

a city-wide advocacy project

AdvoCard

for users of mental health services

Annual Report 2007

November 2006 - October
2007

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AdvoCard

A City wide Advocacy Project Annual Report 2007

WHAT WE DO

AdvoCard is an independent advocacy service for mental health service users living in the community in Edinburgh. AdvoCard has been providing independent advocacy since 1994 and was developed as a result of efforts made by a service user steering group in the early 1990s. We have two advocacy services and a training service.

Volunteer Delivered Advocacy Service

This service offers independent advocacy around a wide range of issues that can affect a person's life. Anyone who has experience of mental health difficulties or mental ill health can use this service. All advocacy workers are trained volunteers. The types of issues that people bring can be benefits, housing, medication or access to services.

Mental Health Advocacy Service

This service offers independent advocacy to individuals who are facing compulsory treatment in the community or who are already compelled in the community under the Mental Health (Care & Treatment)(Scotland) Act 2003. Advocacy workers are all contracted and can support a person to prepare for Tribunal Hearings as well as advocate around safeguards within the Act such as helping someone nominate their Named Person or to draft their Advance Statement.

AdvoCard's Mission Statement

AdvoCard is an Edinburgh-wide advocacy project for adults who have experience of mental ill health. We provide a free, independent and confidential service which supports people in getting their voices heard.

Our long-term aim is to work towards a community where each individual's needs are met and where people have greater influence over the services they use.

Training

All advocacy workers, whether they're volunteers or contracted are trained when they first join the organisation and throughout their time with us. We train all sorts of different people who not only volunteer for us but also go on to get other jobs no doubt partly due to the training and voluntary experience they receive with us.

What is independent advocacy?

Independent advocacy is when someone is with an individual to help them get their point of view across to others. Their point of view can be their wishes or their feelings or what they would like to happen. Independent advocacy can help them to influence decisions made about their life and their care and treatment

Why is our independence important?

Our independence is important because we are there solely to help the person get their views across. It is important that we are not influenced by other people or organisations that provide services to that individual. We do not mediate between the person we are working with and the people who provide them with services. We only work with the individual and focus on their needs. Any work we do with a person is instructed and led by them and is confidential.

Convenor's Report

This has been my first year as Convenor of AdvoCard and I have enjoyed it very much. I work with a very good team both on the committee and with the staff team and volunteers. There is a very supportive atmosphere throughout the organisation and I'm sure that this is set to continue.

It has been a busy year for all of us and a year that has seen record levels of activity and use of our services. More information on activity can be found elsewhere in this report.

At the last AGM we were able to put our revised Constitution to the membership for approval. This has now been registered and accepted with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

The success of forming a working group to review the Constitution has led to the setting up of a number of other working groups focussing on different development areas. I myself am part of the Equal Opportunities working group looking to develop an Equality and Diversity strategy. There is quite a bit of work to do.

Other working groups are looking at developing the extent to which we are truly service user-led, developing a lone working and risk assessment policy and procedure and developing the website.

Working groups have also been established to develop a 'Welcome Pack' for services users to be given to them when they first contact the project.

This will give them information on what they can expect from us as well as information on our data protection and

equal opportunities procedures. There is also a group looking at taking AdvoCard through the Investing in Volunteers evaluation process.

We hope these important areas of development will improve us as an organisation and ensure that we are as accessible as possible and also responsive to the needs, wishes and influence of our service users.

AdvoCard has developed a series of protocols with other advocacy services. The purpose of these protocols is to ensure that each service is clear about their remit and to identify where there is any overlapping of remit. The aim is that service users benefit from these arrangements and that it makes accessing any of the services involved easier as well as one service referring a person to an alternative project.

The committee stands at almost full and we have a dedicated and talented set of members currently with AdvoCard. Many of the committee members have been part of the various working groups and have therefore contributed directly to the development of the organisation as well as experienced more direct contact with the staff team and other volunteers.

Thank you so much to everyone for all of their contributions to the running of the project be you a member of staff, a volunteer, a service user, partner agency or committee member.

