

# About Advocacy

*The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance Magazine*

*Autumn 2012*



***Celebrating a decade of improving  
the quality of Independent Advocacy***

## **Onwards and Upwards**

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## Editorial

As you will be able to tell from the cover, here at the SIAA we are celebrating our 10th anniversary. In this issue we will take you on a 10 year journey about where we have come from and what we have been doing over this time. Muriel also contributes a piece analysing the value of Independent Advocacy. This is all neatly illustrated by the Care About Rights report where we can clearly see the integral role that Advocacy can play in defending people's human rights.

We also hear from Advocacy North East about their award winning work with volunteers, and the impact that advocacy has on their lives.

This is my last edition of About Advocacy, as I move to Age Scotland to take up a post there. I know already there are some interesting articles coming together for the Winter edition and I look forward to reading it.

*Rhian*  
Editor

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### Next issue:

Please contact [enquiry@siaa.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@siaa.org.uk) if you have content for a future edition.

### Thank you:

The SIAA would like to thank all the individuals who have contributed to this magazine.

Printed in Scotland using FSC certified paper and vegetable-based inks. Cover image by Craig Swatton / istockphoto.

### Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the individual authors and should not be taken to represent those of the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

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### Editor:

Rhian Thompson  
[enquiry@siaa.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@siaa.org.uk)  
0131 260 5380

SIAA  
Melrose House,  
69a George Street  
Edinburgh, EH2 2JG

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance  
Scottish Charity No. SC033576  
Company No. 236526

An electronic copy of this magazine can be downloaded from our website: [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk).



# Independent Advocacy – onwards and upwards

Shaben Begum MBE, Director, SIAA

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The last decade within the Scottish Advocacy movement has been an exciting and exhilarating time. To mark our 10th anniversary we decided to ask people involved in advocacy what they thought were some of the SIAA's key achievements. This article is an amalgamation of some of my thoughts on the progress made by the SIAA and the advocacy movement alongside comments we collected from individuals across the country. Since I started working at the SIAA in September 2002 the movement has changed in so many ways that some might say it is unrecognisable.

'I think a lot has changed since the 1990s when people saw advocacy as naïve or trouble-making... I can't tell you how badly it was received, the idea that you could have somebody go with you to your appointment and make sure that your voice was heard. I remember going to a hospital appointment and this consultant said 'I'm a good doctor. You don't need to have anybody with you.'

Anne O'Donnell, Convener, Consultation & Advocacy Promotion Service

I think that the movement has changed, developed and grown but it has held on to its core principles and this has strengthened the identity of Independent Advocacy. The movement in Scotland has an overall clarity of purpose (to borrow a Citizen advocacy term) that means that advocacy organisations only deliver advocacy and have not been seduced by offers of funding to provide a range of other services funders want. It is crucial that during the current economic climate advocacy organisations are clear about the important role that they play and bear in mind the importance of not 'muddying the waters' by taking on other services.

'The way Independent Advocacy has developed in Scotland is something to be proud of and I'm proud to be a part of it.'

Rachel Annand, Co-ordinator Dunfermline Advocacy Initiative

The unity of the movement and even the questions about there actually being an advocacy movement are issues that come up from time to time. The evidence is clear, we are a movement because we have developed and agreed a set of Principles and Standards that apply to all types of advocacy, to all groups and situations. The SIAA documents unite us. We have a shared vision that advocacy must be independent of other services and that Independent Advocacy should be available to anyone who needs it.

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'The development of the Principles & Standards and Code of Practice for Independent Advocacy has been really important. These underpin all advocacy work and give something to measure advocacy practice against. The role of advocacy is unique and can often be misunderstood – therefore it is important that it should be accountable.'

**Moira Nicholson, Director, The Advocacy Project**



'We love the Principles and Standards.'

**Morag McClurg, Manager, Aims Advocacy**

'There have been lots of things that the SIAA has done that have benefited our organisation, but the most helpful has been the development of the Principles and Standards. They help commissioners measure the impact of Independent Advocacy, they give us a national standard of practice, and they help other individuals and organisations to understand Independent Advocacy.'

**Angela Forbes, Manager, Advocacy Service Aberdeen**

The various documents produced by SIAA have helped raise awareness about Independent Advocacy, the role of the advocate and improved the quality of the advocacy taking place.

'A Voice to Trust is an outstanding piece of work. The fact that it is freely available on You Tube and in multiple languages is commendable. It is a resource that I still regularly direct people to.'

