



Parent Partnership Service

What is a Befriender?

You can contact us at:

Parent Partnership Service, PO Box 73, Worcester, WR5 2YA

Tel: 01905 727940 • Fax: 01905 727949 • Email: ppservice@worcestershires.gov.uk

What is a Befriender?

The Special Needs Code of Practice (November 2001) recommends that all parents of children who have special educational needs (SEN) should have access to an Independent Parental Supporter (IPS) if they would like one. In Worcestershire IPS's are called Befrienders and you can access support from a Befriender through the Parent Partnership Service.

Befrienders are volunteers who have had training about special educational needs and know a great deal about legislation, the SEN Code of Practice and the way that the Local Authority (LA) works.

Who might need a Befriender?

Befrienders provide support for parents/carers who have children identified as having SEN. Some children identified as having SEN go through a process of statutory assessment to determine their special educational needs; this can be a very stressful time for families and some parents/carers value the type of support that is provided by a Befriender.

What does a Befriender do?

Befrienders are independent of the decision-making professionals. This means that there will be no conflict of interest that could influence their ability to give you neutral, unbiased information.

A Befriender can:

- Listen to your concerns about your child's education
- Provide information on the assessment process
- Provide information on dealing with schools, the LEA, disagreement resolution services and the SEN and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST)
- Talk through with you the options available for your child
- Help you to fill in forms
- Help you to express your views when you make your contribution to the assessment process
- Attend meetings with you
- Help you in understanding the implications of any objectives that are set out in the statement of SEN
- Tell you where you can get further information on SEN issues

A Befriender does not:

- Make decisions for you
- Tell you what you should do
- Attend meetings or write reports in your absence
- Provide an advocacy service
- Help you with issues unrelated to your child's SEN

How long will the Befriender be able to provide support?

The length and level of support provided by Befrienders varies a great deal. Some parents/carers feel that an initial visit and occasional telephone contact during the assessment process provides the level of support that they need. Other parents/carers need regular visits and ongoing support during the assessment process followed by some further support at the time of the child's annual review.

Our aim is to provide parents/carers with the skills and abilities that will empower them to act for themselves and their children; we do not, therefore, envisage that Befrienders will become long-term supporters. However, we do recognise that, for the minority of families, some ongoing support may be necessary and we will always do our best to provide this either through a Befriender or through support from the Parent Partnership Service staff.

If I feel that I need support, do I have to have a Befriender?

No, you can seek support from whom so ever you choose. You can ask a friend or relative to support you and some voluntary organisations may also be able to provide help.

You could also seek support from someone who works with your child and knows you well. However, if your child is going to have statutory assessment then you should not choose someone who might be involved in the assessment. You need to make sure that the person you choose can give you independent advice.

How can I access a Befriender through Parent Partnership Service?

Telephone or write to the Parent Partnership Officer, who will allocate a Befriender as quickly as possible and arrange for him/her to make contact with you. It would be helpful if you can give brief details of:

- Your child's difficulties
- Whether your child is on School Action or School Action Plus
- Whether or not statutory assessment has been agreed

Are you interested in becoming a Befriender?

What skills does a Befriender need?

You need to be a good listener and have the ability to express yourself both orally and in writing. Counselling and negotiating skills would be an advantage but are not essential. **Most importantly, an enthusiasm for and a commitment to working with families are essential.**

What training is a Befriender given?

There is an initial training course of approximately 20 hours over a period of six to ten weeks. During this time Befrienders will learn a great deal about special educational needs and the assessment process. They will also learn about relevant Government legislation and guidance on special educational needs, and the way the LA works.

Why would I want to become a Befriender?

Many Befrienders are parents/carers of children who have SEN. You might have, or have had experience of, children with SEN, perhaps as part of your work or training. You might like to help someone who needs a sympathetic ear, support and advice. These are just **some** of the reasons why you might like to become a Befriender.

How can I become a Befriender?

You can find out more information about how to become a Befriender by contacting The Parent Partnership Service at the address below. If you are interested we would love to hear from you.

Selection is by reference and interview. Volunteers are required to undergo a police check and must be over 18 years.

For further information about Befrienders or special educational needs please contact:

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Fax: 01905 727949

Email: ppservice@worcestershires.gov.uk

Website: www.ppsworcs.co.uk

Last amended April 2005

This publication can be made available in other languages (including British Sign Language) and alternative formats (including large print, audio tape, computer disc and Braille) on request from Parent Partnership Service on telephone number 01905 727940 or by emailing ppservice@worcestershires.gov.uk

To the best of our knowledge all information is correct at time of printing. December 2008.
(document last amended April 2005)