Dot Twyman
Convenor

Project Manager's Report

We have, as Dot has already said, experienced the most busy year so far in terms of the number of requests for advocacy. This is no doubt due to the right of access to independent advocacy as well as word of mouth and the results of any promoting of the services we offer.

What has not increased in the same way is the number of volunteers that we've been able to recruit and train so at times we have struggled to keep up with demand for the service and to meet every request for advocacy. There have been moments when prioritising requests has been a reality and the start of a waiting list an unfortunate possibility.

However we have met all requests so far and feel positive that with new recruits on board in the near future we will continue to offer service to a large number of people in Edinburgh. We may also look to increase our recruitment drives from twice to three times a year, resources allowing.

For much of the year we made efforts to relocate to larger premises in order that both teams and services could be located together. There were a number of possibilities but in the end due to lack of funds and uncertainty about the level of future funding we are now resigned to staying where we currently are for another 3 years.

We have developed a Service Level Agreement with Edinburgh City Council Department of Health and Social Care detailing what is expected of us for the funding we receive as well as what we will commit to as targets and outcomes.

This 'contract' will be signed once future funding is agreed and will cover us for the period from April 2008 through to March 2011. It will be reviewed annually and monitoring information will be supplied quarterly. In 2011 a new 3 year cycle of funding will begin.

We have also been involved in a number of external meetings and events including the review of the Crisis Service, involvement with Quality Improvement Scotland and the development of a model for Integrated Care Pathways (ICPs) and in a focus group which met with the Social Work Inspectorate around their evaluation of the City of Edinburgh Council's Department of Health and Social Care. We will soon be involved in the Mental Health Specific Grant (MHSG) evaluation of the Circles Community Advocacy Project offering advocacy to people with dementia who are living in the community.

Future plans include developing a 3 or 5 year Strategic Development (or business) Plan which will set out where we want to be as an organisation in 3 years time and the steps we need to take to achieve this. All stakeholders of AdvoCard will be consulted. A large working group has been set up to develop the plan.

This plan will then lead to active fundraising in order to develop any areas currently not funded. The Strategic Development Plan may well be presented at next year's AGM.

Bryan Davies
Project Manager

Training

This has been another productive year for the training service within AdvoCard. Training is responsible for providing training opportunities to all stakeholders of the organisation. We will be looking to develop more training aimed at people who use mental health services as well as developing the training we provide to individuals within the mental health community of Edinburgh and where possible to the wider community.

All staff, volunteers and committee members have received training in order that they perform within their roles to the full. Advocacy workers, both volunteer and contracted, receive training to be effective advocacy workers. All support staff are able to access training to enable them to be effective in their supporting roles. All committee members receive both induction and on-going training in order that they are effective committee members.

Initial Training

Any people wishing to be an advocacy worker for AdvoCard undergo the initial 10 session training programme which covers the concepts of independent advocacy as well as the medical and social models of mental health, the Mental Health Act and mental health service provision within Edinburgh. It also explores peoples' attitudes and values. The content of this training is continually revised to be up to date and to reflect current thinking in the field. We have trained two large groups in the last 12 months and plan to try to train 3 groups in the next 12 months.

Refresher Training

Any advocacy worker wishing to refresh their knowledge and skills can ask to take part in the two day refresher training course which covers the theory involved as well as giving opportunities to practice advocacy skills through role-play and other exercises. The content of this training has also been revised with positive feedback received.

Follow-on Training

Follow-on training gives opportunities to learn about specific topics and is provided in-house as well as through external providers. Topics can vary and subjects in the last 12 months have included Named Person and Advance Statements, Suicide Talk and Benefits. We hope to have training on Borderline Personality Disorder in the near future.

Mental Health Act Training

As well as training on the Safeguards within the Act we have had 3 sessions where a mental health officer, a lawyer and a psychiatrist talked about their experiences of the first 12 months of the Act. These sessions have been produced as handouts and will be available to anyone interested. We have also run regular mental health act seminars for volunteers where they can meet the advocacy workers from the mental health act team and hear about the work they do.

