

SEND Butterflies South Coast Advocacy Policy



Policy Principles

SEND Butterflies South Coast is committed to providing the best support possible to parent carers of young people with special educational needs and disabilities as well as all unpaid carers of adults. It demonstrates an on-going commitment to supporting the community and those in need as well as person-centered and personalised outcomes for individuals by:

- Ensuring individuals can access and make best use of information and resources which SEND Butterflies South Coast can offer, other services and organisations and broader support networks in the community.
- Enabling and empowering individuals to make their own choices, in the best interests of themselves and their family, and to determine their own preferred outcomes in relation to education, care and Local Authority support.

This policy sets the framework for delivery of peer and citizen advocacy support provided by SEND Butterflies South Coast. It is intended to support the committee of volunteers and any group supporters in their person-centered practice and to secure personalised outcomes by helping individuals, their families, friends and/or carers to:

- Speak up for, or act on behalf of, themselves or another person,
- Take action to say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests,
- Contribute their views, opinions, ideas and feelings to inform processes for continuous service improvement.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all SEND Butterflies South Coast volunteers, both committee and group supporters, and the people they support via the activities provided by the community group.

SEND Butterflies South Coast are not a paid or professional advocacy service. The committee and group supporters give their time voluntarily to provide both citizen and peer advocacy to others who have similar experiences and circumstances as themselves. Everyone providing voluntary support via the group has direct lived experience of the situations group attendees find themselves in. Our support and guidance is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice or support nor supersede this but rather compliment and improve the access to services which would benefit and assist these individuals.

Definitions

Informal/Peer advocacy

When an individual asks someone they know (such as a family member, friend or carer or someone who has the same disability, illness, condition or circumstances) to speak up or take action for them.

Citizen Advocacy

Where a group of people with similar experiences meet together to put forward shared views.

Peer Advocacy

Where the advocate has experienced the same or similar issues to you and can draw on their own experiences to understand and empathise with you.

Casework/ Community Advocacy

When an individual asks a group of people or an organisation to speak up or take action for them.

Therefore, an advocate can be:

- An individual
- A friend, family member or carer
- A community volunteer
- A person or organisation
- A paid practitioner

Responsibilities

All SEND Butterflies South Coast voluntary supporters are responsible for following this policy and having awareness of the limitations to the support we can offer, as well as ensuring that those individuals we support understand that;

- We are not affiliated with any organisation or service.
- Our support will be guided by the persons desired outcome, not our own opinion.
- We will not make any decisions for individuals but will represent and inform them so that they can make their own decisions.
- The support we offer is based on our direct lived experience, understanding and knowledge of services and relevant acts not on formal or legal training.
- Our time is freely given, and support will be provided around our own and family commitments, which may mean that we are not available on some days or at specific times. It also means that support cannot be guaranteed to be available or provided by the same volunteer.
- We will try to respond to emails and messages received within three working days but, as volunteers with our own personal commitments, it may occasionally take longer than this. An expectation of people requesting our support is to be mindful of this, exercise patience and not badger volunteers.
- Where support is provided to attend meetings, the individual will be encouraged to speak on their own behalf.
- SEND Butterflies South Coast will not run meetings or be the sole speaker, unless this has been explicitly requested and agreed with all parties in advance; we may speak and raise points during a meeting (with the individual's permission) where it is deemed appropriate.
- Any support with written communication or applications will be to guide the individual to complete this for themselves with the exception of those with language barriers or disabilities which make this challenging; under these circumstances the individual's own words and opinions will be used.

- With a person's permission we may make initial contact with a service or organisation in order to begin the process of access. After initial contact we will guide an individual to communicate for themselves.

Distribution

All SEND Butterflies South Coast committee and group supporters undertaking advocacy support in the group's name will have read this policy and be aware of its principles and content.

All individuals receiving advocacy support from SEND Butterflies South Coast will be given a copy of this policy.

Review This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Date: 22.08.2024

Review date: 22.08.2026