



Scottish
Independent
Advocacy
Alliance



SIAA Advocacy Map: Sustainability of Independent Advocacy in Scotland

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Introduction

SIAA are delighted to introduce the Advocacy Map: Sustainability of Independent Advocacy in Scotland report. 28 Advocacy organisations contributed to the Advocacy Map representing 71% of the SIAA membership. Please note that some organisations reported that they were unable to complete the survey due to specific capacity issues they were experiencing at the time. The theme of sustainability of advocacy organisations is highlighted in this report. We asked advocacy organisations a number of questions relating to their advocacy provision during 2020-2022.

In conjunction to SIAA seeking information from members, the Mental Welfare Commission sought information from Health and Social Care Partnerships about planning and provision of independent advocacy in their specific area. You can read more about the findings and recommendations in their report [The right to advocacy – a review of advocacy planning across Scotland](#)'.

Previous Advocacy Maps have focused on provision and funding of independent advocacy across Scotland. Whilst this is important we were keen to understand what story the data was telling and to understand the prevalent issues for independent advocacy across Scotland. Jenny from The Lasting Difference supported us to analyze the data and focus on the specific themes in the report. We hope that future advocacy maps can focus beyond the quantitative data and understand the impact and lasting difference independent advocacy is collectively making for the people of Scotland.

Sustainability of Independent Advocacy in Scotland

As part of SIAA's Advocacy Map, organisations shared information which paints a picture of the current position and challenges of the independent advocacy sector.

Twenty-eight respondents from SIAA's membership completed the mapping survey. The themes that arose linked clearly to factors relating to sustainability, both for provider organisations and the whole system of independent advocacy. The collated data has been mapped against indicators in [The Lasting Difference Toolkit](#) to gain an understanding of how members are responding to challenges relating to sustainability.

The toolkit identifies five sustainability capabilities:

- Involvement
- Income generation
- Innovation
- Improvement
- Impact measurement

This report highlights the key information from the Advocacy Map relating to each capability. The sample size of data received does not reflect the full range of organisations offering independent advocacy and does mean that there is potential of some results being skewed. However, it does give a starting point in allowing us to understand sustainability issues in the sector. This report sets out areas we hope to explore more deeply with the SIAA membership.

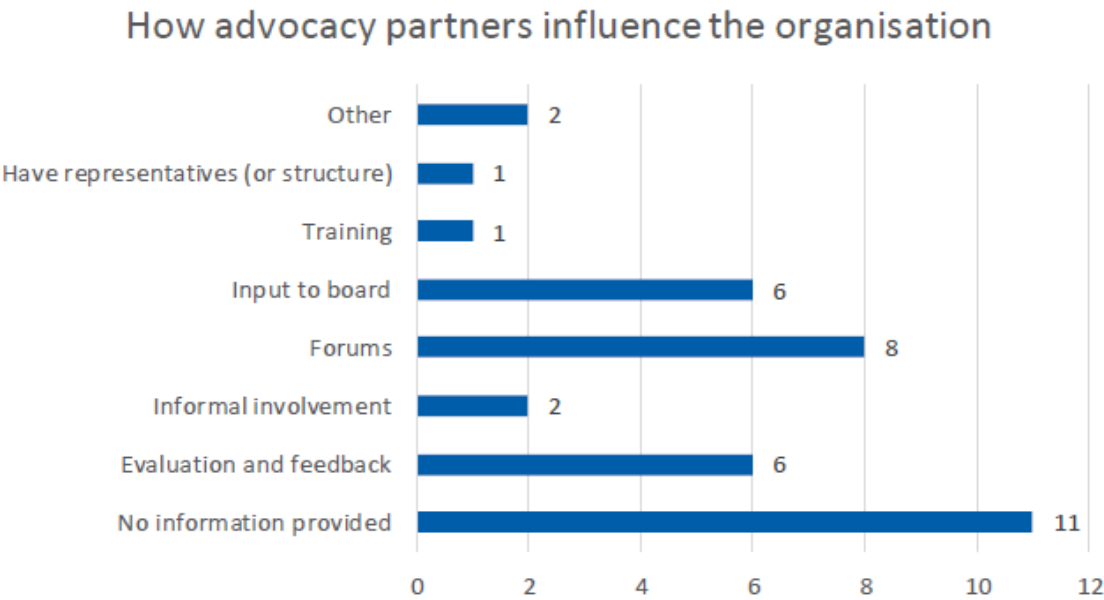
This will support SIAA and its members to contribute to the development of a sustainable advocacy system across Scotland. By working together, we can shine a light on issues, particularly relating to capacity, in the system.

