

Defining “Quality”

in Scottish Independent Advocacy



Scottish
**Independent
Advocacy**
Alliance

Research Report

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About this report

The following document is the full technical report, detailing the research methods, activities, and analysis that informed the findings. A separate summary document, focused on the core findings and recommendations, accompanies this document and is linked in the [Reference List](#).

Any reflections or questions about this report can be forwarded to marta@siaa.org.uk.

Let's keep this conversation going.

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Introduction

In June 2024, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) began working on the “Quality Project”. Its initial aims were to evidence the difference that independent advocacy makes in Scotland, alongside supporting SIAA members in their quality practice which is one of SIAA’s core functions. The project began with a research phase, looking into best practice of evaluation and evidencing impact as well as an investigation into stakeholders’ requirements to be fulfilled by the project.

It quickly became evident that there is no clearly outlined and agreed definition of “quality” in the context of independent advocacy practice, management, or commissioning. However, the concept had been widely explored and discussed over time. This was reflected in conversations amongst stakeholders, where “quality” consistently emerged across various themes, including independence, sustainable funding, procurement processes, and learning. It was also evident in the collection of foundational documents co-created by SIAA and its membership, which outlined the core tenets of independent advocacy, including best practice. In addition, the “Independent Advocacy Guide for Commissioners” (2013, p. 12) identifies six “key factors which underpin good independent advocacy”¹. Despite their connection to quality, these factors were primarily framed in the commissioning context.

The initial research suggested that a collective understanding of “quality” in independent advocacy does exist, having been negotiated and shaped over the years by a range of stakeholders through the collaborative processes of co-creation. However, the understanding was implicit and likely varied across stakeholder groups, and more information was needed to clearly articulate what quality practice entails for all stakeholders.

This insight led to the organisation of two dedicated activities, a workshop and a conversation café, during SIAA’s annual conference in September 2024.

Designed to gather participants’ perspectives on quality in independent advocacy, these activities were facilitated and their outcomes analysed and interpreted by a member of the SIAA team. In this way, SIAA’s organisational perspective served as a lens through which the research was conducted.

This paper outlines the research activities undertaken to explore and articulate **the meaning of “quality” in independent advocacy**, their subsequent analysis, findings, and recommendations. It begins with a section detailing the

¹ The list of the key factors is available in [Appendix 4](#)..

research background and methods, followed by an overview of the activities conducted during SIAA's annual conference in 2024. The later sections present an analysis of the collected data and highlight key themes that emerged. Finally, the paper outlines and proposes five pillars that create a foundation for quality independent advocacy, recommending actions for stakeholders: independent advocacy organisations and practitioners, commissioners, and policymakers. It finishes on a section detailing SIAA's role in upholding quality of independent advocacy and proposes next steps.

Research background

Methods and assumptions

The data gathered during the conference activities was qualitative, or descriptive, in nature. The workshop resulted in a collection of questions, while the conversation café participants provided with a set of key takeaways. Therefore, thematic analysis was selected as a suitable research approach. This method enabled the researcher to identify patterns and themes within the dataset, providing a structured way to interpret the information, addressing the aims of the research.

Because the researcher played a central role in interpreting the data, it was deemed important to acknowledge their academic background and assumptions shaped by prior experience. Their academic foundation lies in critical theory, which seeks to understand social change by examining power structures and underlying assumptions². In that approach, they frequently used discourse analysis, with particular attention to linguistic and sociolinguistic contexts. These approaches, combined with a research interest in collective action, group facilitation, and public engagement, provided a strong basis for gathering information in a group setting, analysing the language-based data and synthesising individual perspectives to uncover a collective understanding.

The key assumption resulting from that background is that individual perspectives, when combined and analysed based on thematic clusters, offer a comprehensive view of the situation they describe. This assumption was further supported by collecting the data in a group setting, which allowed participants' views to be expressed and negotiated in real time. Unlike individual interviews or surveys, the group format encouraged interaction, where ideas could be

² For further explanation of critical theory, visit: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/#CritTheoToda>

reinforced or challenged within the shared space of the conference. The chosen methods reflected a commitment to identifying points of convergence among perspectives on quality, while allowing ample space for difference and nuance. Inspired by convergent facilitation methods³, this approach aimed to encourage creative responses to the challenge posed by the research goals. Their analysis, supplemented by contextual background through the researcher's academic and organisational lens, aims to uncover the implicit collective meaning, which would be otherwise impossible to capture by investigating the individual perspectives only.

Regulations and shared standards in independent advocacy

Understanding the complex regulatory landscape of independent advocacy in Scotland is essential for the discussion of quality in the sector. Regulation can be defined as “the use of rules, incentives and penalties to change the behaviour” and is sometimes set in law through secondary legislation; that power to set standards, enforce them and/or monitor compliance, can be carried out by governmental or non-governmental bodies both under statutory powers or in a self-regulatory manner which is based on mutually agreed standards for quality, safety or ethics (Institute for Government, 2024).

Currently in Scotland, there is not just one body that regulates the sector, which would set the standards, monitor, and enforce them. This means that when speaking about existing regulation of independent advocacy, we can only speak about what is set out in primary and secondary legislation, which are enforceable by law. However, a piece of comprehensive legislation regulating “independent advocacy”, its definition and standards does not currently exist. Rather, different pieces of legislation mention independent advocacy in a variety of contexts, and at times attempt at providing a definition. This wording varies significantly across different policy areas, further adding to the complexity of the landscape.

