About Advocacy

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance Magazine *Edition 3/2016*

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Editorial

This edition begins with an article from SCVO explaining the importance of Human Rights to the Third Sector. We also learn about the progress of the Rights for Life Declaration since its launch earlier this year and how it is helping people understand and realise their rights.

Don't miss the article by Saheliya discussing what they do and how their person centred approach meant that they won Scottish Charity of the Year. The Scottish Human Rights Commission explains the role of advocacy in Human Rights and encourages advocates to view themselves as 'defenders, champions and monitors' of Human Rights. See Me introduce their new Director and speak about their new programme aiming to tackle mental health stigma in Scotland.

You can also find out about digital inclusion for people who are blind or partially sighted in an article by RNIB. Finally learn a little bit more about the new Director of the Scottish Recovery Network.

Kiren S. Zubairi

Next issue:
Please contact 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.

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SIAA News

Advocacy Map 2015-16

We are currently in the process of finalising the analysis of the 2015/16 *Map of Independent Advocacy*. We would like to thank all our members and Commissioners who contributed to the research.

As you know the Advocacy Map is a useful resource to help track the annual spend on advocacy across Scotland. The Advocacy Map 2015-16 will be used to lobby and campaign for;

- Increased funding for independent advocacy
- Increased access to independent advocacy
- Better strategic planning

Following the creation of new advocacy duties for the Mental Welfare Commission included in the new Mental Health Act (2015) we will also be providing the information gathered to the MWC. They will use it to help inform the questions they will ask each NHS Board about strategic advocacy planning.

We will let you know when the new report will be available.

AGM and Conference

Our next AGM and conference will be held on 24th November. The conference will have a range of workshops and will be a great opportunity for advocacy organisations to network and share best practice and ideas.

Goodbye to Kiren

Sadly this is the last edition of About Advocacy produced by Kiren Zubairi, our Development Officer. Kiren leaves us at the end of August and we wish her the best for her future career and thank her for her huge contribution to the organisation.

Shaben Begum
Director

The Importance of Human Rights to the Third Sector

Allan Young, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

The importance of human rights to the third sector in Scotland cannot be overstated. I don't know about you, but when I was having my breakfast this morning I didn't think too much about how my human rights would be protected today. Key freedoms such as the right not to be tortured have been neatly written down in documents, so surely that's enough to guarantee my safety and security? Well, as it turns out, it isn't.

> *Without the work and dedication of campaigners across the third sector, many individuals would continue to suffer rights violations without redress.*

In light of this, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) launched a campaign in August to recognise and promote human rights based approaches within the third sector.

Our campaign, The #RightApproach, aims to inspire the third sector in Scotland to apply a human rights based approach to their work by sharing materials created by organisations across the sector who have successfully used the approach, including videos, case studies, blogs and quotes.

Our website (www.scvo.org.uk) features a resource bank to encourage third sector organisations to learn more about best practice in Scotland, the work of human rights-based organisations in the UK and the international human rights framework.

> *The 1998 Human Rights Act has been of fundamental importance for third sector organisations in Scotland. It enshrines key civil and political rights for citizens, providing individuals and campaign organisations with the legal framework needed to hold authorities to account over incompetence, negligence and discrimination.*

The Act has also provided a much needed spotlight to shine on government at local, national and UK level, connecting the international human rights regime with lived experience in our communities. It has helped third sector organisations to see their work in this light and connect with international conversations and fora.

Nowhere was this more evident than with the recent strong participation from the Scottish third sector in the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review of human rights in the UK.

And the impact of the Act in Scotland does not stop there. Whilst a climate unfavourable to human rights has been brewing at Westminster in recent months and years, many campaigners in Scotland are pushing the agenda in the opposite direction.

Many within the Scottish third sector regard the Human Rights Act as a crucial first step towards the full recognition and realisation of all internationally stated human rights.

A short life working group on food insecurity, for example, involved a range of third sector organisations and produced a report, 'Dignity, Ending Hunger Together in Scotland' calling for the Scottish Government to explore adopting a human rights approach to food. Nourish Scotland, and many others, have been vocal about the need for the full realisation of all internationally recognised rights.

