

# Amplifying Impact: 2024 Conference Report





## Who joined us for the conference? Attendees and speakers

26 SIAA  
member  
organisations

Representatives  
from the  
Scottish  
Government

Civil society &  
human rights  
organisations

Independent  
advocacy  
commissioners



### Keynote speaker: Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing & Sport, Maree Todd MSP

SIAA and attendees welcomed Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing & Sport, Maree Todd MSP as our keynote speaker. SIAA were grateful for the Minister's clear insights on independent advocacy (IA), particularly:

- consistent emphasis on 'independent' advocacy;
- the value of various models of IA e.g. citizen, collective;
- supporting effective IA through an asset-based approach;
- strengthening IA organisations that are thriving at the local level;
- leveraging existing IA expertise when planning future provision.

SIAA and members look forward to working with the Minister and civil servants to ensure IA provision for upcoming policy and legislation is strengthened through the expertise of the SIAA members and see the asset-based approach come to life. [Click here for the Minister's speech](#) - please note it has not been checked against delivery so is not an exact transcript.



### Speaker: Professor Alan Miller on the National Mission on Drugs: National Collaborative

It was an honour to welcome Professor Alan Miller as our afternoon speaker, where he described the journey of the National Collaborative in strengthening human rights for people affected by alcohol and substance use. Independent advocacy was noted as important in supporting people and families to understand and access their rights and to hold others to account where this does not happen.

Key developments were highlighted such as the launch of the Charter of Rights in December 2024 and the accompanying human rights toolkit. This will further strengthen people's rights alongside the MAT Standards.

SIAA and members are keen to work with the National Collaborative in making rights real and ensure that people and families can realise their everyday human rights.

'My favourite  
moment of the day  
was Prof Miller!'



### More information & resources

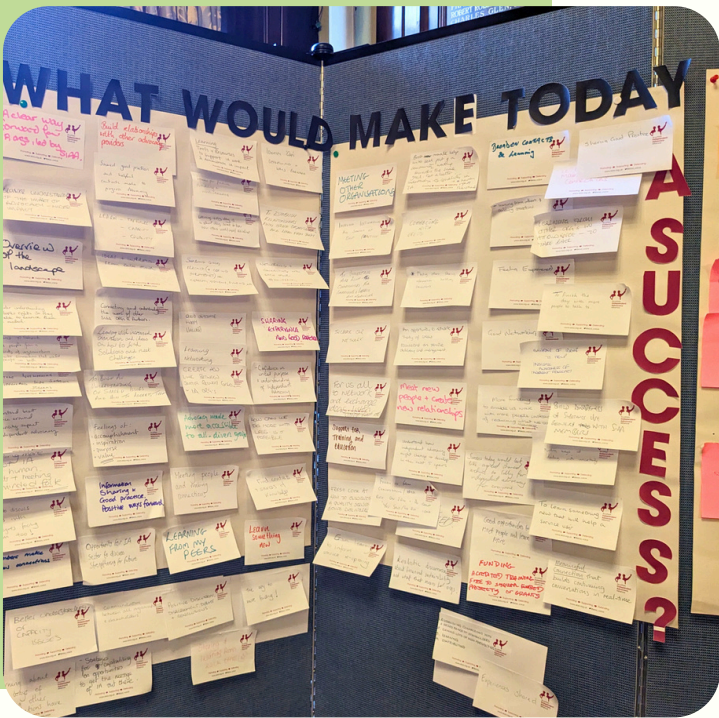
- [Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd MSP](#)
- [National Care Service \(NCS\) Bill](#)
- [Learning Disability, Autism & Neurodivergence \(LDAN\) Bill](#)
- [Mental Health and Capacity Reform Programme](#)
- [National Mission on Drugs: National Collaborative](#)



# What were we aiming for? And did we achieve it?

## Conference aims

- Create opportunities for members to build relationships and have a sense of togetherness
- Provide learning opportunities for stakeholders on capacity and quality
- Support conversations about funding and sustainable independent advocacy
- Provide space to talk about the future of independent advocacy



## “What would make today a success?”

At the start of the conference, we asked about your expectations for the day. Based on your 78 answers, a successful conference would:

- include opportunities for networking;
- facilitate learning, including learning from peers;
- be a space for discussions and debates;
- result in a shared understanding of an issue or future direction;
- result in feeling empowered, valued, and accomplished.

