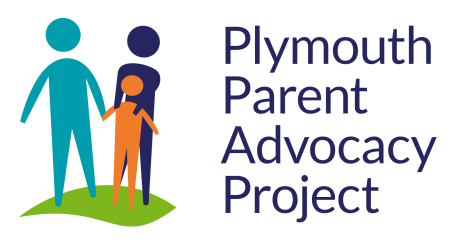
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**The Role of the Parent Advocate**

There are many forms and definitions of Advocacy.

In general an advocate assists a person to express their views to someone who will make a decision which affects his/her life.

When applied in a child protection context, **without compromising the safety of the** **child**, the core goal of advocacy is twofold:

* **to empower parents to participate in the child protection process from an informed position, speaking for themselves wherever possible, and**
* **to promote good communication, and a positive working relationship, between the parents and the local authority**

Advocates perform a wide range of tasks including the following:

* Developing a trusting relationship with the parent so as to be able to support them effectively through the process
* Supporting the parent to engage with the local authority
* Giving the parent information about the legal and practice framework and their rights within it
* Helping the parent to clarify the specific concerns about their child, and how these can be resolved to the satisfaction of the local authority
* Supporting the parent to obtain specialist advice about the range of options open to them, the likely consequences of choosing a particular course of action, and thereafter helping them to formulate their views
* Presenting their views and needs either by supporting them to express themselves to the local authority (for example helping them to prepare for meetings), or by presenting their views and needs (either verbally or in writing) on their behalf
* Helping parents to identify their needs and the services they require to meet their needs when additional services may be required over and above advice, advocacy and support in relation to the child protection case
* Challenging the local authority’s view on their behalf where it appears unreasonable to the parent

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