However, the campaign for greater codification of human rights in Scotland must be matched with grassroots efforts to ensure their realisation. Far too many individuals in vulnerable situations still feel voiceless and powerless in the face of abusive practice.

The Act has reinforced the legal framework to hold public bodies to account, yet would be largely meaningless to many people if it were not for the presence of the third sector. In essence, the third sector and the Human Rights Act are mutually beneficial.

Full protection and realisation of human rights is not a state at which you suddenly arrive, meaning you can eat your cornflakes without a care in the world. Instead, it is a continuous conversation between individuals who have had their rights denied, campaign organisations who provide support and insight, and those in positions of power.

Without the third sector pushing for action at national and local level, human rights would be in a far worse state in Scotland. It's time we recognised the great work already being undertaken by our sector and encourage others to follow a human rights based approach in their work.

To get involved or share your story contact Allan Young **allan.young@scvo.org.uk**

Allan Young is a Policy Officer with SCVO

Rights for Life: A Declaration of Rights for Mental Health in Scotland

Christine Muir, Scottish Recovery Network (with thanks to Lucy Mulvagh)

Earlier this year saw the official launch of Rights for Life: A Declaration of Rights for Mental Health in Scotland. This landmark document is a statement of the rights being called for by people affected by mental health issues across the country.

National consultation

The Rights for Life Declaration (and accompanying Change Agenda) is based on the views of hundreds of people with experience of mental health issues and those family and friends who care for them. It started to take shape at the Rights for Life conference, hosted by See Me, Voices of Experience and SRN, in June 2015. Following the event, the Rights for Life Steering Group* organised widespread consultation on early drafts regionally, nationally and online.

The Declaration demands that people affected by mental health issues** have the following rights:

1. The right to be treated with dignity and respect and be free from discrimination on any grounds.

2. The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

3. The right to free, meaningful and active participation in decisions at all levels, using co-production as standard and independent support if required.

4. The right to information that is provided in a clear and accessible format, tailored to the requirements of each person.

5. The right to hold duty bearers to account, provide feedback with impunity and access to justice when rights are infringed.

6. The right to independent advocacy, both individual and collective.

7. The right to equal treatment and recognition by the law and to its equal protection and benefit.

8. The right to enjoy the full range of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. In the context of mental health this includes a particular emphasis on:

   - Participation in community and society on an equal basis.
   - A good standard of living and legal and social protection.
   - Access to lifelong education and learning opportunities.
   - Employment and work opportunities.
   - Liberty, privacy and the right to a family life.
   - Security of the person and the right to be free from torture and abuse.

Why do we need a Declaration of Rights for Mental Health in Scotland?

While people affected by mental health issues have the same rights as other members of Scottish society, they face significant barriers in realising them.

People with experience of mental health issues:

- Face unacceptably high levels of stigma and discrimination.
- Can die 20 years younger, are poorer on average and have fewer opportunities in life than the general population.

- Can have their rights legally limited as a consequence of mental health issues and laws designed to protect their rights are ignored with impunity.
- Are excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- Are denied access to timely, acceptable, quality care and support.

The Change Agenda

Central to meeting the Declarations aspirations and demands is the Change Agenda. This is intended to generate action and has initially outlined four high level priorities that Rights for Life is calling for:

1. A modern and accessible mental health system.
2. An immediate Scottish Government commitment to embed rights-based and recovery focused approaches across mental health policy and strategy.
3. A shift in the balance of power.
4. New mental health legislation to be developed in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Rights for Life in action

We hope the Declaration will help inform people about their rights and support their realisation. Over 1,000 copies of the Declaration have already been distributed and many more downloaded online. Organisations and individuals responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights are using the Declaration to inform their policy, practice and responses to people asserting their rights.