Apart from the regulations, there are pieces of best practice guidance which aim to clarify how the regulation should be applied, and which standards should be followed, for instance:

- “Best Practice for Effective Access and Involvement of Independent Advocacy for an Adult in Adult support and Protection Processes” (2024);

³ Further information and resources about convergent facilitation:
<https://convergentfacilitation.org/>

- “Advocacy in the Children’s Hearings System: Guidance document” (2020);
- “Independent Advocacy: Guide for Commissioners” (2013) (relating to implementation of the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003).

These sources of best practice guidance are at times co-created with, or developed with feedback of, stakeholders across the sector, and can – but not always do – reflect the current consensus regarding shared standards set in foundational documents of independent advocacy described below.

SIAA’s membership has historically been actively involved in co-creating the key foundational documents for independent advocacy. These include the following:

- “Outcomes Framework: Toolkit for Demonstrating the Impact of Independent Advocacy” (2024);
- “Definition and Components of Independent Advocacy” (2024);
- “Independent Advocacy Principles, Standards, and Code of Best Practice” (2019);
- “Independent Advocacy: An Evaluation Framework” (2010).

These documents capture the core values and essential components of independent advocacy, addressing best practice, setting standards for advocates and organisations, and the outcomes that best practice can achieve, thus setting a comprehensive framework for quality. Developed through the aid of multi-year, sector-wide dialogue, these sources reflect the years of professional experience of practitioners and the voices of Advocacy Partners and groups they support.

As the sector evolves, these documents evolve too. They are being continuously refined to reflect the shared understanding resulting from sector’s changing realities. They are widely adopted and collaboratively agreed upon, therefore they represent the most robust guidance for the Scottish independent advocacy sector. Importantly, these standards never contradict the regulatory wording; rather, they add and build upon it, offering a more comprehensive and actionable interpretation.

Activity 1: Stakeholder Workshop

The following section provides with an overview of the workshop's design, drawing links to the ways activities and flow of the session informed data collection.

Workshop aims and objectives

The main goal of the workshop, titled "What do we mean when we say, "Quality Independent Advocacy?", echoed the overall aims of the research, which was to tap into participants' collective understanding of quality independent advocacy and record that information for further analysis.

The collective perspective was to emerge from collation and analysis of the individual responses, drawing out broad themes and salient points. In addition, several approaches to sorting the data were to be tested out through engaging participants in a sorting exercise in the second half of the workshop, anticipating the post-workshop analysis of the input.

Based on the broad aims of the workshop, three objectives were formulated:

- To generate ideas about the meaning of independent advocacy through at least 20 questions.
- To test out approaches to sorting the generated ideas, using categories emerging from participants' input.
- To provide a space for collaborative work between SIAA Members and other stakeholders.

Participants

The workshop was one of four options available at the morning timeslot during the conference. It attracted 21 attendees who self-selected to participate. Despite the self-selection, the group proved broadly reflect the range of stakeholders within the Scottish independent advocacy sector.

The group included:

- Managers in independent advocacy organisations (SIAA Members)
- Independent advocates (SIAA Members)
- Advocacy Partners
- Civil servants
- Commissioners (local authorities)

- Advocacy education specialists

Due to this diverse composition, the participants' group can be considered representative as it reflects the make-up of stakeholders with an interest in the quality independent advocacy practice.

The participants were informed that their input will be used by SIAA to inform future work.

Workshop activities

Opening activity

The first activity was a short, drawing-based exercise. Participants were asked to draw "a sunset" in 30 seconds, and then "a sunset they remember" in another 30 seconds. The initial drawings, when compared, proved to have a lot of similarities. The second-round drawings, on the other hand, were more varied and included more detail.

This activity aimed to encourage participants to value their subjective perspectives and draw on them in the duration of the workshop. It served as a "proof of concept", laid out to them in a post-activity debrief, indicating that by merging their individual contributions, the collective comprehension of what a sunset truly is becomes more complete than when they individually consider the abstract idea of "a sunset".

Main activity: Question storming

The main facilitation technique used in the workshop was "question-storming". Instead of asking participants for solutions to an issue at hand, they were prompted to come up with as many questions as possible, interrogating a statement posed by the researcher.

This approach aimed to encourage all participants to contribute freely, under the assumption that it would be easier to ask questions about an issue than provide a definite answer. Brainstorming for questions rather than solutions is theorised⁴ to mitigate existing power structures in a group setting, creating

⁴ For additional question-storming explanations and resources, visit:
<https://adityabarrela.medium.com/question-storming-solving-complex-systemic-problems-b5f775538cb7>;
<https://www.printmag.com/strategy-process/business-design-school-question-storming/>;
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35604003/>.

space for contribution of those less confident of their knowledge or position within that group.

The statement participants were asked to interrogate was designed by the researcher, adapted from the research goals. It read as follows:

“We need to make sure that provision of independent advocacy in Scotland is of high quality”.

The use of active and decisive wording (e.g., “we need to”) was intended to reinforce the collective character of the task at hand. It also aimed to promote a sense of belonging to the sector and signalled the necessity to work collaboratively, promoting shared accountability for outcomes. The “high quality” was drawn directly from SIAA’s mission statement, lending the wording an aspirational tone and framing it as a goal to be achieved collectively.

The statement was designed in that way to provoke an emotional response from participants. Such response was hoped to jumpstart creativity and promote coming up with “as many questions as possible”, thus achieving the workshop objectives while staying on topic.

Participants started with individual reflection on the posed question. Later, they worked in pairs and groups of three to begin with and finished the workshop in groups of seven. This structure allowed for different levels of reflection: drawing from participants’ subjective, individual perspectives initially, moving on to combining and negotiating them in pairs, and lastly, sorting them in larger groups. The researcher moved from group to group, listening to the discussions, providing clarifications, and asking follow-up questions where necessary.

In total, participants came up with 52 questions.⁵ Each was recorded on a separate sticky note. They were each read out loud during the second part of the workshop, and later randomly allocated to one of three groups.