Involvement

Involvement supports sustainability by creating ownership and generating buy-in from people, communities, colleagues and partners. Involving those people in defining, exploring and solving challenges, increases our chance of success.

What we know:

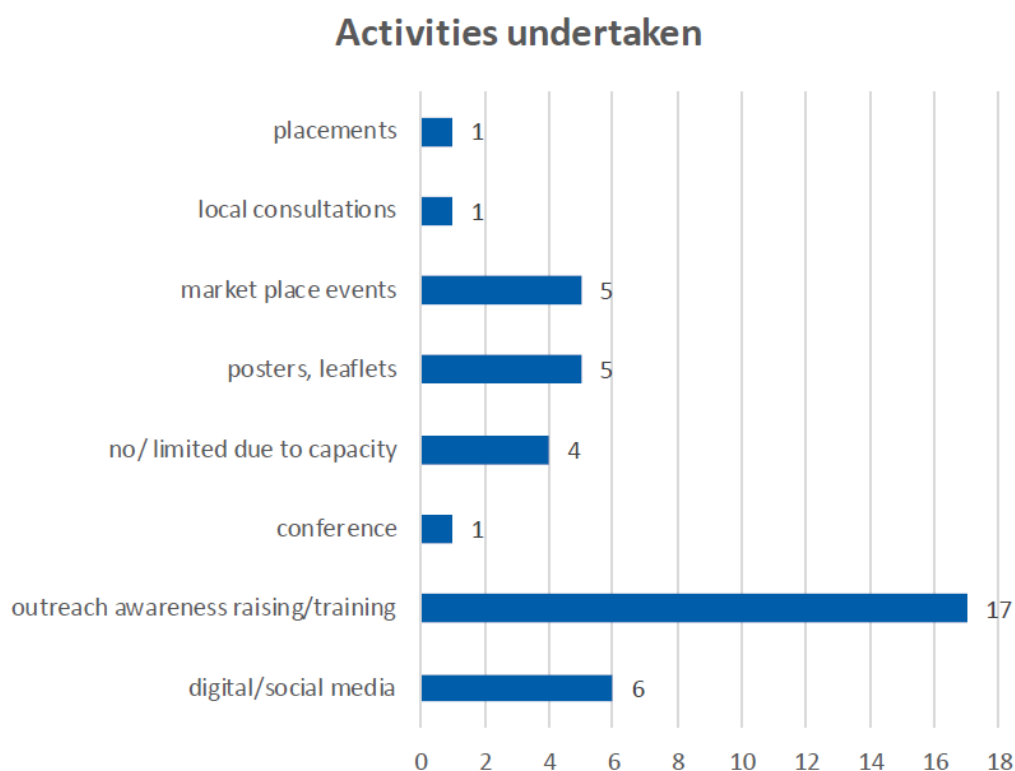
Some organisations use a range of approaches to involve advocacy partners in their work. This doesn't appear to be consistent across the network.



73% of respondents have a service level agreement that requires them to prioritise certain groups which can result in longer waits for non-priority individuals. Defining reach can help organisations be clear on who they involve. Organisations are also using prioritisation to manage capacity.

“We deliver a screening service for all our referrals where everyone is acknowledged and prioritised accordingly. Time is ringfenced to ensure staff can be available (if required) to support advocacy partners subject to compulsory measures.”

Awareness raising is one way that independent advocacy organisations connect with their partners. 93% of respondents had undertaken awareness raising, highlighting the activities shown below. Having direct contact with partners through outreach work or training was the most common raising awareness activity undertaken.



Shared ownership with key stakeholders, be it advocacy partners, referrers or funders, is key to the independent advocacy system functioning effectively. The Advocacy Map data gives a sense that this is happening for some but is worth exploring further.

What we want to explore:

- Are we clear on our reach, i.e. do we expect to support everyone who has an advocacy need within our existing capacity?
- Is involving advocacy partners clearly embedded in our practice?
- Are we clear on the outcomes and benefits of involvement, for our organisation and the people we work with?
- Do our referrers and funders have shared ownership of our work? Do our systems (i.e. for managing referrals and reporting on our work) tie in with our key stakeholders?
- How do we evaluate our partnerships with key stakeholders?