At the start of the year the Rights for Life Steering group joined with several other mental health organisations to respond to the Scottish Government's proposed plans to realise the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

We are also greatly encouraged to see that, since its launch, the Declaration has been publicly endorsed by the Scottish Green Party and has the support of the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

The partners involved in getting Rights for Life underway are committed to continuing our support to help take the movement forward. We want to make rights more real in the lives of people affected by mental health issues in Scotland. Watch this space. This is just the start.

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*The Rights for Life Steering Group is made up of people from the Scottish Recovery Network, See Me, Voices Of eXperience, Mental Health Network (Greater Glasgow), Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance and the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

** By this we mean people with experience of mental health issues and those family and friends who care for them.

For more information and to download your copy of the Declaration and Change Agenda visit **www.rightsforlife.org**

Alternatively order a hard copy by calling SRN on **0141 240 7790**.

Christine Muir is the Communication Officer at SRN

Saheliya

Alison Davis, Saheliya

Do any of you have the same problem with funding applications or reports – words and phrases re-used and re-hashed losing their impact, becoming bland, even banal? Like 'staff with lived experience of the problems our service users face', one of Saheliya's key selling points, it just isn't adequate.

Saheliya provides one-to-one support in twelve languages, counselling in six languages, art, dance, and complementary therapies, and learning, training and employability activities, enabling marginalised, traumatised BME women to progress from crisis to citizenship, vulnerability to employability; isolation to integration.

There I go again. I have written that a thousand times, it is what we do, and we do it very effectively, but it doesn't encapsulate Saheliya's day-to-day reality.

Every year our case workers accompany women to appointments with 240+ GPs, midwives, gynaecologists and other specialists, to ensure that they get the services they need.

- 'Almaz' has mental and physical illness resulting from rapes. She didn't know that GP services were free or confidential and wouldn't seek help without us.

- 'Joy' was giving herself eardrops for dementia. Her niece couldn't interpret the consultant's diagnosis of a mental health issue to a respected family elder and said she had a problem with earwax instead.

- 'Fatima' went to her GP repeatedly for over two years and got the same male interpreter; she couldn't possibly talk about 'down there' so she said she had headaches, was tired, had a cold. This meant that her cupboards were full of unused medication by the time our case worker accompanied her to the GP.

We have excellent partnerships with job centres, schools and other agencies. The beginning of those partnerships is almost always the same, Saheliya staff spend a lot of time explaining what our service users need and don't need:

- If a young woman tells you she is being forced into marriage, phoning her parents to check it is true could increase the danger she is in.
- It is not racist to describe someone as 'Black' or as 'African'.
- A 'three no-shows and you're out' policy to deter time-wasters will exclude women who are traumatised, lacking in confidence, are attending in secret, or who may not understand the system. After just a few weeks two women who would have been excluded from job centre services are employed and four women are applying for jobs.
- Living in Britain for ten years, speaking good English and being very charming does not qualify a man to interpret for his wife.

What makes Saheliya staff such good advocates for our service users? There's a woman over there who was forced into marriage; one who has experienced coercive control by the whole extended family; one who is ostracised for marrying outside her religion; one who had to leave school at 16 because women don't go out to work; one who left her profession because of racism; one who escaped sexual abuse at home; there's a woman just here who has made that journey across continents from refugee camp to refugee camp to refugee camp; one who as a tiny child was held down by women she trusted to have the most sensitive human organ cut off without anaesthetic; one whose home was repeatedly attacked by racists; one who has rebuilt her life from the ashes of war, asylum and destitution; there's another who has seen all her family killed.

That's not our service users, that's the Saheliya staff team: lived experience of the issues our service users face.

Our rage, pain and knowledge of survival is channelled into supporting other women to rebuild their lives. That's why we won the Scottish Charity of the Year Award. That's what I will write in funding bids next time.

You can get more information about the services that Saheliya provide by visiting their website at **www.saheliya.co.uk**

Alison Davis is the Manager of Saheliya

Advocacy and Human Rights

Cathy Asante, Scottish Human Rights Commission

Advocates and advocacy workers may not immediately think of themselves as human rights defenders, champions or monitors. However, advocacy can play a crucial part in helping make human rights a reality for people using services.