Going through all the questions in plenary ensured that each question was understood exactly as intended by the person who came up with them. It honoured each piece of input, thus signalling that each perspective was equally important. It also aimed for participants to begin reflecting on the 52 questions.

Later, the discussion was prompted by the following questions:

- “What are your initial feelings looking at all the questions?”

⁵ All questions are available in [Appendix 1](#).

- “Is there anything here new to you, a perspective you haven’t considered yet?”

Participants were then asked to look at the questions again and think about any emerging themes or ways the group could sort and categorize the questions. Each of the groups decided to take a different approach.

Initially, the groups seemed to be focused on the “people aspect” of the questions. They sorted the questions depending on the following statements:

- “whose experience of independent advocacy do these relate to”;
- “who can answer these questions”;
- “who should be asked these questions”.

Across the board, participants pointed towards the complexity of the task set out by the statement, which is illustrated by the diagrams and drawings that were created, presented in Figure 1 below.

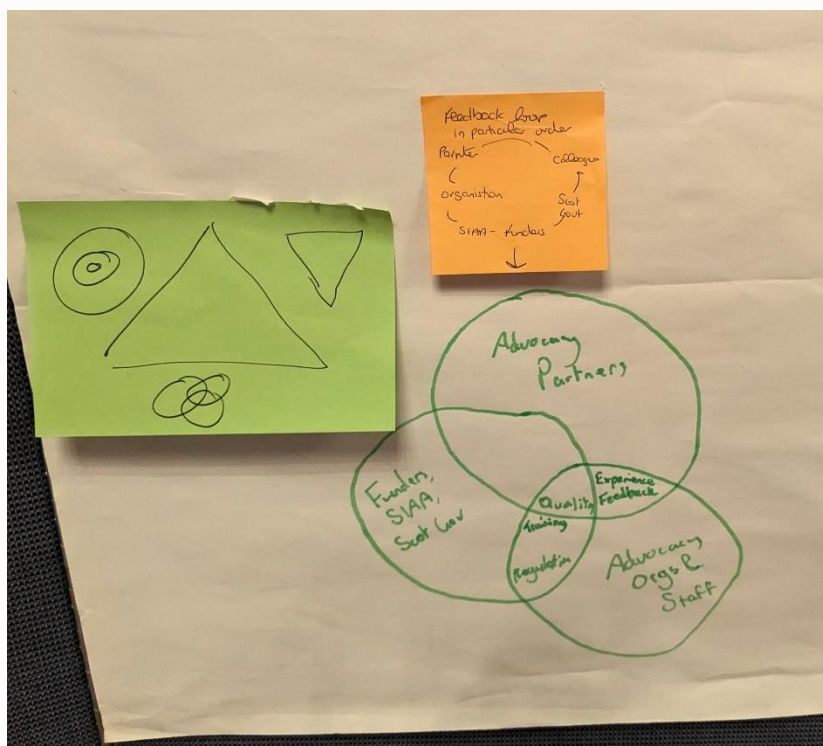


Figure 1 Participants illustrated the complexity of the task and interrelations

In addition, each table was asked whether it was possible to prioritise the questions at hand. None of the groups chose to do so, which indicated that prioritisation was either not possible, or did not seem important, further underlining the complexity of the task.

After the workshop, the questions were thematically grouped by the facilitator to be displayed in the conference plenary (Figure 2). The goal of that initial sorting

was to showcase the group's work and become a visual aid for the subsequent conversation café activity, the contents of which built upon the workshop's initial findings.

Participants' work resulted in a collection of considerations for investigating, measuring, and evidencing the quality of independent advocacy.