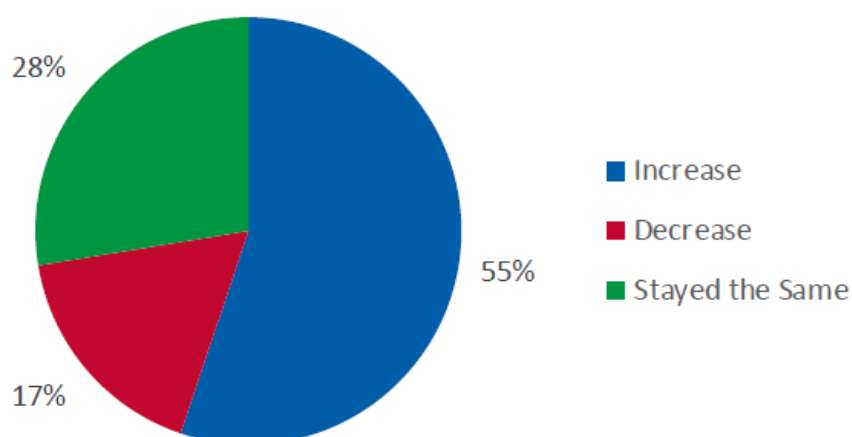
Income Generation

Sustainable organisations take a holistic approach to generating income, gaining revenue from different sources. Building relationships with funders and donors helps us to understand what they are receiving in return.

What we know:

Our members are affected by recent increases in the cost of living and changes to core funding. This has made it increasingly difficult for funding to cover the true costs of delivering independent advocacy.

What has happened to core funding
since the 2017/18 survey?



Comments about the impact of changes to funding made in our survey, can be grouped into the following themes. The numbers in brackets relate to the number of comments in the theme.

How have changes to your funding affected your organisation?

Funding change	Result	Long term impact
Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More staff hours (6) • New programme (2) • Update to core assets (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to respond to increase in costs (4) • Increase in provision (2) • Change salary banding (1) • Increase in referrals, staffing maintained (1) • Despite increase, reserves used (1)
Same	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity issues/prioritisation (4) • Increase in demand (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with increase in costs (4) • Sustainability concerns (3) • Reserves used (2)
Decrease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity issues/prioritisation (2) • Change absorbed (1) • Cuts to staffing & premises (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability concerns (2)

“The demand for independent advocacy has significantly increased during this period and we have used our reserves to increase capacity to meet this. The position is not sustainable for the future and demand is now outstripping resource.”

“[The decrease in funding] reduces delivery and increases demand on members as well as workers and contributes to uncertainty as planning beyond short term and reactive rather than proactive responses are required.”

“Although we have had a small increase in funding, it has in no way kept pace with the financial exigencies faced by the organisation over the time period.”

Organisations have been able to generate income from a mix of public sector and grant funding. 64% of the respondents had put in at least one application for grant funding from 1/4/20 to 31/3/22, with a 64% success rate. Organisations that used grant funding within this period gained an average additional income of £144,918. This suggests that resources are being used effectively to generate further income, but it would be useful to explore if this is the case, and whether the grant funding sourced covers the true delivery costs.

Demand for independent advocacy is increasing and any changes to funding appear to impact capacity; increases in funding are used to increase provision, reductions or stasis in funding create sustainability problems.

What we want to explore:

- How are organisations managing to balance contract requirements with organisational aims and strategy?
- Do we understand the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of the promotional and income generation work we do? Are there other unplanned benefits (and costs) of seeking additional income (for example, impacting capacity for innovation)?
- How can we collectively raise our profile to ensure the true costs and impact of our work are understood?