**Martin Coyle, CEO Action for Advocacy**

'Advocates and advocacy partners regularly use the SIAA's publications and find them valuable. We use a 'Voice Through Choice' and it's a wonderful publication.'

**Rachel Annand, Co-ordinator, Dunfermline Advocacy Initiative**

The documents have provided transparency to the advocacy role, given advocacy partners a clear picture of what to expect from their advocate and given Independent Advocacy an unprecedented level of accountability. I think that the impact of the documents has been immeasurable; they have helped the movement gain credibility and recognition that would not have otherwise been possible.

The inclusion of access to advocacy in several key policies and legislation indicates the increasing effectiveness of the policy work undertaken by the SIAA.

'The SIAA keeps Independent Advocacy on the political agenda and the by-products of that affect our organisation and affects how Independent Advocacy develops locally.'

**Rachel Annand, Co-ordinator, Dunfermline Advocacy Initiative**

'The SIAA is helpful to Independent Advocacy organisations across Scotland. We are so busy providing advocacy that sometimes we don't have the time to lobby nationally and promote



'To begin with [the government] weren't listening because they thought that they knew best and they were trying to get me round to their way of thinking, but I kept challenging on independence. I was able to back the statements up with evidence. we had the Alliance and other people helping and we eventually got through, but it's a hard nut to crack.'

**Sarah-Jane, Your Voice**

the work that we do. The SIAA gives the Independent Advocacy movement a voice. The SIAA advocates for advocacy.'

**Angela Forbes, Manager, Advocacy Service  
 Aberdeen**

The SIAA has worked hard to build relationships with allies outwith the movement too. There has been a sustained partnership with the Stroke Association Scotland with the aim of developing Independent Advocacy for people who have been affected by stroke.

The support that SIAA has provided to our work around Independent Advocacy and stroke has been invaluable. They have worked with us to develop publications and training materials and are continuing to work with us in delivering our current work related to Advocacy, Self-directed support and stroke.'

**Charlotte Lee and Karen Irvine, Stroke Association  
 Scotland**

'The RCPsych in Scotland has worked in partnership with the SIAA for a number of years... we have consulted with the SIAA on a regular basis whenever expertise on advocacy is required and we have promoted SIAA materials to our membership'

**Karen Addie, Policy Manager, Royal College of  
 Psychiatrists in Scotland**



'As President of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland I have sought to foster a culture within the Tribunal that puts the patient at the heart of the Tribunal's work. Across Scotland advocacy services and individual advocacy workers have been instrumental in developing and establishing that culture.

'The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance has been immensely supportive of the Tribunal's efforts to keep the focus on the patient. In producing its Mental Health Tribunal Advocacy Guidelines SIAA has provided a tool that will assist in consolidating and strengthening the quality of advocacy services at Tribunal hearings throughout Scotland. That can only be a good thing, from the perspective of patients, the Tribunal and all who appear before it.'

**Dr Joe Morrow, President of the Mental Health  
 Tribunal for Scotland**

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'The role of the Independent Advocacy worker in the Mental Health Tribunal setting is, for me, both valuable and necessary. During a Tribunal hearing I am focused on correctly legally representing my client and therefore rely on the Independent Advocacy worker to ensure that my client is following and understanding the proceedings'

Raymond G. Fairgrieve, Solicitor



My constant reminder and the thing that motivates me and others in the movement is the impact of all this work on the people who use Independent Advocacy. One of the things I miss about being an advocate is seeing at first-hand the difference advocacy

can make to a person who is full of frustration at not being involved in decisions about them and not being listened to actually getting what they need. So hearing about the difference that our documents make is extremely gratifying.

'If it wasn't for Heather and Stuart...., you know talking through it and that and helping me I wouldn't be anywhere... I've got my life back. Now I can go out with the workers and do this that and the other, and go wherever I want and whatever it is I need to do. It's far better, what a difference. It's far better....The advocates fight on your behalf and know the system. I think it's an absolutely brilliant service. There should be more everywhere.'

Jane, The Advocacy Project – Advocacy Partner

'Advocard is an excellent advocacy organisation... service users come here in the hope that their problem will be addressed and resolved'

Tony, Advocard – Advocacy Partner

'My relationship with Forth Valley Advocacy began as a user of their services and moved on to be a director. I have now moved into self employment and can no longer afford the time to be a director but the established links and friendships have held firm.