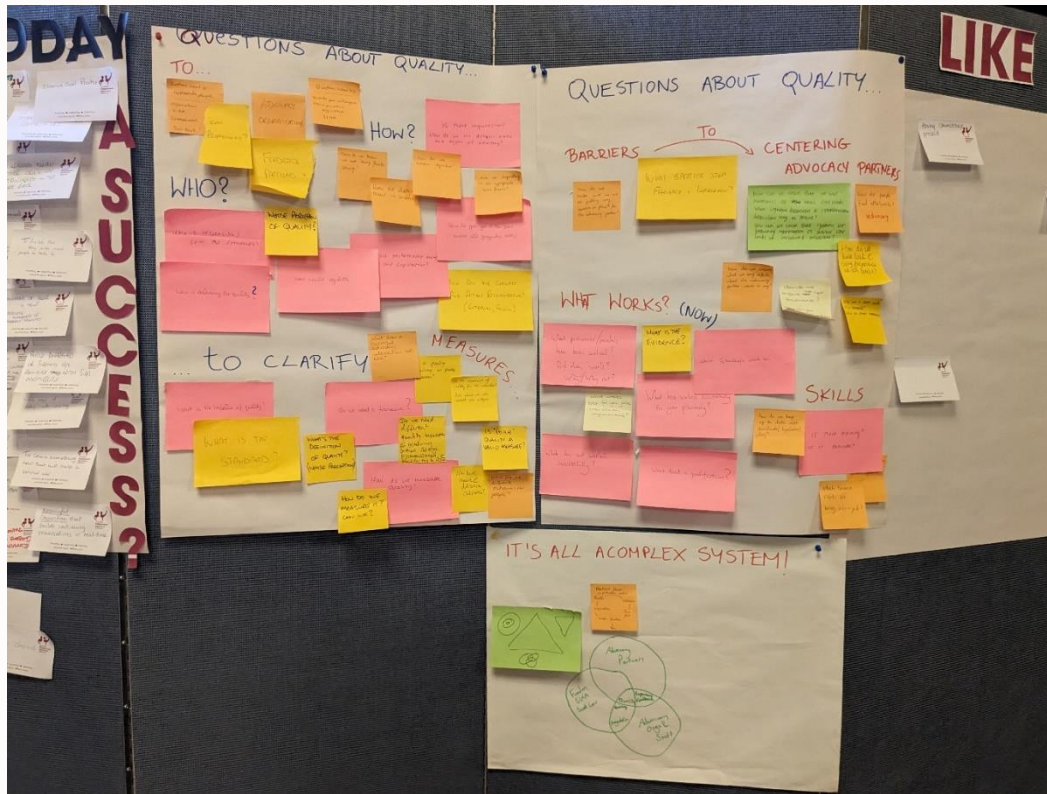


Figure 2 Initial grouping of the work done during the conference

Workshop results: Coding and analysis

The 52 questions that participants of the workshop came up with were later coded and analysed. The coding process allowed to sort the gathered qualitative data in a systematic way, hence enabling its analysis. There were three coding phases, as displayed in Appendix 1.

The initial steps of the coding process were building upon the workshop participants' ideas, focusing on the stakeholders involved ("Who is in position to answer" – SIAA, IA organisation, Advocacy Partner, Funders) and characteristics resulting from the "question" format of the input ("Type of the question") and whether or not there was an answer ("Do we have an answer?").

However, this initial coding did not result in getting closer to the meaning of quality. Still, it was a valuable exercise, as it pointed to the necessity of

collaboration across the sector, later reflected in the conversation café's key takeaways, and final recommendations formulated for the stakeholders.

The second coding reverted the focus towards the meaning of quality. Initial codes were developed by assigning one code to one layer of meaning within each question. These codes were collated into thematic clusters, noting where the experience of quality related to Advocacy Partner, or areas where the question related to the delivery of independent advocacy intervention.

These clusters were then sorted again into wider themes (third coding), based on shared meaning patterns. It narrowed down their number, thus enabling their analysis, which outlined the three emerging themes:

- **Continuous improvement**
- **Quality measurement**
- **Quality regulation**

The themes were further analysed with the research goal in mind, with results providing considerations for defining quality independent advocacy practice, as outlined in the following sections.

Analysis of the themes

Theme 1: Continuous Improvement

Based on questions coded under this theme, it can be assumed that "high quality" in independent advocacy is not static; it is not simply a set of standards that are to be achieved once. Instead, ensuring quality relies on continuous improvement of practice, with a set of standards guiding the direction of change.

Participants emphasised the importance of evidence, such as feedback and reflective observations ("How do we ensure we get feedback?"; "What works best for you just now?"), whilst highlighting the need to ensure accessibility and inclusivity of the "systems for gathering information".

Furthermore, it was made clear that the experience of independent advocacy, as perceived by an Advocacy Partner in either individual or collective setting, is at the heart of quality. The questions highlighted a need to delineate what makes for a successful advocacy intervention and provided suggestions around interventions' components and characteristics that could inform the meaning of quality. Whereas not an exhaustive list, they begin to paint the picture of quality parameters. Based on these suggestions, quality independent advocacy is one

tailored to each individual case, making quality practice person-centred, accessible, and timely.

Continuous improvement necessitates the provision of support for independent advocates and independent advocacy organisations alike, with an overall goal of developing advocates' skills and knowledge. "Training" repeatedly comes up in the questions within this theme, highlighting the need for both availability of the training and its accessibility.

Quality of independent advocacy is also closely linked to an understanding of the legislative context which is continually evolving. Independent advocates not only need to support Advocacy Partners and groups in navigating complex systems but also rely on this knowledge to inform them about their rights - both human rights and those secured under primary legislation. For other stakeholders, that knowledge is essential to ensure consistency across the independent advocacy landscape. Therefore, to support quality independent advocacy is to support professional development and learning in that area.

Theme 2: Quality regulation

The emphasis on this theme indicates that regulation is crucial to ensure widespread quality practice. Based on some of the questions ("Is there regulation? ; What is the standard?"), it can be argued that the sector would benefit from increased clarity about independent advocacy regulations, creating explicit connections between existing regulations, shared standards and quality practice. In addition, there was a degree of repetition with questions around "who" would regulate, which suggests their relative importance to workshop participants. At face value, these questions highlight the lack of clarity about the way the sector is regulated currently.

Further, it is a recognition of the fact that "quality" can mean different things to different stakeholders, reinforcing researcher's assumptions that, on one hand, these meanings exist and ought to be reconciled; and on the other, it suggests that there is a need for a comprehensive set of regulations for the independent advocacy sector. To achieve this, one way would be to meaningfully involve all stakeholders: those who deliver and commission, but also those who experience independent advocacy ("How do we have lived and living experience at all levels?") in creation of these regulations.

Variations in wording and levels of comprehensiveness in the regulation, guidance and foundational documents can lead to inconsistencies in the quality of independent advocacy across different policy and geographic areas. This

dissonance between the contents of the regulations, guidance, shared standards, and the realities of independent advocacy provision and practice was highlighted by participants: “How can performance match policy and legislation?”.

The differences across localities and across the variety of advocacy types and models were highlighted as areas that regulation of independent advocacy should address. This suggests certain recognition that respecting local contexts is crucial for quality independent advocacy and necessitates a degree of flexibility which is to be built into the regulation. Inherently, the regulations are subject to interpretation (for instance, by local authorities), but, according to workshop participants, the degree to which they are being interpreted ought to be balanced with “remaining objective”. This objectivity, especially in the light of current absence of comprehensive regulation, can be guided by the use of shared standards.