> *By looking at experiences and issues through a human rights lens, advocates can help empower people to know and claim their rights. They can also support people to hold organisations to account for the protection and fulfilment of their rights.*

One example is illustrated in a series of short films that the Scottish Human Rights Commission developed as part of Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights. These are online at www.snaprights.info.

When Patricia, who has restricted growth (sometimes known as dwarfism), had to go into hospital, she was not given basic equipment like a commode and a zimmer. Her advocacy worker identified this as a human rights issue and raised it with the hospital in those terms.

The hospital responded by providing Patricia with equipment and this then led to policy and practice being changed right across the health board, so that patients are provided with the items they need to enjoy their right to dignity and appropriate healthcare.

> *Human rights are protected in law, both in Scotland's own laws and through international treaties and monitoring mechanisms.*

The Human Rights Act introduced many of the human rights in the European Convention on Human Rights directly into Scotland's own laws. These fifteen well-established fundamental rights and freedoms - like the rights to liberty, freedom from degrading treatment, privacy and family life - are minimum standards across Europe, agreed by the UK and other countries in the post-war era.

The Human Rights Act means that people can raise human rights issues directly in Scottish courts instead of having to go to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. This provides a direct route to justice in domestic courts, which is an important part of ensuring accountability for rights.

Recent legal cases challenging elements of welfare policy like the bedroom tax have used the Human Rights Act in court. Although each case varies on the particular facts, the principle has been established that policies that have a disproportionate impact on disabled people (or other groups) can be challenged on human rights grounds.

The Human Rights Act also places duties on public bodies in respect of human rights. Section 6 of the Act makes it unlawful for them to act in any way that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. This creates a compliance duty that has led to positive changes in policies, practices and culture without the need for individuals to take legal action including, for example, in hospitals and other health and social care settings.

Evidence from the Commission's Care About Rights project showed how implementing Section 6 duties contributed to improvements in care settings, including a more individualised and person-centred approach, a move away from 'blanket' policies, reduced complaints and a clearer understanding of shared responsibilities.

Despite the positive impact of the Human Rights Act, the UK Government has said it wants to replace it with a new British Bill of Rights. The Commission is opposed to this.

> *We think the Human Rights Act does a good job and are concerned about any moves that would weaken protection for people's rights in everyday life. As well as defending the Human Rights Act, we would like to see the Scottish Government and Parliament take bolder action to incorporate all international human rights treaties directly into Scotland's own laws.*

Cathy Asante is Legal Officer with the Scottish Human Rights Commission. She leads the Commission's work in promoting a human rights based approach, with a particular focus on health and social care. Cathy has been practising in the field of mental health and incapacity law since qualifying as a solicitor in 2008.

National Confidential Forum

Ben Lukins, National Confidential Forum

The National Confidential Forum (the Forum) is hearing from people all over Scotland and beyond, who are sharing their Scottish childcare experiences. Being heard and acknowledged has been a powerful experience for those that have shared with the Forum.

> *We have heard experiences around themes such as making sense of childhood, the powerlessness of not being listened to and believed and the long-term impact that care experiences have had on individuals' lives. The Forum hopes to take learning from what people share to make a difference for children in care now and in the future.*

So far, the Forum has heard from over 80 individuals, ranging from ages 20 to 80, about their experiences in various institutions which include children's homes, boarding schools, hostel schools and hospitals. Their time in care has ranged from just a few months to up to 18 years and they have spoken of a wide array of care experiences; some negative, some positive and some mixed. We value and respect anything that individuals chose to share with us.

Most people have come to the Forum offices in Glasgow for a private hearing with two Forum Members, who in their previous work have listened to people talking about very personal experiences. The Forum covers travel expenses and can make arrangements on behalf of the individual and up to two people they would like to come along for support.

Others have chosen to share their experiences with the Forum in writing. This is treated with the same respect and importance as a face-to-face hearing.

> *The experience of taking part in the Forum has been described as bringing a sense of relief and unburdening.*

However, it can also be challenging to relive distressing experiences so how people are supported is very important.