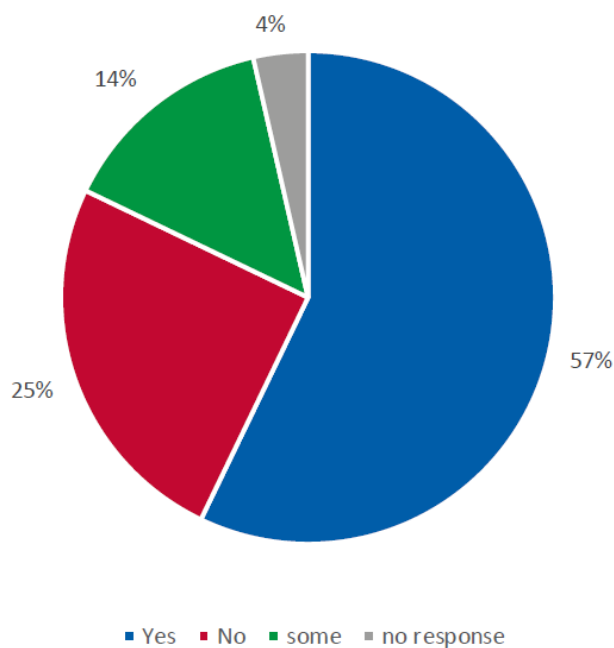
Innovation

Innovation supports sustainability as it improves your ability to adapt and evolve in changing circumstances.

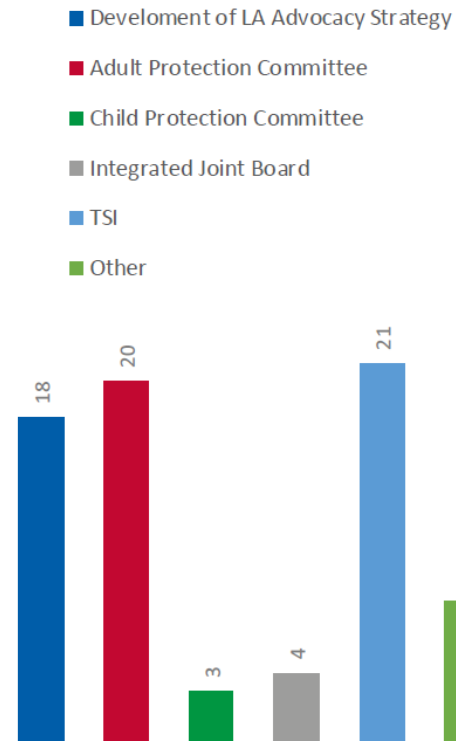
We did not explicitly ask about this in the survey, but it would be useful to share practice and develop approaches for innovating collaboratively across the SIAA membership.

Independent advocacy organisations have a role in the development of local strategy, but the survey shows that opportunity for involvement is varied. Only 71% of respondents identified having at least some involvement in strategy development. Being actively involved (working with others, rather than being consulted on the work of others) gives an opportunity to innovate new approaches to common challenges.

Have you been involved / consulted with in the development of your Local Authority/Health Board/HSCPs Advocacy Strategy / Plan?



Areas of Involvement in Local Area



What we want to explore:

- How do organisations create the capacity to invest in new ideas and innovations (e.g. piloting new approaches, small tests of change)?
- How can we work together to create learning across the network?
- How have organisations that have been able to develop new programmes or services captured the learning?
- Can any organisations share positive practice about their problem-solving and decision-making processes?
- What does local strategic involvement look like and how can we improve our influence? Are we seen as a source of knowledge about our sector by others?
- How do our members perceive SIAA's ability to have a national influence?

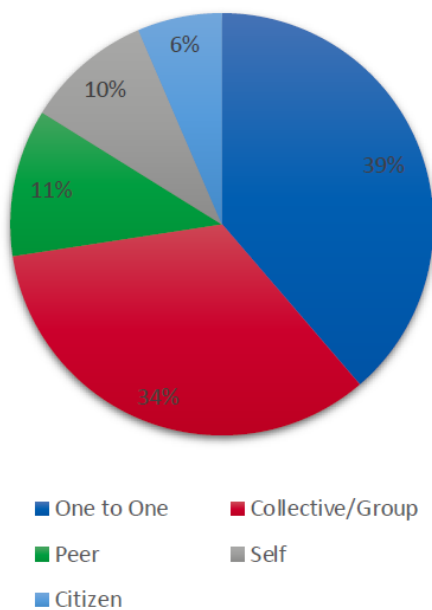
Improvement

Improvement helps sustainability by ensuring organisations' work is good and always getting better. Improvement initiatives should be linked to core purpose and strategy and a culture of learning is needed. Sustainable organisations navigate and manage external pressures to make sure they work within capacity without compromising their values.