Theme 3: Quality measurement

Under this theme, there is a certain recognition that quality is something to be measured, or perhaps something that is *supposed to be measured* to ensure consistent standard of practice. Some of the questions indicate a certain lack of clarity, and perhaps systematised knowledge, on what can and cannot be measured, and in which circumstances. This is further evident in the apparent lack of agreement of what – exactly – is to be measured to evidence quality: outputs, outcomes, feedback, delivery, or “high quality” itself.

On the other hand, questions in this theme also suggest that there are multiple ways to understand and therefore measure quality. Thus, any proposed measures ought to be specific enough to promote a (shared) understanding of quality, while remaining in the sphere of control of those practicing independent advocacy (“Is the measure of quality for the individual, if what we control are outputs?; “What does a successful advocacy intervention look like?”). Furthermore, the focus on alignment in measurement suggests an opportunity to explore shared measurement as a method of evidencing the collective impact of independent advocacy.

Activity 2: Conversation Café

The Conversation Café⁶ activity took place towards the end of the conference and involved all its participants, including SIAA's staff team and board members. The goal was to give participants an opportunity to collectively reflect on quality of independent advocacy, drawing on their perspectives and any learning gained throughout the conference.

During the activity, each table was asked to discuss the following question:

“How do we ensure, as a sector, that quality independent advocacy is practiced throughout Scotland?”

Question's wording was based on the statement from the morning workshop as described in sections above, purposefully steering the participants towards providing solutions to the shared challenge.

The discussion was divided into three rounds; at the end of the last round, each table was asked to write up three takeaways from their conversation, answering the posed question. The activity resulted in 38 takeaways formulated; they were recorded and later analysed.

Initial sorting of the key takeaways was done using a Large Language Model (LLM)-based tool.⁷ Then-identified themes were afterwards refined manually by the researcher, resulting in five final takeaways emerging:

- **Working collaboratively**
- **Professional development**
- **Shared standards and best practice**
- **Human rights-based approach**
- **Raising awareness**

These takeaways provide with solutions to achieving quality independent advocacy, thus supplementing the results of the workshop.

Key takeaways analysis

Working collaboratively lies at the heart of the solution to ensuring quality independent advocacy is practiced throughout Scotland. Maintaining networks of independent advocates, organisations, and other stakeholders cultivates an environment where shared knowledge, tools, and resources enable different

⁶ Conversation café is a “liberating structures” method. Details available here:

<https://www.liberatingstructures.com/17-conversation-cafe/>

⁷ [Appendix 2](#) includes the full list of key takeaways and the results of initial sorting.

aspects of quality practice. Partnership working encourages transparency, while creating a sense of solidarity and collective responsibility for the continuous improvement of practice. As an intermediary organisation, SIAA plays an important role in facilitating that cross-sector collaboration.

It should also be noted that supporting quality is a shared responsibility of the stakeholders in the independent advocacy system, as was illustrated by workshop participants in Figure 1 below. It is not just down to practitioners; it is also about providing favourable conditions in which the practice can occur in. It is about adequate training and resources, regulations that are clear and their interpretation aligned, and sustainable funding structures that supports and fundamentally enables quality independent advocacy. This takes joint effort from all the stakeholders involved.

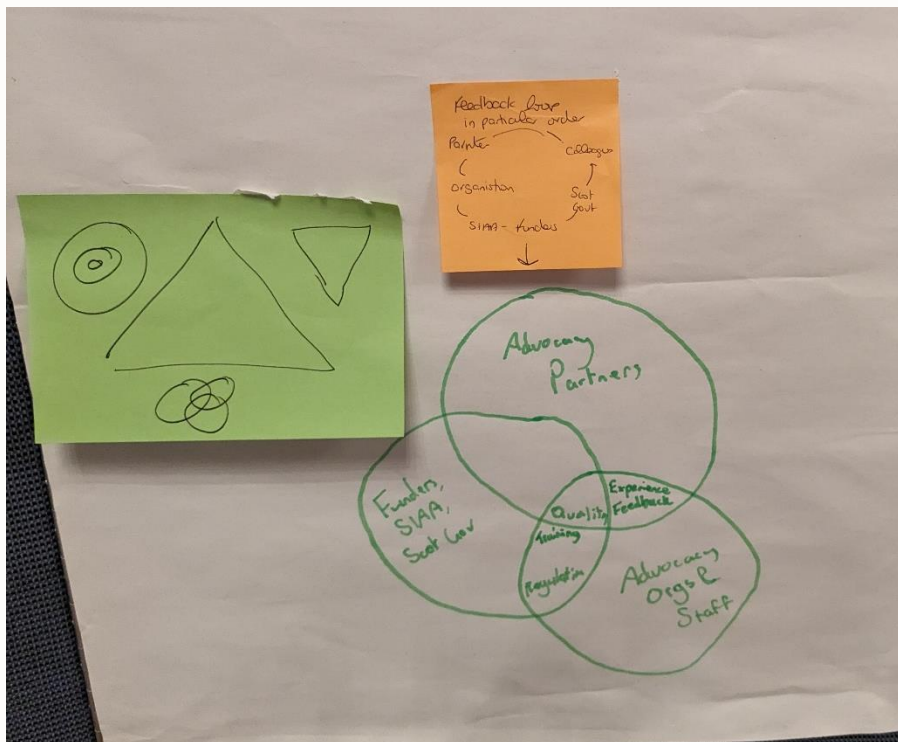


Figure 3 Participants illustrated the complexity of the task and relations between stakeholders

Adherence to **shared standards and best practice** ensures consistency of independent advocacy practice. Regular evaluation and closed feedback loops help maintain these standards, especially in absence of one regulatory body which would check compliance across the sector. While the foundational documents of independent advocacy provide a framework for these standards, the sources of regulation and best practice guidance are not always aligned with them, which can create tension or ambiguity in implementation. Therefore, to ensure consistency in independent advocacy across Scotland, it is beneficial to use the same set of standards, and work to align the sources as much as

possible. It is especially crucial in the absence of comprehensive regulation. Alignment in interpretation relies on working collaboratively with other stakeholders in the sector, keeping up to date with developments, and checking the interpretation against best practice guidance and other stakeholders' views. The responsibility for upkeeping the shared standards lays with all stakeholders, as they each play a unique role in the delivery, commissioning, and regulation of independent advocacy.