At the Forum all aspects of the impact on the participant is taken into account and this is done in a person centred way as we understand that everyone has had different experiences and the impact of this will also differ between individuals. We are sensitive to how powerful sharing experiences can be and seek to ensure the hearing is as safe and comfortable as possible. This is supported by participants bringing along a friend, family member or someone else, such as an advocate, on the day.

The Forum support team work to inform participants before their hearing of potential personal outcomes and always emphasise the importance of good support, whatever a person perceives that to be.

National Confidential Forum

They can signpost participants to helpful agencies when needs are identified, whether that is before or after their time at the Forum. Throughout the process, and afterwards, participants can access an independent Advice and Guidance Line to talk through what coming to the Forum may mean for them, to support them to reflect on how the hearing was for them and if it brought anything up which they might need support with.

> *The support team discuss the other factors going on in a person's life and support them to think about if it is the right time for them to take part in the Forum. For a number of people they have identified that this is the first time they have begun to think about their time in care and would like to get linked in with support first before sharing with the Forum.*

It is important to address this to support an individual to have as positive experience as they can when taking part in the Forum.

The role of a supporter, such as an advocate, is very important throughout the process of engaging with the Forum for a participant's wellbeing. What individuals want to share with the Forum is up to them and an advocate can play an important part in helping someone organise what they'd like to say. For some they maybe haven't spoken about their time in care before or in such detail. This can lead to them feeling a range of emotions associated with how they felt then.

A supporter can help to ground someone, reassure them and support them in a way that helps them feel they are not alone and assist them to access any ongoing support they might identify.

This can make the experience less daunting and reduce any anxieties that someone might have. An advocate can also go into the hearing with the participant if they wish; this can also give reassurance to the individual if they feel overwhelmed or simply feel more at ease with someone by their side.

Anyone who wants to take part in the Forum must be over 16 years old and no longer in care. Institutional care includes residential care or health service or boarding school and could have been run by a local authority, health board, a private provider or a charity.

Anyone interested in finding out more can call the Forum's support team free on:
0800 121 4773

email:
information@nationalconfidentialforum.org.uk

visit the Forum's website
www.nationalconfidentialforum.org.uk

Ben Lukins is a Project Manager at the National Confidential Forum

See Me

Nick Jedrzejewski, See Me

Calum Irving has started as the new Director at See Me, the Scottish programme to end mental health discrimination.

Calum will lead the programme in the next phase of tackling mental health stigma in Scotland.

A big area of focus for the next phase of See Me will be tackling discrimination in health and social care. This has been identified as one of the key areas where people with mental health conditions face stigma and discrimination.

Advocacy is vital to preventing people being discriminated against in this area, particularly at times of crisis.

“I’m delighted to be See Me’s new Director and taking on this new challenge. Tackling stigma and discrimination has been a critical part of my life at work and beyond and I am excited to join a movement that I believe is on the cusp of major change.”

> *“Already See Me sees advocacy as a vital right for people experiencing mental health problems. In the Rights for Life declaration, created by hundreds of people with lived experience across Scotland, alongside ourselves, the Scottish Recovery Network and Voices of Experience, the right to individual and collective advocacy was highlighted as one of the eight most important rights that need to be protected”*

See Me

End mental health discrimination

I’m keen to see work in this area taken forward.

> *“Now more than ever we have an incredible opportunity to ensure no one in Scotland faces stigma and discrimination just because they experience a mental health problem.”*

“See Me’s campaigns, community development and partnership approach can be developed further, particularly within health and social care, where advocacy is vital, to achieve our aim of ensuring people experiencing mental health problems can live fulfilled lives.”

For more information contact:
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Website: **www.seemescotland.org**

How to Digitally Include People Who are Blind or Partially Sighted?

Ian Brown, RNIB Scotland

New technology has brought an explosion of information and services to our fingertips. The click of a mouse and we can book holidays, GP appointments, pay bills, order shopping, check bank accounts and contact friends and family.