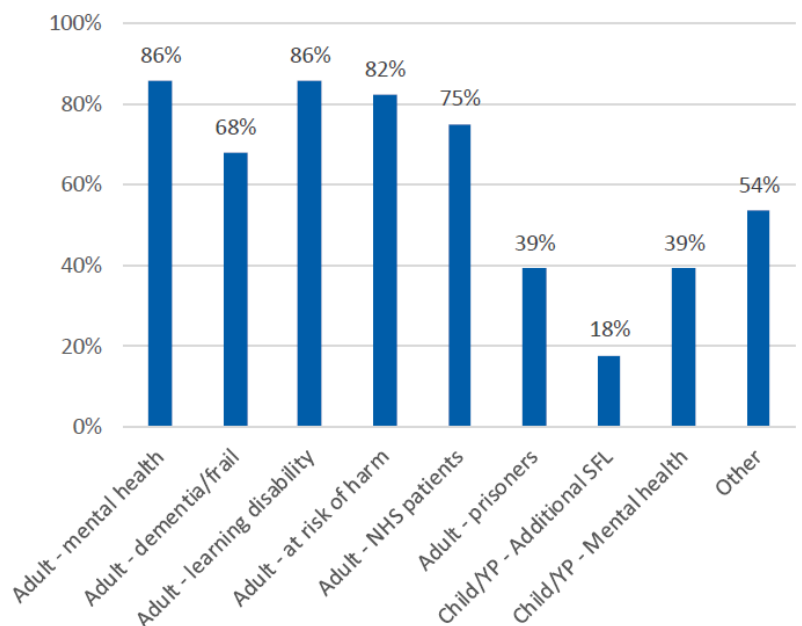
What we know:

SIAA members offer a range of advocacy approaches to a range of client groups.

Types of advocacy provided

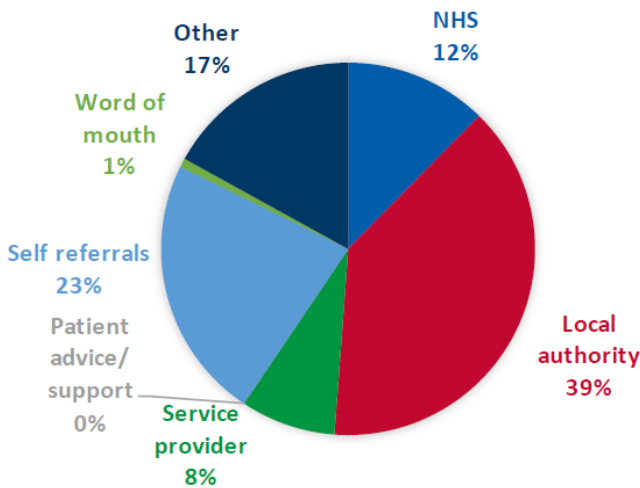


Percentage of advocacy organisations working with different advocacy partners or groups

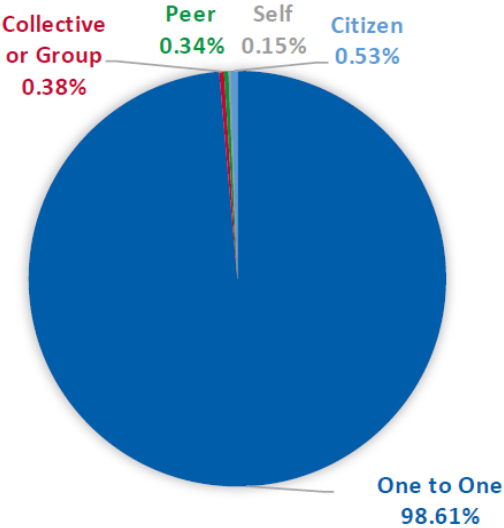


Referrals come from a range of sources, but the majority of referrals are for one-to-one advocacy.

Where do referrals come from?