In addition, the sector must remain firmly rooted in human rights, which serve as the overarching principles guiding independent advocacy. It also more broadly aligns the high-quality independent advocacy with Scotland's broader human rights ambitions and commitments. Therefore, **human right-based approach** can be considered as another shared framework, further promoting consistency in delivery and commissioning of independent advocacy alike. Within the sector's context, a human rights-based approach is about ensuring that the PANEL principles are integrated into procedures and processes, including decision-making and commissioning, as well as embedded into the day-to-day running of organisations. The knowledge of human rights is also an integral part of independent advocates' skillset, further underlining its importance to the sector and the quality of practice.

Professional development, learning and continuous improvement, is a way the sector can get to the place where quality practice is ensured throughout Scotland. A recurring theme throughout both datasets and emergent in the analysis, it is important that it's made available to all stakeholders in the system. All stakeholders need regular learning opportunities to be aware of the changes in the landscape, of examples of quality practice, of ways to implement shared standards.

Raising awareness about independent advocacy is closely tied to ensuring the visibility and shared understanding of the quality across the system. More targeted efforts might be needed to engage all stakeholders, particularly those responsible for commissioning and regulating independent advocacy, so they remain informed about sector developments, evolving needs, and available support and resources. Increasing awareness among other professionals, especially those most often making referrals to independent advocacy, and the general public, helps build recognition of the value and quality of independent advocacy. This, in turn, fosters trust, drives demand, and strengthens the case for sustained investment. Ultimately, a well-informed system supports continuous improvement and reinforces the impact of quality independent advocacy.

Discussion

Intersection of the Themes

During the course of analysis, certain overlap between themes became evident, especially between quality measurement and quality regulation. It is evident especially in terms of proposed alignment between geographic areas, various models and types of independent advocacy, as well as centring lived experience. Based on that, it can be argued that the measurement, alike regulation, would benefit from a degree of flexibility, allowing for contextual adjustments.

Involvement of lived experience at all levels is an important consideration for each of the three emerging themes. In continuous improvement, it reiterates putting Advocacy Partners' experience at the heart of quality practice; in quality regulation and measurement, it highlights the necessity to involve lived experience voices in creating rules and standards and ways the adherence to them is measured.

Reflecting on the statement that participants' questions interrogated⁸, it can be argued that the role and purpose of measurement in ensuring quality is perhaps to evidence and recognise existing quality. Conversely, measuring quality would also allow for monitoring the degree to which shared standards of independent advocacy are fulfilled, ensuring their alignment, and enable continuous improvement by allowing for comparison against a quality practice baseline established by the measurement. The purpose is precisely where the intersection of regulation, measurement and continuous improvement lays.

Significance of the local context

Independent advocacy practice can vary depending on the model and the local context in which it operates. Being rooted in communities⁹ is essential to deliver high-quality independent advocacy. This is reflected in the "Independent Advocacy Guide for Commissioners" (2013), which states: "Advocacy groups should be firmly rooted in, supported by and accountable to a geographical community or a community of interest"; SIAA has echoed this sentiment in our work and influencing efforts over the years.¹⁰

⁸ "We need to make sure that provision of independent advocacy in Scotland is of high quality"

⁹ Community: people who share an identity, interest or experience, or people living in the same place.

¹⁰ Most recently it was articulated in a position paper "Sensible Sharing: Safeguarding Scottish Advocacy Independence Through Data Sharing Best Practices", 2025.

Therefore, it is essential that the commissioning processes, as well as the measurement and evaluation activities take these differences into account. There are multiple ways to evidence the activities and impact of independent advocacy, and the chosen approach to evaluation will often depend on the preferred methodology, organisation's capacity, and the type of data that can realistically be collected. To ensure objectivity, these processes must be sensitive to local realities, while guided by a shared set of core standards.

To achieve this, engaging meaningfully with stakeholders – particularly during the development of Local Advocacy Plans, commissioning, and setting evaluation parameters – is vital. Meaningful engagement here means using shared standards to ensure all parties begin with a mutual understanding of the core principles of independent advocacy. Co-creation should aim to fill gaps in understanding, not redefine the basics. This collaborative approach based on mutual understanding and respect helps embed local context into the process while respecting the independence and capacity of individual organisations. It promotes greater consistency across Scotland and fosters mutual trust.

Independence

It is important to emphasize that the themes, considerations and key takeaways in this research paper apply specifically to independent advocacy. Independence is not just a guiding principle but a prerequisite for quality of practice. The definition of independent advocacy comprises of the “structural, financial and psychological independence”, which are its key components.¹¹ Without them, it is not possible to practice, manage, and commission good quality independent advocacy, or *independent* advocacy at all.

While the practice of independent advocacy may look differently in various local authorities, the *independence* should always look and be evidenced in the same way.

Pillars of Quality Independent Advocacy

Based on the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that quality independent advocacy is underpinned by five pillars:

- **Advocacy Partners' experience**
- **Evidence-based improvement**

¹¹ The meaning of “independence” was negotiated through years of engagement within the sector, with the clarified, agreed definition and wording contained in 2024 briefing paper “Legal Definition and Components of Independent Advocacy Briefing”.