'When a Children's hearing was called for my son as a result of my ill health, FVA provided advocacy for my son, then eleven. Knowing that T was being supported took a weight off my shoulders. I knew that what was said either by T or on his behalf was what he wanted to say and that was all I cared about'

Jude, Forth Valley Advocacy

The future development of the movement depends on a number of factors including the unity of the movement, proper planning and funding of Independent Advocacy and the continued lobbying of decision makers.

‘Furthering recognition of the importance of Independent Advocacy and the importance of independence in advocacy. This has been continuously in danger in recent years for a variety of reasons. The Guide for Commissioners has been very useful in Borders helping in advocacy planning’

**Bryan Davies, Advocacy commissioner, Scottish Borders Council**

‘I’m happy to say that I have been impressed by the work of the SIAA over my years as an MSP. In my current role, I continue to believe in the need for the most vulnerable in our society to have access to support from an advocate who is free from potential conflicts of interest and is there to exclusively represent the needs and wants of the service user/client. The work of SIAA continues to provide that valuable service.’

**Hugh O’Donnell, Director of Policy, BEMIS**

‘It’s a very difficult time at the moment, not just in terms of advocacy but in terms of a lot of other aspects of government, economic and social life in the UK... I feel that the principles and benefits of Independent Advocacy risk being overwhelmed by some of the economic priorities of commissioners at the moment. Therefore it is important to have an organisation like SIAA reminding everybody of the principles of Independent Advocacy and I think that SIAA is moving in a very positive direction. I think that the advocacy movement would fragment without the SIAA.’

‘I think that the organisations that are now moving into advocacy, looking for contracts would take over and smaller organisations would be swamped. It’s very difficult for small organisations to lobby and campaign ..... without the SIAA it would be increasingly more difficult for smaller organisations to have a voice.’

**Keith Maloney, SIAA Board member**





*The award winning Advocacy North East team*

## ***Volunteering for Advocacy North East***

***Sheila Gray, Training and Volunteer Co-ordinator***

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*We gained the Volunteer Friendly Award in August 2011. This achievement was the culmination of 10 years of working with volunteers, learning what works best and putting it into practice.*

The Volunteer Friendly Award is a quality standard designed by Volunteer Centre Dundee to support, recognise and reward groups for their good volunteer management practices. It helps organisations to identify what they do well, recognise what they would like to improve and to develop an action plan to progress the changes.

We learned over the years that volunteers want to help the wider community, they want to use their existing skills as well as gain new ones and they want to belong to a friendly group. Some want to enhance their employability, some to gain confidence and some to make new friends. All

want the satisfaction of working for a worthwhile cause.

There is no such thing as a typical volunteer. They come in all shapes and sizes, genders, ages and backgrounds, which reflects the community they serve.

When Advocacy North East (ANE) was established some 11 years ago, we started with four volunteer advocates, one of whom is still with us. At present we have 23 volunteer advocates covering Moray and Aberdeenshire.

11 of our volunteers have been with us for 5 years or more; they are awarded an engraved coaster after 5 years of service and after 10 years, an engraved Quach.



We also have a voluntary Board of Trustees and 2 volunteers who come in regularly to help with administrative duties in both the Inverurie and Elgin offices.

We know that volunteers are the key to the success of our organisation and supporting them is a major part of my job. Following our standard training and induction period, we have a bi-monthly support meeting on an individual basis and we hold a Volunteer Day every 3 months. On these days we have a speaker on a relevant subject for half a day as well as a couple of hours of peer group support during which our advocates share their triumphs and challenges.

We also have an annual festive celebration when we all get together in a more informal manner; this is an excellent opportunity to thank our volunteers for their commitment.

Given our large geographical spread, a newsletter, to which volunteers can contribute, is sent out three times a year with recent advocacy information, upcoming training and articles of relevance.

Over the years, several of our advocacy clients have become volunteers. Because they have used the service, they understand its crucial role and the benefits it can bring.

One such advocate, Amanda Bibby, says 'A few years ago, I was extremely distressed with social, health and education services while trying to look after my children and feeling very much alone. It seemed my words were always twisted and seemed unimportant to others which impaired my mental health. Having an advocate helped me tremendously in turning everything around and feeling back in control.