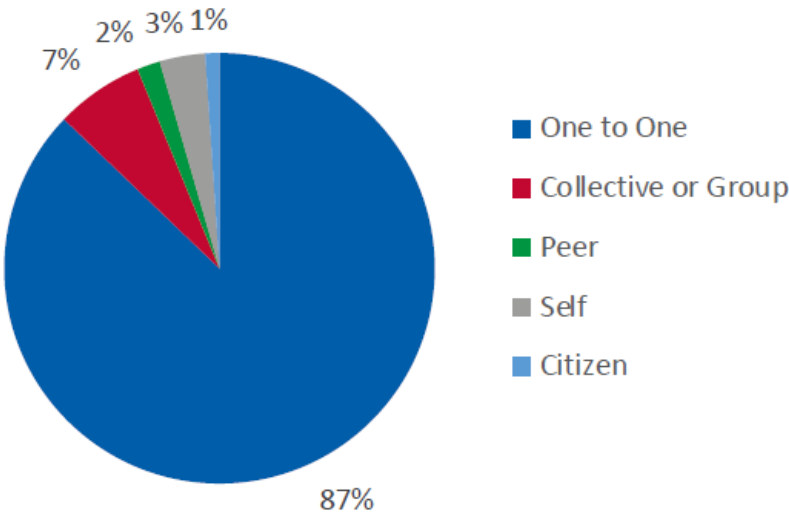


Referral types



In reality, the types of advocacy that people access are more balanced than the referrals received. It is worth gaining an understanding of why this might be and whether the current referral process is efficient and effective.

Percentage of people accessing different advocacy groups from 1/4/2020 to 31/3/2022



Respondents told us they collect and use evaluation information for a range of purposes, with quality improvement featuring prominently:

- Review/improve delivery (12 comments)
- Feedback to funders/partners (10)
- Feedback to board, check organisational aims are being met (4)
- In future funding applications (3)
- Supports Advocacy Partners to reflect on their progress (3)
- In external training/raising awareness (3)
- Measure against local outcomes (3)
- Forecasting trends for collective advocacy (1)
- Ensuring Advocacy Partners have their voice heard and know their rights (1)

What we want to explore:

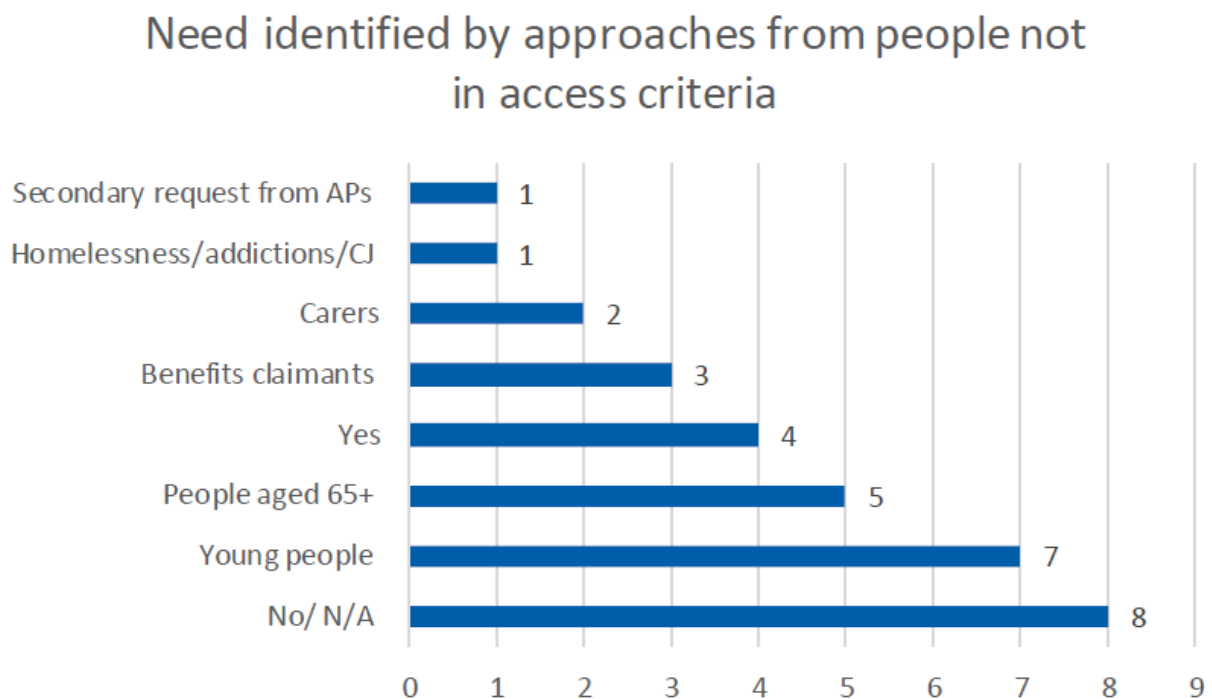
- Do current capacity issues restrict the time and resource we have for exploring improvements?
- Is the referral process effective and efficient? Is there the potential to explore improvements that could create capacity within the system?
- Is the balance of different delivery types right, i.e. does it reflect the need and demand in the system? Could we improve the quality of advocacy, and manage capacity, by doing things differently?
- Organisations are using creative ways to get feedback (see Impact Measurement). How are we closing that feedback loop and helping people to understand the effect their feedback has?