- **On-going learning and development**
- **Alignment in shared standards**
- **Effective regulation**

Pillars have a supporting function; they cannot be prioritised – one is not more important than other, and together they make a strong foundation for quality practice to flourish. They reveal the meaning of quality independent advocacy: a practice, continuously developed based on evidence, which places Advocacy Partners' experience at its core, is consistent throughout Scotland and enabled by applying shared standards and effective regulation.

Each stakeholder in the independent advocacy sector has a vital role to play in upholding the pillars of quality. The recommendations outlined below are not standalone actions; they are interconnected and often rely on collaborative working, which is a theme that runs throughout. In particular, commissioners and funders and independent advocacy organisations will need to work closely and frequently together. Their roles are complementary: commissioners and funders hold the responsibility for ensuring sufficient resourcing, while organisations and practitioners apply those resources in practice to deliver high-quality independent advocacy.

Pillar 1: Advocacy Partners' experience

Quality independent advocacy places Advocacy Partners' experience at its core.

Placing Advocacy Partners' experience at the core is a shared purpose that connects the themes of continuous improvement, quality measurement, and its regulation. It provides a rationale for ongoing development, captures the intent behind consistent regulation, and highlights key aspects of measuring and assessing quality.

Further, putting Advocacy Partners' experience at the core of practice ensures that support provided to individuals and groups is person-centred and explicitly accessible. It prioritises timely delivery, adapting to the pace, circumstances and preferences of the person or group being supported. Accessibility is not only about appropriate communication or ensuring physical access to a meeting place, but it is about creating conditions where people can engage to the full extent of their ability and capacity at a given time.

In practice, this means that:

- a variety of independent advocacy models are made available to each Advocacy Partner, and the choice is dependent on their needs;
- sufficient time with an independent advocate is allowed to build trust and work at an appropriate pace, to ensure Advocacy Partners have a meaningful opportunity to be involved in decision-making about their lives;
- referrals are accurate and made in a timely manner;
- collective advocacy groups can emerge when it reflects the communities'¹² need;
- collective advocacy groups are resourced and supported to set their own agenda and influence decisions that affect them.

This requires sustainable funding and adequate provisioning to ensure sufficient staffing and organisational capacity. The person-centred nature of independent advocacy practice means that it is often impossible to determine an “average” duration for interventions or how long it “should” take for a group to reach a decision. Any measurement and evaluation should honour the person-centred approach and avoid imposing rigid timeframes or expectations.

To truly centre the needs of Advocacy Partners, a degree of flexibility is essential, both in delivery and in how regulations enable organisations and commissioners to respond to local contexts. Supporting organisations rooted in their communities with sufficient resources is key to maintaining both the quality of independent advocacy and its relevance to Advocacy Partners.

Recommendations for organisations and practitioners

- Have effective and transparent referral management systems in place to ensure timely access.
- Proactively meet accessibility requirements.
- Where resources are lacking or limited, clearly communicate these gaps to commissioners and funders, advocating for the support needed to uphold high standards.
- Work to strengthen engagement with communities to ensure independent advocacy remains locally grounded, responsive to emerging issues, and adaptable to change.

¹² Community: people who share an identity, interest or experience, or people living in the same place.

Recommendations for commissioners and funders

- Ensure that all reporting and evaluation requirements focus on Advocacy Partners' experience as the core purpose.
- Work collaboratively with organisations to understand local needs and allocate resources appropriately.
- Local Advocacy Plans should provision for a range of independent advocacy models to ensure Advocacy Partners can access the type of support that best suits their circumstances.

Recommendations for policymakers

- Ensure that all legislation and regulation concerning independent advocacy explicitly place Advocacy Partners' experience as the core purpose.
- Meaningfully involve Advocacy Partners and collective advocacy groups in the development of regulations to ensure their lived experience informs policy.
- Embed flexibility in regulations, allowing organisations to respond meaningfully to local contexts and community needs.
- Support professionals who make referrals to independent advocacy by establishing clear, consistent criteria for when and how referrals should be made.

Pillar 2: Evidence-based improvement

Quality independent advocacy uses evidence to enable learning and continuous improvement.

The evidence can take different forms, including, but not limited to, reflective practice by practitioners and feedback from Advocacy Partners. When feedback is part of a closed loop – gathered, received, analysed, and acted upon - it becomes a powerful tool for truly placing Advocacy Partners' experience at the core of practice. Importantly, the methods of gathering information must be varied, accessible, and appropriate to the purposes of continuous improvement.

Reflective practice, whether documented in case notes or shared through peer conversations, serves as a form of storytelling. It helps advocates process complex and challenging situations, contributes to professional learning, and provides valuable material for case studies and fundraising. In this way, evidence gathered through regular reflective practice supports both organisational

development and a deeper understanding of the impact of independent advocacy.

Any measurement related to quality should go beyond compliance with contractual obligations or shared standards. It should serve as a tool for learning and continuous improvement, helping organisations identify strengths, areas for growth, and opportunities to enhance their practice. When approached with this purpose, measurement enables independent advocacy services to remain responsive, accountable, and aligned with their core mission. This is a shared responsibility which echoes the Scottish Mental Health Law Review (SMHLR) (2022, p. 148) Recommendation 4.11, stating that “The Scottish Government should assure an existing or new organisation should have responsibility for monitoring and continuing development of independent individual advocacy”.

Importantly, measurement and data sharing must respect the independence of advocacy organisations. Collected data should highlight both strengths and areas for improvement, reinforcing the value of their work.

Recommendations for organisations and practitioners

- Establish new or improve existing systems for regularly collecting, reviewing, and acting on evidence to support learning and continuous improvement.
- Feedback-gathering mechanisms must be accessible and designed to provide meaningful insights into Advocacy Partners’ experiences.
- Review feedback regularly and use it to inform decision-making.
- Collaborate with collective advocacy groups to co-design evaluation that reflect their priorities.
- Ensure that measurement in evaluation exercises is meaningful to all stakeholders.