'Once I felt my mental health was restored, I applied to be an advocate and started my training with the organisation that helped me. This rebuilt

my confidence after what I had been through, with a fantastic team supporting me. Working as a volunteer advocate now, supporting others through difficult times makes it all worthwhile.'

Here at ANE, we have worked hard to dispel the myth, often held by others, that volunteers are a free and somewhat less professional add-on to an organisation. Properly managing the recruitment, training and on-going support of volunteers is no less demanding than the investment required for an employed staff team but the returns are equally valuable.

As our statistics demonstrate, in the last financial year our volunteers provided more than 1740 hours. This does not include the time given by our 'Friends of ANE' (some 30 people), who provide support to the operation and function of our organisation, from janitorial duties to running fund-raising events and giving financial and legal advice.

As can be seen, volunteers are not an extension of Advocacy North East; they are an integral and vital part of our organisation and they significantly contribute to all aspects of our existence and development.

Rooted in their local communities, our volunteers embody the fundamental values that advocacy espouses. Through their actions, they promote re-enablement for vulnerable individuals, address social inequalities and provide a platform for social inclusion. This ultimately creates a fairer, safer and healthier society.

We are delighted that NHS Grampian shares our view and that they have recently provided additional funding for ANE to further develop our volunteer capacity in our Moray division – long may this continue!

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Find out more about Advocacy North East at [www.advocacyne.org.uk](http://www.advocacyne.org.uk) or 01467 651604

# Why is Independent Advocacy important?

*Muriel Mowat, Research and Quality Officer, SIAA*

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*Why is Independent Advocacy important? That is a question we encounter regularly and is often posed by those who have had no direct experience of using advocacy themselves or observing its impact on others, be they family members, friends or clients.*

The value of advocacy has been recognised for many years now and has played a major role in helping people, who may be vulnerable as a result of illness, disability or other circumstances, access appropriate help, support, justice... It has also played a part in supporting individuals to be included in their communities to have their own role and to be a valued member of that community. Collective advocacy has been instrumental in shaping services in a number of areas.

These are arguments that have been heard from many sources over many years and advocacy organisations increasingly are working on monitoring and evaluating the impact of the advocacy they deliver. But is there any scientific evidence to back up the strongly held belief in the value of access to good quality, Independent Advocacy?

I believe that there is much evidence to support these claims.

The medical sociologist, Aaron Antonovsky studied the relationship between stress, health and well-being. In 1979 he presented the salutogenic theory of 'sense of coherence' to explain why some people become ill under stress while others stay healthy. Sense of coherence can be described as the ability to make sense of the world around us. For people to remain

healthy their social and physical environment must be comprehensible, manageable and meaningful or the individual may experience chronic stress.

Research has shown that the greater control someone has over their lives and circumstances the lower their stress levels. One study<sup>1</sup> shows a correlation between stress and grade of employment amongst Civil Servants. Those of a higher grade, i.e. those who have more control over their own and others' circumstances, were shown to have consistently lower levels of stress than their lower grade colleagues.

Many people who seek Independent Advocacy support do so because they believe they have no control over their lives, often they feel that their lives and circumstances are incomprehensible and unmanageable. Their options have been severely limited, they feel they have no choice over things even as fundamental as where, how or with whom they live.

The process of advocacy aims to restore control, supporting that person to consider their situation and possible options, helping to make sense of their world. Advocacy also will help them to speak up or speak up on their behalf, ensuring that their voice is heard and so gaining, or regaining, control over their own lives and circumstances. Gaining such control will contribute to lower stress levels which can lead to improved health.

Today's society tends to focus on problems, needs and deficiencies. Services are often designed to fill gaps and fix problems. People

<sup>1</sup> Steptoe et al. 2003, Psychosomatic Medicine

become passive recipients of services; things are done to them rather than with them. They are disempowered by the very systems that are in place to support them.

The medical model of disability is seen by many as still prevalent today. It impacts on attitudes towards people who have disabilities, defining people in terms of illness or medical condition. This model promotes a view of someone with a disability as needing to be cured and/or cared for leaving control firmly in the hands of professionals. Choices for the individual may then be limited to the options provided and approved by those professionals.

In supporting individuals to consider their situation and find out about options and possible courses of action, advocacy supports people to make informed choices while considering the possible outcomes of those choices. Advocates work to ensure that the person's wishes and views are heard and taken fully into account either by supporting them to speak up or by speaking up on their behalf. Advocacy aims to empower those they work with, ensure that they are as fully involved as possible in any decisions made about them and help them take control over their lives and circumstances.