Impact measurement

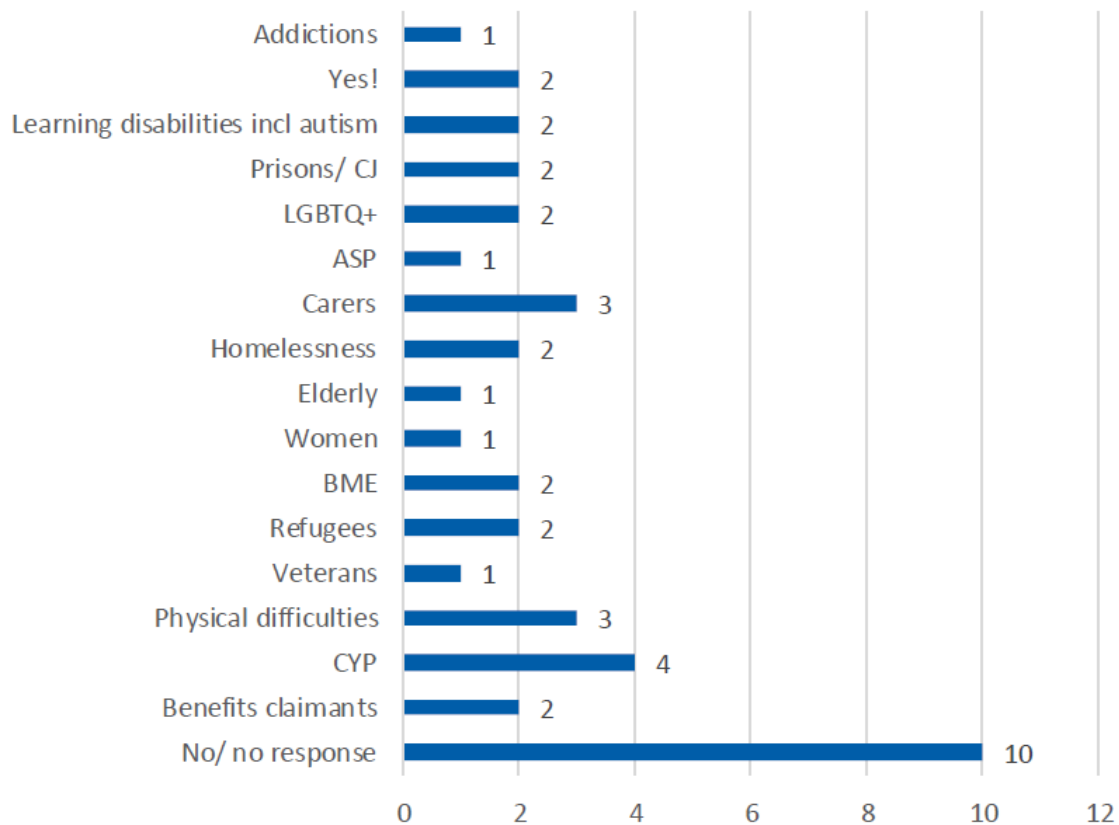
Organisations need convincing evidence of need and compelling stories of impact to sustain their resource. Setting clear outcomes and indicators for success, with evidence from different sources, reduces the evaluation burden for everyone.

What we know:

71% of respondents identified groups with an unmet need for advocacy through approaches to their resource from people who don't meet their existing criteria for access. In addition, 64% identified other provision that was lacking.



Have you identified any other lack of advocacy provision in your area?



