

Summary Report to BCBC Scrutiny Committee October 2018

Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA) Activities from MHM Wales

Sample of the issues referred to IPA:	IPA support given:
Issues	Examples
Engaging with Social Services	Care Assessments, OT Assessments
Disputes with Landlord	Inappropriate action taken by landlords, repairs to accommodation
Help with benefits	ESA, JSA, PIP, attending Tribunals
Help with Correspondence	Letters, bills, forms
Identifying & supporting clients to attend local Support Groups	Coffee Groups, MHM Wales Wellbeing Hubs, Gofal HUB
Assistance with medical appointments	Accompanying clients to GP & Hospital appointments
Child Protection cases	Assisting parents going through Child Protection process, attending LAC & Child Conferences meetings
Identifying and supporting clients to attend reading & writing courses	Basic Skills courses at Bridgend College
Helping clients with decision to move into a care home	Arranging and visiting Care Homes with client
Arranging for clients to meet professionals to draft up Wills and LPOA	Contacting Solicitors on behalf of client. Supporting clients in understanding process & documentation

IPA Case Studies

Case Study 1

Independent Professional Advocates (IPAs) have provided advocacy support to parent carers in a number of Child Protection cases.

One of these cases involved supporting the Dad through the Child Protection process. IPA provided advocacy support to Dad in meetings with his solicitor, local authority and finally in court. At this point in time, Dad was back in a steady relationship with the mother of the child. The mother had support from an independent advocate from a different organisation.

Dad was first referred to our IPA services by Gofal in August 2017, asking for support for Dad whilst attending upcoming meetings with Social Services over his then unborn child.

Dad has a learning disability and mental health issues.

IPA has supported Dad to understand his rights and options, how the child protection process works, and to reflect on the reasons why the social services are concerned about the safety of the child.

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Dad stated that he wished his after the birth the child be placed with him and his partner.

IPA supported Dad by preparing him for the many different meetings, such as Child Protection Conference meetings, Core Group meetings, LAC review meetings. Prior to these meetings, IPA would meet with Dad and talk about what was going to happen and if he had any concerns/issues to raise in the meetings. After the meetings IPA talked to him about what was said and what happens next. As Dad has a learning disability IPA helped him to understand the process and outcomes of meetings by providing information in an easy read format.

Baby X was born in January and placed with a Foster Carer by the Local Authority.

The first child protection meeting was held in January, with various meetings in between until the Final Court Hearing in the summer.

IPA supported Dad to attend meetings with his Solicitor and Barrister up to the Final Court Hearing over a number of days. IPA supported Dad during the Court Hearing by providing practical and emotional support. IPA would meet him in the morning before the hearing and talk about what was going to happen and again at the end of day to talk about what was said. On the final day, IPA explained to him what the possible outcomes were and about how the Judge would sum up the case and make a judgement.

The Judge made the decision that Baby X be placed with birth parents with a Rehabilitation Plan in place.

This is the outcome that Dad (and his partner) wanted. At first, Dad didn't understand what the Judge had said but once he realised he was delighted and gave the IPA a hug in the Court Room.

Case Status:

IPA still providing advocacy support to Dad during the Rehabilitation Plan period but the good news is that everything is fine and all the professionals involved with the Rehabilitation Plan are happy with how things are progressing.

In accordance with Rehabilitation Plan, Baby X is being introduced to his parents gradually, increasingly spending more time with them rather than with the Foster Carer. The plan is for Baby X to go home permanently in October.

Due to his quiet nature and because of his learning disability and mental health issues, the IPA believes that without advocacy support Dad would have struggled to understand the proceedings and would have found it a very stressful process which would have affected his mental wellbeing which may in turn have affected the outcome of the Court decision.

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Case Study 2

Client: 'R' (not real name) Age Range: 40-45 Gender: Male

Reason for referral: Engage with Social Services

Barriers faced: Understand relevant information, obtaining relevant information, advice & assistance

Background

R went to a Friendship Coffee Group asking for help. MHM colleague, overseeing the Group, took him aside and he agreed to be referred to our IPA service. A MHMWales IPA contacted R and arranged initial meeting. An IPA visited R at his home. At this initial meeting, the IPA listened to R and explained their role. A referral form was completed and a follow up meeting was arranged to go through Client Information and further identify his needs and how IPA could help him.

Support given by Advocate

August 2017

Psychiatrist appointment – IPA arranged to support R in attending an appointment with his psychiatrist at hospital. On the day, IPA went to pick him up, but he said he could not go to appointment, he had been worrying about it and his anxiety had just got worse thinking about going. IPA explained the possible consequences of not going. R still could not face going. IPA phoned the hospital to explain the situation and to re-arrange another appointment.

September

Medical appointment – IPA arranged to support R in attending appointment in the hospital. IPA picked him up and R told IPA he had been very anxious about going to the hospital and probably would not have gone on his own. IPA sat with R during the meeting with his Consultant who carried out an examination and recommended a CT Scan. R was not happy about this but IPA asked questions about the procedure to try and reduce his anxiety. Eventually, R agreed to attend for a CT Scan. After the meeting with the Consultant, R and IPA sat and talked, over a coffee, about the meeting and the CT Scan.

October

CT Scan - IPA had arranged to support R in attending a CT Scan in the hospital. On the day, IPA went to pick him up but he said he could not go to appointment, he had been worrying about it and had not taken the medication he was meant to take before the CT Scan. IPA talked to him to try and alleviate any fears he may have about the procedure. In the end he decided not to attend. IPA phoned the hospital to explain the situation.

November

Social Services Referral – During the early meetings with R, he asked about being referred to Social Services but was worried because he had a bad experience in the past. IPA talked with him about his past experience and tried to reassure him about engaging with Social Services

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again. R agreed to complete a referral form, which IPA completed with him and sent on his behalf. Social Services contacted IPA to say the referral form had been received and asked what support he needs. IPA explained his situation and areas where Social Services might help. Social Services identified an independent support service in Bridgend.

Sycamore Project - Social Services referred R to Sycamore. A representative from Sycamore had an initial meeting with R. R cancelled two further appointments.

December

Energy Bills – R asked IPA to help him understand his utility bill which in total for 3 months was over £300. He said he cannot afford this. He asked IPA to contact his energy supplier on his behalf. Before contacting the supplier, IPA talked to R about energy consumption, etc, and explained that they might want to speak to him. IPA contacted the supplier and explained the situation. IPA then encouraged R to talk to them on the phone to discuss his options. R was on the phone for approx. 40mins and agreed to sign up for Direct Debit and the supplier agreed to send information about the different tariffs available and information on the subsidised “Warm Homes” scheme.

R had been referred to an independent food delivery service for a short trial. However, R insists that no one came to his door on the days agreed, but he still received an invoice. The IPA contacted the service on his behalf and explained the situation. The IPA asked about the complaints procedure and then helped R to write a letter disputing this payment. The IPA also wrote a supporting letter on his behalf. Eventually R heard from the food service who had agreed to waive this payment.

January 2018

IPA provided R with information on anxiety & depression awareness sessions.
IPA referred to him Gambling Telephone Counselling service.
IPA referred him to Gofal’s Out of Hours Support.

Case Status:

February 2018. IPA Case Closed.

Summary of support given:

August 2017 – February 2018

No. of Contacts: 31 (Telephone/Face-to-face)

No. of hours support given: 29