External Training

We regularly send staff and volunteers on to external training courses. Examples of these have been the Mindfield seminars, training on the EdIndex system and training on the Act provided by the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

Trainers Group

We have a group made up of volunteers who have expressed an interest in training. The group meets regularly and discusses training issues and the training we both provide and access at AdvoCard. Members of the group will also help facilitate the initial training.

Personal Development Training

AdvoCard is committed to offering training to all of our stakeholders which will benefit them and their personal development. Any requests will be considered alongside available resources and organisational priorities. A number of the staff team have already had such an opportunity and we hope to make these opportunities available to more staff members once funding is clarified.

Volunteer Delivered Advocacy Service

The Volunteer Delivered Advocacy Service works with individuals who are living in the community and have experience of mental health difficulties and illness. The service provides independent advocacy support to people around a wide range of issues that can affect their lives including housing, benefits, medication and many more (see table below). This service is delivered through trained volunteers (see the Training page for more information).

The last 12 months have seen a steady rise in the amount of people who are using this service. It has been our busiest year to date and the amount of requests we have received have reached record levels (see activity table below).

This year we have had people contacting the service who have had particularly complex needs, sometimes coupled with challenging behaviour. It is often the case that AdvoCard is the only remaining service which has contact with the person and this means that the focus of the advocacy work is often centred around supporting the individual to re-engage with the services they need.

Demand for this service this year has been such that prioritising advocacy requests as they come into the office is increasingly becoming part of the normal daily routine. We are currently looking at how we would manage a waiting list should one develop. We hope to increase volunteer numbers in the coming months in order to cope with the high level of demand we are experiencing and to hopefully avoid the need for waiting lists.

Activity in the last twelve months

Requests for advocacy in the last 12 months	337
Number of people who made those requests	232
Requests from women	168
Requests from men	169
Number of resulting appointments	900
Number of home visits	66
Total number of volunteer hours	1800

Growth in demand for independent advocacy over the year

	Requests (per year)	Average (per month)
2000 - 2001	68	6
2001 - 2002	87	7
2002 - 2003	157	13
2003 - 2004	193	16
2004 - 2005	225	19
2005 - 2006	297	25
2006 - 2007	337	28

The issues requiring advocacy support

HOUSING (housing applications, disputes, rent arrears)	20%	RELATIONSHIPS	5%
MEDICAL (GP, medication, psychiatrist, CPN)	14%	DISCRIMINATION	4%
BENEFITS (applications, reviews, appeals, tax)	12%	EMPLOYMENT	3%
ACCESS TO SUPPORT & SERVICES	10%	SOCIAL/COMMUNITY/LEISURE	1%
SOCIAL SERVICES (Social Work, the Department of H & SC)	9%	RECREATION	1%
LEGAL (civil, criminal, MH Act)	9%	OTHER	3%
FINANCIAL (savings, debt)	9%		

Mental Health Act Advocacy Service

This service provides independent advocacy to individuals who are either facing compulsory treatment under the Mental Health (Care & Treatment)(Scotland) Act 2003 or who are already compelled. The service works with people who are about to be discharged from the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, or who are staying temporarily in other hospital settings or who are living in the community.

The advocacy workers help someone prepare for a Tribunal Hearing involving helping them to understand the paperwork and supporting them in their dealings with other people involved such as psychiatrists, mental health officers (MHO's), and lawyers. These hearings can be about new compulsory measures as well as changes and extensions to compulsory measures or appeals against those measures.

The advocacy workers will also advocate for the person during the hearing and support them to say what it is they wish to say including speaking on the person's behalf if necessary. Generally the focus of their role is to liaise with the individual's lawyer to ensure that the lawyer is able to represent the views of the person fully.

A lot of the focus of the work is also around advocating for an individual after they have been compelled and supporting them to have a greater say about their on-going care and treatment.

As well as tribunal work the workers also get involved in advocating for people around the Safeguards within the Act such as helping someone draft their Advance Statement or helping them to nominate their Named Person.