There is a growing body of research showing that social relationships and networks have a profound impact on mental and physical health and wellbeing. At the heart is social connectedness – a society where all members feel fully empowered. People with complex

*'I heard people and read feedback from people who have used our service, stating that they had felt completely overwhelmed and isolated by circumstances in their lives and having an advocate had allowed them to have a voice, to get that voice and their opinions over and have an impact and change things and they had said, very honestly I think, that advocacy had actually saved their lives.'*

***Keith Maloney, Board Member***

patterns of social integration are twice as likely to survive adversity as those who don't.

In a paper published in 2004<sup>2</sup> Helliwell and Puttnam demonstrate that being socially connected has a startlingly high impact on overall well-being, suggesting that one of the most effective ways to improve well-being is to find ways to achieve trust and connectedness with those around us.

<sup>2</sup> J.F. Helliwell and R.D. Puttnam 2004, The social context of wellbeing



Many of those who contact advocacy organisations are isolated and lack informal social support networks. In their work advocates will aim to support individuals to make connections with others and to be included in their community. This is particularly true of citizen advocates who support individuals on a long term basis and who aim to ensure that, along with having their views and wishes respected, their advocacy partners are valued members of their local communities.

Collective advocacy helps enhance the social connectedness of group members. In coming together to address common issues and campaign for change, members of collective advocacy groups build their own social supports

and sense of community. Advocacy facilitates this process and so can help to bolster individuals' sense of self and contribute to physical and mental health and wellbeing while informing and contributing to the development of effective supports and services that are responsive to local needs.

Antonovsky believed that it was more important to focus on people's resources and capacity to create health than to focus on risks, ill health and disease. The assets based approach to health builds trusting relationships within communities. This recognises and values people's strengths and personal resources rather than focussing on problems, helping some rediscover skills and strengths they may have forgotten they have

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and supporting them to put those into practice. It involves building positive networks and trust within communities.

There are unrecognised capacities in individuals and communities and it is important that these are recognised and taken fully into account so that members of communities are fully involved in the process of change.

Independent Advocacy has a vital role to play in this process. The ultimate aim for an advocate is to work towards making themselves redundant by supporting individuals to recognise and understand their own strengths. Many of those who have accessed Independent Advocacy for support to deal with a specific issue have subsequently reported increased self-confidence and a newly discovered belief in their own abilities to challenge and question. With the support of Independent Advocacy they become active agents in their own lives with a restored sense of control over their lives and circumstances.

Many collective advocacy groups came about when individuals, with common issues or in similar situations, recognised that they were not alone in seeking change. Members support each other to understand and recognise the value of their personal experience and knowledge and use the strength that comes from many voices speaking together. Members of collective advocacy groups have reported increased self-confidence and self-belief gained from observing differences that have come about as a result of their campaigning for change.

If we accept that health and wellbeing are improved and stress levels are lowered for those

who have some degree of control over their own lives and circumstances and we further accept the impact of social supports and networks on mental and physical health and wellbeing then it is clear that access to Independent Advocacy is a vital factor in maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of the population. This is true for all those who may be disadvantaged or excluded whether by illness, disability or social circumstances.

Access to Independent Advocacy is currently a right for anyone with a 'mental disorder' under the terms of the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. NHS Boards and Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that there is access to Independent Advocacy for all in their area with a mental disorder. All Boards and their partner Local Authorities therefore have responsibility to commission independent advocacy in their area.

Commissioners should be encouraged to recognise that, for Independent Advocacy to play the greatest possible role in the improvement of the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the population, there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

They should be encouraged to ensure that provision allows access to as many models of Independent Advocacy as possible and as necessary for all who need it when they need it.

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For more information please contact Muriel Mowat at [mmowat@siaa.org.uk](mailto:mmowat@siaa.org.uk) or phone **0131 260 5380**

# Human Rights: Adding Value in Care for Older People

*Rhian Thompson, Information Officer, SIAA*

'Often when I visited (the care home) there was nothing terribly wrong but there was nothing terribly right either, and I didn't have any framework to put my concerns.' — older persons advocacy worker.'

Across the UK, successive reviews have expressed concern that human rights are not properly understood or applied in practice, particularly in relation to care for older people.

Care About Rights is a training and awareness raising programme led by the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) which aims to embed a human rights based approach in the delivery of care for older people. The programme empowers people to understand their rights and increases capacity to ask for rights to be met.