But what if you are blind or partially sighted? How do you take part in the online world if you struggle to see a screen? Don't worry - help is at hand. Over 1,800 people with sight loss in Scotland have already been helped by a Lottery-funded project led by RNIB Scotland.

Online Today is holding one-to-one and group sessions across the country to make sure that no one with a sight problem need be left behind in today's digital revolution.

"Many of today's latest smartphones and tablets now come with in-built accessibility features that can make it far easier for someone with a visual impairment to use," says Sheila Sneddon, who manages the Online Today team in Scotland.

"You can enlarge and change the type of font used in the text, change the background colour for better contrast, and use software that reads text to you through an earphone. Many of the people we introduce these basic features to never even knew they were there. They'd simply assumed they wouldn't be able to use new technology.

"But that would mean they were excluding themselves from a vast range of everyday activities - because so many things we do nowadays are done online. Sometimes exclusively online."

The Online Today team talks blind and partially sighted people through the basics of how smartphones and tablets can be configured to maximise their accessibility.

"Our sessions are very informal, not aimed at people who already have an interest in new technology," says Sheila. "Many, though not all, people with sight loss are older, so perhaps less likely to be as familiar as younger people with going online. So we demonstrate the relevant features of whatever device they have in easy to understand, non-jargon language. And the feedback we have received from clients is very positive."

Janet from Dundonald in South Ayrshire, who has blurred, fragmented vision attended an Online Today session in Glasgow and was delighted with the results. She had struggled to use her iPad but is now much more confident and has since bought an iPhone 6 Plus, as well.

"I am relaunched on a wave of enthusiasm," Janet said, "determined to use my iPad a whole lot more and to meet the challenge of 'taming' the iPhone! Without the Online Today team my iPad would still be snoozing in a drawer, and they also gave me the push I required to get onboard the smartphone train!"

Lorna from Armadale in West Lothian has sight loss due to diabetic retinopathy. "I only lost my sight two years ago so I wasn't very up on what was available for the visually impaired," she said. "Now I can really only see shadows.

"I'd used the iPhone and iPad before but had no idea of the accessibility features that were available, like enlarging the keyboards and the 'Rotor' voice-over feature that allows you to more easily navigate through the phone. The Online Today session helped me realise I could do so much more with the phone. It's really boosted my confidence."

For more information contact Ian Brown
0131 652 3164 Ian.Brown@rnib.org.uk

Introducing SRN's New Director: Frank Reilly

Christine Muir, Scottish Recovery Network

The Scottish Recovery Network (SRN) has a new Director. Here we learn a little bit more about him.

You started at SRN in June, how has it been so far?

It's been a whirlwind. There has been a lot to take on board in a very short space of time. It's been extraordinarily exciting seeing the range of things the network is involved in and have been leading.

Why did you want to work with SRN?

SRN has been so influential over the last twelve years in pretty much every area of mental health and it has changed the landscape dramatically. SRN has not done this alone but is one of the driving forces enabling people to consider mental health in a totally different way.

The organisation has prompted people to consider what wellness means to the individual and that is so important to me. It can be very easy for people to have in their mind a picture of what a 'normal' person is supposed to be but I have yet to meet that person. We are all different and all exceptional and that is central to the recovery message.

What does recovery mean to you?

In the past I might not have framed what I was doing to keep well as recovery but in retrospect it was.

One thing that keeps me well is playing music on a regular basis, particularly the ukulele. I even took it on holiday and my family play as well. It is good fun and a very easy thing to pick up.

I know now what my strengths are and I think this is one of the key messages from SRN – to focus on peoples strengths. Sometimes it can be difficult to see your own strengths. SRN works hard to promote and support approaches and tools to help people work through this.

We need to move away from such a deficit focused assessment of health in general but particularly in relation to mental health. Wellness to me is about the positive things in my life that I do and can continue to do.

What are you looking forward to most in your new role?

The challenge. I have come from working in a closed institution but this is not where I started my career. What I am looking forward to is re-engaging with all of the background I had in the past within addiction and then in mental health planning services in communities. It was all about relationships. That was such a joyful thing to do: making things happen that made a difference to people.