



Advocacy Prioritisation of Referrals Policy

Name of Policy:	Advocacy Prioritisation Policy
Distribution:	For internal and external use Internal – all Advocacy staff External – tendering, commissioning, inspection and audit
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Location of Policy:	Help & Care Healthwatch West Sussex C/O Help & Care A49 Aerodrome Studios Christchurch Dorset BH23 3TS
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Links to other Policy and Procedures:	Mental Capacity Act

1.1 Policy Statement

Help & Care acknowledges the importance of responding, allocating and making contact with people as soon as reasonably practicable. This policy seeks to uphold the person's rights; ensure fair and equal treatment and access to services. It is recognised that an advocacy partnership, where appropriate, starts within reasonable timescales.

This policy, and its supporting standards and work instruction, are fully endorsed by the Board through the production of these documents.

I trust that all staff, partners and other relevant parties will, therefore ensure that these are observed in order that we may contribute to the achievements of Help & Care's objectives.

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1.2 Summary

This policy sets out

- Our timescales for responding to referrals
- Our criteria for determining which referrals are eligible
- Which eligible referrals have priority
- How we manage eligible referrals that have a lower priority

1.3 Scope of the document

This policy applies to all non-instructed advocacy carried out by Help & Care. Additional, service specific operational requirements may be found in our Advocacy Service Specification.

1.4 Policy

Help & Care is transparent about who it can help, and when. We are committed to responding quickly and fairly to those who are eligible for our services. We recognise that there may be times when not all of those who are in principle eligible for our services can be helped, for example at times of very high demand, or staff shortages. We will have a fair system for deciding which referrals will take priority at these times, and how we will explain our decisions to those whose needs are adjudged to be a lower priority.

1.5 Referral Response Times

Help & Care will acknowledge referrals within 2 working days. Where the referral is assessed as requiring the allocation of an advocate, the advocate will be identified, and contact made within 5 working days.

1.5.1 Determining Eligibility for Advocacy

The Lead advocate triages new referrals to the organisation and will assess their eligibility against the criteria set out in the Service Agreement Contract. They will advise the referrer whether their referral is eligible. Where a referral is eligible, the Lead advocate will allocate directly to an advocate, according to the project pathway.

In all cases where eligibility cannot immediately be established, the Lead advocate will escalate the matter to the Healthwatch Manager for review.

1.6 Sign Posting and Unmet Need

If a referral does not fit the core criteria for a service or the issue is not suitable for advocacy, then every attempt should be made by the Advocacy Team and Hub to signpost them to another agency that can assist/support. The Team will hold information on other local services and ensure this is regularly updated. This unmet need will be recorded on the CRM database and is fed back to commissioners & funders as part of the relevant quarterly contract monitoring report.