The SHRC approached the SIAA to help identifying potential partners to host sessions. Borders Independent Advocacy Alliance and Advocacy Orkney were the first to express interest and subsequently worked with SHRC to establish outreach groups.

The evaluation report found that Advocacy workers and volunteers consider it very important that they know and can clearly articulate human rights information. This group firmly asserted their intention to utilise their new knowledge in their role as advocacy workers in the future.

## Case Study

A staff nurse commented that since completing Care About Rights she has used the FAIR framework when developing care plans to ensure that residents are involved and, for those without capacity to be involved themselves, that a carer/ advocate is involved in the development of the plan. FAIR ensures discussion of human rights issues and she feels this has enhanced the



© Scottish Human Rights Commission

process for developing care plans (even in situations where the final plan is the same as it would have been previously).

One care home manager feels that the Care Inspectorate (formerly the Care Commission) has always looked for evidence that service users have a voice. He feels that Care About Rights and the advocacy work within the home provides evidence that they do have a voice and that this voice is valued by staff and the organisation as a whole.

As a result, the latest inspection report for the care home also highlighted that service users are involved in a positive and meaningful way.

Advocacy workers and volunteers consider it very important that they know and can clearly articulate human rights information. Several of the participants feel that Care About Rights sessions have clarified legislative issues for them and developed their understanding of the concept of proportionality. Comments included:

'It [Care About Rights] is giving me practical skills to actually use in my advocacy work. It's helped to make legalisation like that real.'

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'I keep coming back to this framework – one of my clients didn't want me to raise lots of points of concern while she was alive because she was afraid that it would backfire and staff would treat her even less well. I had things that I felt that were wrong but mentioning them was very badly received by the staff and they seemed to think I was picking holes. I don't know what they thought but they rejected what I said... if I had had a framework of human rights I could have said what this treatment would come under and put it into some sort of better context'

Some participants see a potential case for self advocacy in the future. One participant commented: 'If I end up in a care home, I will know

where I stand'. Advocacy workers and volunteers have learnt they have more rights and could advocate for themselves, their family, and friends.

Care about Rights has increased the confidence of staff and outreach participants to challenge in cases where they feel rights are infringed and that this process helps providers to develop positive relationships with service users / families is helping them to deliver better person centred care.

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Find out more about the project and access the materials at [www.scottishhumanrights.com/careaboutright](http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/careaboutright)

### **Outreach – the Galashiels experience**

We are planning to use some of the scenarios in the Care about Rights resource pack as the basis for discussion with support workers on how human rights law can assist in the care and support of all vulnerable people in the community, including older people.

My experiences... have been that far too often investment in long-term, quality training does not always filter down from management to delivery level in care homes. The Care about Rights scenarios will be a good way to help me extend the learning from the Galashiels outreach group to a new audience. For example, human rights will now be incorporated into the training for all new volunteer advocates at BIAS.

It's been a few months since I completed the training and I have had to keep reminding myself about some of the detail we covered during the sessions and refer back to the resource pack. But, the key messages about proportionality and taking a human rights based approach is common sense and consistent with everything to do with the personalisation of care - particularly Article 8 ECHR (respect for private and family life) in preventing 'blanket' policy-making where individual choice is at risk – so it does all join up.

I think the next step must be to include human rights in the monitoring, and crucially reporting, of isolated, but distressing, cases of abuse or neglect in the system.

***Fiona Munro, Borders Independent Advocacy Service***

## Advocacy Now

By Jo McFarlane

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In the future  
when it's fashionable to listen  
everyone will have a voice –  
the disadvantaged, disillusioned –  
all will have a voice

Not just to say what's wrong  
or could be better,  
but to celebrate what's good right now

In the future  
when it's wise to count our blessings  
people won't be threatened by dissent.  
We'll welcome opposition to the status quo

In the future  
when all voices speak as one,  
we'll challenge the hegemony.  
We'll seek the truth that speaks its name regardless of  
authority or strength in numbers

In the future  
we'll drown out the volume,  
separate the essence from the noise

In the present  
we'll keep fighting for a future  
in which all shall have a voice

Jo McFarlane is a mental health service user and poet who performs her work throughout Scotland. Independent Advocacy has been an important part of her recovery, and SIAA a friend on the journey

Find more at [www.edinburghjo.co.uk](http://www.edinburghjo.co.uk)