about their experience of the service and whether they have achieved their outcomes.
- The manager has an excellent understanding of the types of issues they are supporting people on and provides information to the board of trustees on the impact and outcomes of the advocacy work.
- The manager and the Chief Executive meet every couple of months with the 2 key Heads of Services for Lambeth Council. These professionals have fed back how useful these meetings are as it provides them with intelligence on themes and patterns about the services they commissioner and manage. It also helps them to know whether they are currently gaps in services that people require.

3.8 Supporting Advocates

 *The Advocacy Provider will ensure that Advocates are suitably trained, supported and supervised in their role and provided with opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, including access to legal advice where necessary.*

It will create a supportive culture that enables Advocates to undertake their role in line with this Charter. 

- It is clear that the advocacy manager and the advocates work closely often discussing complex cases and advocacy dilemmas.

- They are advanced practitioners with an extremely experience, skilled, knowledge and supportive manager.
- They have regular supervision and are supported with various tools such as the advocacy handbook and non-instructed advocacy checklist.
- The advocates are qualified to certificate level and the manager is qualified to diploma level. Advocates report they feel supported and enjoy working in Disability Advice Service Lambeth.
- There is a range of training available e.g. via Inclusion London, Kings College, covering a range of topics e.g. Human Rights Act, Mental Capacity Act, Dementia, etc.
- It has been a pleasure to meet such a dedicated, passionate team that are clearly delivering excellent advocacy including non-instructed advocacy and ensuring people's rights are, in fact, upheld.



Further information

Further information about the QPM and the resources and key documents noted in this report can be viewed on the website here www.qualityadvocacy.org.uk.

Should you wish to discuss this report in further detail, please contact the QPM Support Team or Awards Manager at:

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