## Conference feedback



We recieved 24 pieces of feedback about the conference. That is about a quarter of attendees. Feedback included:

- Attendees agreed attending the conference increased their knowledge and connections, they heard new ideas and shared their own experiences.
- Overall attendees gave the conference 4.5 out of 5 stars.
- Attendees told us they loved the graphic facilitation, they found workshops thought-provoking and gave us feedback about what we could do better next time... more on that below!



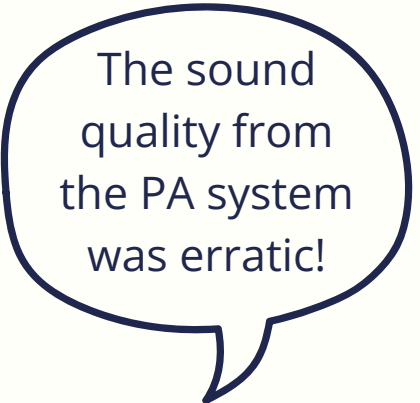
## Ways we made the conference accessible

- Encouraged attendees to take breaks as needed
- Offered a variety of ways to input and give feedback (on sticky notes, through an online form, verbally)
- Liaised with the venue staff to ensure accessibility requirements were met
- Utilised a presentation, which:
  - was sent to participants ahead of the event
  - was a visual aid helping to navigate throughout the day
  - could be downloaded and followed on own device



## What we'll do next time:

- Make sure that the microphone is used throughout
- Double check acoustics and sound quality when selecting the venue
- Provide a dedicated quiet space



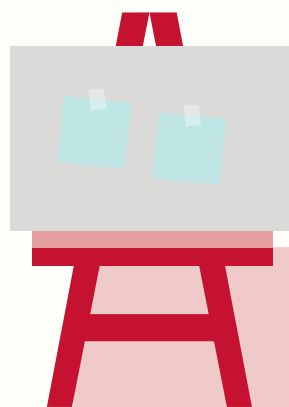


# Conference talking points and takeaways



SIAA would like to thank Clare Mills (Visual Facilitator from Listen Think Draw) for all her work capturing the key themes of the conference and workshops.



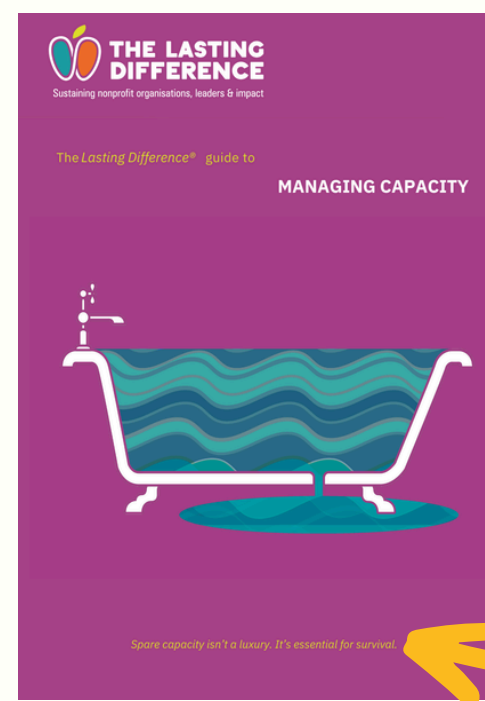



# What did we learn? Conference workshops

## Overview

We were delighted to have six workshops under the “amplifying impact” theme. SIAA members and stakeholders talked about the funding challenges, managing capacity, providing independent advocacy to marginalised groups, and developing learning about independent advocacy. Members also thought about what the future of independent advocacy holds and what quality independent advocacy means.


## Managing Capacity - Graeme Reekie



SIAA staff attended this great workshop facilitated by Graeme Reekie from The Lasting Difference a few years ago, so we were delighted to offer this opportunity for independent advocacy organisations to enable them to learn about how to get to grips with managing capacity. To learn more about how to define, measure and manage capacity using practical solutions, you can visit  [The Lasting Difference's website](#) or explore the guide which is linked on the image to the left.

The facilitators were excellent. My expectations of the content of both workshops I attended were surpassed.

## Fair Funding - SCVO

Thank you to Kirsten Hogg, Head of Policy and Research for SCVO who lead a lively workshop on Fair Funding. The  [SCVO Fair Funding campaign](#) is an array of policy asks and principles aiming to address the funding issues and barriers faced by the voluntary sector. We know funding is an ongoing issue for SIAA members. Click the link for campaign resources or you can explore

SCVO's workshop presentation to the left.