During the last 12 months the service has seen a steady increase in the number of people referring themselves or being referred by other agencies.

Some details on activity for the last two years

	last year	this year
People referred	123	169
Men	60	82
Women	63	87
Tribunal Hearings	26	34
Total Tribunal Hours	350	360
People under compulsory measures	58	118

Some observations about the last twelve months

The number of people being carried forward with on-going care and treatment needs at the end of this year compared to last has nearly doubled.

Around one quarter of referrals are from Mental Health Officers (MHO's).

Up to one third of referrals are self-referrals. It is possible that MHO's are behind a number of these self-referrals.

The number of Community Compulsory Treatment Orders (CTO's) that we are working with reflects above average take-up of our service when compared with national Tribunal Service statistics.

The number of people wishing to write an Advance Statement has increased from last year.

NOTE: FROM DECEMBER 10TH THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT ADVOCACY SERVICE WILL BE BASED AT 332 LEITH WALK, EDINBURGH. EH6 5BR

AdvoCard's Funding

AdvoCard is funded by the City of Edinburgh Council's Department of Health and Social Care and by the Scottish Government. Although we are funded by these large statutory bodies who provide many of the services that a person with mental health difficulties will encounter, we are in fact funded to be independent of those services.

AdvoCard has two sources of funding. One source is known as Mental Health Specific Grant (MHSB). This funding is received from both the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government.

We also receive what is known as Service Level Agreement (SLA) Grant Aid. This is funding from the City of Edinburgh Council that is awarded and has a contract (or agreement) attached to it. We have worked in partnership with our commissioners to develop a Service Level Agreement and the accompanying Service Specification that enables us to provide a good quality and good value service with every element of what we aim to provide and what we need to be able to achieve those aims detailed and signed by both parties.

This is the first time that we will be working in this way but feel certain that it will benefit the organisation and ultimately the people who use our service.

Treasurer's Report and Accounts

Extracts from the Financial Statements of AdvoCard for the year ended 31st March, 2007 are shown below. Copies of the full audited Financial Statements are available from the AdvoCard office.

INCOME (in pounds)		EXPENDITURE (in pounds)	
MHSB	158,899	Salaries & Staff Costs	237,590
SLA Grant Aid	142,500	Property & Equip. (inc. depr.)	41,506
Bank Interest	96	Supplies & Admin.	15,794
		Sessional/Vol. Expenses	11,412
TOTAL	301,495	TOTAL	306,302
DEFICIT	(4,807)		

Management Committee Members

Executive

Convenor: Dot Twyman
Vice Convenor: Jean Bartlett
Treasurer: Diane Walters
Secretary: Nick Gardner

Committee Members

Fenella Hayes (left November 2006)
Anwar Ali (left March 2007)
Ruth Hughes
Steven Copeland
Charlotte Mitchell
Andrew Hogg
Geoff Allan
David Cameron (joined March 2007)
David Atiyah (joined May 2007)

Adviser - MHSG Assessor

Paul Flaherty, Mental Health Officer, Central MHO team

Advisers

Graeme Pettie (Community Psychiatric Nurse)
Susan McMeel (NHS Lothian)
P.C. Tony Kot
Fiona Ross
Brian Sneddon
Alan Sharp

Staff Team

Bryan Davies: **Project Manager**

Finance & Administration

Jean Crombie: **Receptionist - Admin**
Marion Hadland: **Clerical Worker**
Janette McDougall: **Finance Worker**

Volunteer Advocacy

Karen Anderson: **Advocacy Manager**
Jackie McGinty: **Advocacy Assistant**

Training

Jane Rubens: **Training Manager**
Jane Cairns: **Assistant Trainer**

Mental Health Act Advocacy

Jane Laidlaw: **Advocacy Worker (left Nov 2007)**
Vincent Gill: **Advocacy Worker**
Devrim Turkey: **Advocacy Worker**
Diana Simcock: **Sessional Advocacy Worker**



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We are striving to be an equal opportunities employer

• EDINBURGH •
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

 The Scottish Government