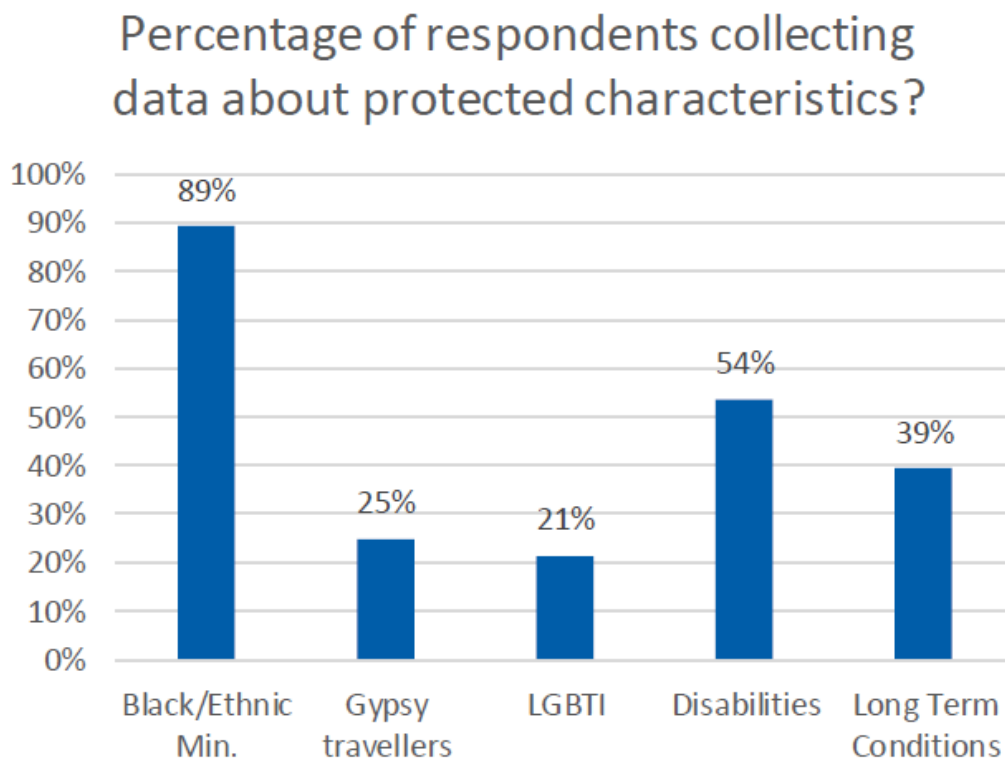
Survey respondents were asked how they collect information about the outcomes and change that they help people to achieve. Their comments were grouped into the following themes showing that evidence is being collected and triangulated from a range of sources. It is not clear, however, how widely spread this practice is across all SIAA members.

How collected:

- Questionnaires/surveys (14 comments)
- Verbal feedback (8)
- Case notes, observations, reflective practice (7)
- Third party feedback (6)
- Bespoke tools (physical or digital) (5)
- Outcome star (2)
- Case studies (2)
- Group consultation (1)
- External assessment (1)
- Statistics (1)

How used:

- Outcomes are tailored to the individual (4)
- Used in monitoring reports (3)
- Set outcomes are used (3)
- Used in case discussions (3)



There is a varied picture of data being collected about protected characteristics, with some characteristics being more widely measured than others. This is being used for the following purposes:

- Ensuring equality of access/identifying gaps or priorities (17 comments)
- For funders (11)
- For funding applications (2)

However, it isn't clear why variations exist in what is being collected.

What we want to explore:

- Is it worth exploring ways to gather data on protected characteristics consistently? Is data collection being driven by funders?
- How wide, across all SIAA members, is the practice of gathering information a range of sources, including practitioners, beneficiaries, third parties and others?
- What positive examples are there about communicating evaluation findings and using them to learn and improve?

Conclusion

The Advocacy Map: Sustainability of Independent Advocacy in Scotland report highlights specific sustainability and capacity issues faced by independent advocacy organisations. Most organisations reported increased demand but where funding has not kept pace, this appears to have created sustainability issues. These challenges mirror major sustainability issues across the third sector.

Understanding the report's findings will help influence policymakers to support sustainable and quality independent advocacy. The report generated questions around involvement, income generation, innovation, improvement, and impact measurement, and future work will explore these themes to strengthen the advocacy movement.

We want to thank everyone who gave their valuable resource of time and information to contribute to this report.