

Appropriate Adult Services: High Level Options Response – October 2015

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) is Scotland's national membership body for advocacy organisations. The SIAA promotes, supports and defends independent advocacy in Scotland. It aims to ensure that independent advocacy is available to any person who needs it in Scotland.

We are not able to answer the questions in the paper due to time restrictions but do wish to raise some issues;

- We believe there needs to be a clear definition of an Appropriate Adult (AA) along with clarity about the role and responsibilities they would undertake.
- There needs to be clarity around the skills and qualifications that are needed to be an effective AA.
- There needs to be recognition that AA are experts in communication and safeguarding and have an understanding of peoples' rights in the criminal justice system.
- All vulnerable people including suspects, witnesses and victims should have access to an AA.
- There should be clarity about where AA operate, ideally it should be in police stations and court.
- A statutory body that is free from conflicts of interest should have responsibility for recruiting, training, supporting and supervising AA.
- The body should also have responsibility for ensuring provision and quality of AA is equitable across all geographical areas.

The right of access to independent advocacy for those with a mental disorder is included in the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and many of those individuals with such a right of access to independent advocacy would also benefit, if involved in Criminal Justice processes, from the services of an Appropriate Adult. Best practice for independent advocacy would not be compatible with the role of Appropriate Adult. It is important therefore that there is clarity about the different roles and responsibilities of an independent advocate and those of the Appropriate Adult.

In addition to the above the SIAA is a member of the SOLD network and we support the response submitted by the SOLD Network.