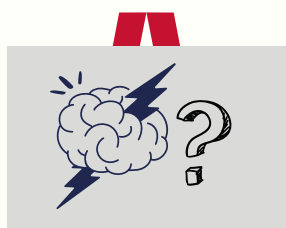
I enjoyed the fair funding workshop as this was able to address concerns I had about my own organisation & realise others are in the same situation

## LGBTQIA+ workshop - LGBTQIA+ Collective Advocacy Group

We were delighted to have CAPS LGBTQIA+ collective advocacy group present a workshop at our conference. The workshop provided information on LGBTQIA+ people, including common barriers faced by the community in claiming their human rights . The presenters also shared their experience of being marginalised as a result of intersecting identities and best practice on how to include LGBTQIA+ people. We'd like to say a huge thank you to the presenters who gave up their time to join us to share their expertise. Find out more about [CAPS collective advocacy](#) or explore the groups' presentation linked to the right +







## What did we learn? Conference workshops



### What do we mean when we say “Quality Independent Advocacy”?

This workshop, facilitated by our Engagement and Quality Officer, Marta Wittek, involved 21 attendees brainstorming 52 questions about the following statement:

**“We need to make sure that provision of Independent Advocacy in Scotland is of high quality.”**

The participant group was diverse and included advocacy managers and workers, Advocacy Partners, civil servants, commissioners and advocacy education specialists.

The goal was to uncover the group’s collective understanding of quality, drawing from participants’ individual perspectives. After coming up with the questions, the group tested out a few approaches to sorting the questions:

- **Thematically** (Whose experience of quality do they relate to?)
- **Prioritising** (Is it possible to prioritise some of the questions?)
- **By stakeholder** (Who should be asked? Who has the answers?)

**Early conclusions were that quality independent advocacy exists in a complex system and that collaboration across the sector is necessary!**

Group’s work resulted in a collection of considerations for regulating, measuring, and evidencing the quality of independent advocacy. Those considerations, together with key takeaways from the Conversation Cafe, were later analysed to uncover the collective meaning of quality. Results will be used by SIAA to inform the next stages of the project.



### Skills in Quality Independent Advocacy

Liisa Lehtinen, our Learning and Development Officer, led this workshop aiming to identify the vital skills and knowledge needed for providing quality independent advocacy. The workshop involved group conversation and reflection. Groups discussed an independent advocacy case study, then outlined the steps they would take to support the advocacy partner.

This collaborative discussion helped identify the practical actions necessary for effective advocacy. Based on the identified steps, each participant pinpointed the specific skills and/or knowledge required to execute those actions. Once these skills and knowledge were collated together, participants reflected as a group on any additional skills and knowledge not previously mentioned.

#### Workshop results

- List of skills and knowledge essential for independent advocacy, providing a building block for developing an independent advocacy skills and knowledge framework.
- Participants self-assessment and reflection helped them to identify and celebrate their own skills and knowledge. Many participants expressed increased confidence in their independent advocacy skills as a result.

Really enjoyed the engagement, collaboration and support offered in workshops.

#### Future of independent advocacy workshop

We were lucky enough to have a workshop on the future of independent advocacy captured by Claire, expert graphic facilitator (see next page for the results!). Huge thanks to Joette Thomas from Animate Consulting for facilitating this thought-provoking workshop.





# WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY?

Live visuals by:  
www.listenthinkdraw.co.uk

Children at the centre...  
What about when they  
become adults?  
**DON'T FANTASISE**  
focus on good doing now



Spend time on the things you can control & influence

Clarity Boundaries Routine  
all help our brain!





## Thank you!

It goes without saying that organising a conference is a huge amount of work, especially for a small team of five! We couldn't have done it without the support of the SIAA Board, and we'd like to say particular thanks to our Chair, Tracey McFall, who expertly chaired the conference on the day.

Thank you to all the workshop facilitators; with a particular thanks to the LGBTQIA+ collective advocacy group members, who gave up their time to present their workshop and share their expertise with us.

Finally, thanks to all the SIAA members and stakeholders that attended our 2024 conference. Your participation, collaboration and energy on the day was what made the conference a success. We look forward to seeing you soon!

**SIAA Team**





## Contact

**Website:** [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

**Find an advocate:** [www.siaa.org.uk/find-advocate/](http://www.siaa.org.uk/find-advocate/)

**General** [enquiry@siaa.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@siaa.org.uk)

**Marta Wittek** [marta@siaa.org.uk](mailto:marta@siaa.org.uk)

**Rhona Willder** [rhona.willder@siaa.org.uk](mailto:rhona.willder@siaa.org.uk)

**Phone:** 0131 510 9410