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# Lanesend Primary School Advocates and Independent Visitors Policy

## Safeguarding and Welfare of Children Policy

Signed: ..... Date:  
(Headteacher)

Signed: ..... Date:  
(Chair of Governors)

**Review Date:** April 2021 (Every 5 Years)

**Reviewed By:** Headteacher, Family Wellbeing Team and  
Child-Centred Group

# Lanesend Primary School

## Advocates and Independent Visitors Policy

We support our children to have a voice and welcome independent advocates and visitors into the school for advice, information and support. We believe children have an intrinsic worth irrespective of race, language, religion, disability, gender or sexuality. Our children have the right to be seen, heard and listened to and for their wishes and feelings to be given due weight. Our children should be given opportunities to be heard in judicial and administrative processes concerning them.

### Article 12 of the UN convention on the rights of the child

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Advocates and independent visitors can be provided for children who are:

- in care (up to age 18)
- eligible care leavers (up to the age of 21)
- taking part in Family Group Conferences

### Providing independent visitor services for children in care:

Paragraph 17 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to appoint an independent visitor in respect of any child they are looking after if they believe that it would be in a child's best interest and communication between the child and his parent has been infrequent, or of poor quality.

Children & Young Peoples Act 2008 will changes criteria to all children in care, if it is in their best interests.

### What is advocacy?

Advocacy is the process of one person helping another to represent their views and to speak "as if." An advocate enables the child either to say what they want to say themselves or represent the issues and views on behalf of the child, after ensuring that they have been fully briefed and understand the issues. (ie their rights and responsibilities).

### Advocacy - what it is NOT

- A long term supportive, "mentoring" relationship
- Led by notions of what is "best" for the young person

- A decision-making role

### **Advocacy – How it works**

**It is a** confidential service to children. Information will only be shared with others if we have the child's permission. Child protection concerns are always shared within recognised policy and procedure. We work on the wishes and feelings of the young person, not a "best interests" approach. **It is a child-led approach.** We are honest and realistic with our children as to what can be achieved by advocacy intervention. We will support professionals to try to resolve issues on an informal level using negotiation and mediation skills with the children and professionals involved. If the child has made a complaint, we will support the child's emotional need. .

### **Independent Visitors – What do we mean?**

- Someone who visits regularly – once a month
- A long term befriender: a minimum of 2 years
- Independent from social care
- Someone who creates and shares new experiences – and has FUN!

### **Independent Visitors – Who are they?**

- Lay people/Volunteers
- Recruited, trained and supported by the local project following Safer Recruitment guidelines. As a regular visitor to our school, we would complete our own DBS checks.

### **They aim to:**

- befriend, support, advise, encourage, and offer friendship on a 1-1 basis
- spend time JUST with the child
- focus only on the child's needs

As a school, we would fully support independent visitors, but ensure safeguarding procedures are followed at all times.

### **Making a referral for advocacy or an independent visitor**

- Gain the consent of the child to make a referral and work with the child's social worker and meet with the advocate or independent visitor prior to meeting with the child.
- Referrals can be made by anybody: e.g. young people, professionals, foster carers, RSW's etc.
- Criteria for access to service needs to be met: looked after, care leaver, etc.
- Referrals should be made to the NYAS Helpline
- ALL Referrals go through the NYAS helpline - 0800 616101
- All records will be kept in the child's child protection file.