Recommendations for commissioners and funders

- Work with organisations to allocate funding specifically for evaluation activities, recognising that meaningful measurement requires time, resources, and expertise.
- Structure the reporting and evaluation processes in a way that supports organisations’ learning from gathered information, resulting in continuous improvement of independent advocacy practice.
- Use the information gathered from reporting to deepen your own understanding of the local need for independent advocacy and to enhance its provision.

Recommendations for policymakers

- In regulations and best practice guidance, encourage the use of evidence as a tool for learning and improvement.
- Create opportunities for meaningful engagement with collective advocacy groups to inform policy development and evaluation frameworks.
- Monitor and review the impact of regulations, ensuring they adapt to evolving community needs.

Pillar 3: On-going learning and development

Quality independent advocacy requires on-going training and development of skills.

Professional development opportunities should be available for all practitioners, including independent advocates, collective advocacy workers, development workers, and volunteer citizen advocates. It should also extend to those in leadership positions and administrative positions, such as managers, chief officers, trustees and others, recognising their role in supporting practitioners. These opportunities are essential to ensure that they remain confident in navigating complex systems and changing policy landscape, as well as feel equipped to respond to evolving needs of people and groups supported.

Training must be tailored to diverse learning styles and grounded in the realities of independent advocacy work, with dedicated resources that educate the workforce on shared standards and legislative contexts. Time for professional development must be protected and appropriately funded, recognising that the capacity to deliver high-quality advocacy is directly linked to investment in the people who provide it.

Other stakeholders also require on-going opportunities for learning. Staying informed about developments in the sector takes continuous effort and is required to ensure that commissioning and policymaking are grounded in current best practice. When stakeholders are well-informed, they are better equipped to support independent advocacy organisations, who in turn can truly place Advocacy Partners experience at the core of their work.

The areas for development could include essential skills that independent advocates need to ensure quality of practice¹³, as well as the legislative and policy landscape, human rights and their application in independent advocacy.

Recommendations for organisations and practitioners

- Practitioners: regularly engage in reflective practice, both individually and in group or cross-sector settings.
- Organisations: Encourage regular reflection on skills and work, creating spaces to identify areas where further learning is required.
- Protect and prioritise time and resources for professional development for all workers.
- Seek out and provide regular learning opportunities, including peer learning, for all workers.

Recommendations for commissioners and funders

- Work with organisations to ensure sufficient funding is allocated for training and skills development.
- Stay up to date with sector developments (practice, legislation, communities' needs) and participate in training opportunities.

Recommendations for policymakers

- Stay up to date with sector developments (practice, legislation, communities' needs) and participate in training opportunities.
- Support initiatives that promote ongoing learning across the sector.

Pillar 4: Alignment in shared standards

Quality independent advocacy is delivered, managed, and commissioned according to shared standards.

To ensure consistency in quality, independent advocacy should be delivered, managed, and commissioned in line with shared standards. These standards include tenets written into the foundational documents of independent advocacy, as described in the background section of this paper¹⁴, as well as

¹³ Those skills were additionally explored during the “Skills in Quality Independent Advocacy” workshop that also took place during the 2024 SIAA conference and intended to support the creation of a learning framework for independent advocacy. List of skills is included in [Appendix 3](#).

¹⁴ See the section on [Regulation and shared standards in independent advocacy](#).

sector-agreed frameworks such as the human rights-based PANEL principles. It is essential that the most up-to-date versions of these documents are used to support practice, its management and commissioning.

The alignment in shared standards is key. To illustrate, when commissioning reflects these standards and interprets regulations consistently with those delivering and managing independent advocacy, it helps preventing situations where independent advocacy is commissioned to different standards than those upheld by the local organisations.

In addition to supporting learning and improvement, measurement can also help monitor compliance with shared standards. Tools such as the SIAA's "Evaluation Framework" (2013) offer practical ways for organisations to self-assess their alignment with core principles.

While there is currently no single body responsible for evaluating compliance across the sector, consistent use of shared frameworks for evaluation can promote accountability and transparency, without compromising the independence of independent advocacy services.

Ultimately, it is the shared nature of these standards that gives them legitimacy and strength. When stakeholders in the sector commit to following the same path, even if they begin from different starting points, they build a foundation for mutual understanding, with an emphasis on consistency in supporting Advocacy Partners and high-quality of service provided.

Recommendations for organisations and practitioners

- Ensure that the internal procedures and processes reflect the shared standards through regular self-evaluation.
- Actively participate in sector-wide conversations about shared standards, and speak up when they no longer align with the realities of work.
- When advocating for a change in shared standards, ensure that they reflect the lived experiences of Advocacy Partners and the needs of the communities.

Recommendations for commissioners and funders

- Stay up to date with sector developments related to shared standards, ensuring the most recent versions are used in your work.
- Use shared standards as the foundation and guiding principles during all stages of commissioning.

- Engage with organisations to understand the local context, and use that information to clarify and complement the foundation built on shared standards.
- Support organisations in evaluating their practice against shared standards.

Recommendations for policymakers

- Ensure that best practice guidance supporting regulation is regularly reviewed and updated, with updates that reflect the most current versions of shared standards and sector frameworks. This includes both the creation of new guidance and the revision of existing documents.

Pillar 5: Effective regulation

Effective regulation of independent advocacy enables consistent application of shared standards across models and regions, supporting quality.

High quality independent advocacy that is consistent across Scotland and grounded in the needs of communities depends on appropriate regulation. Effective and comprehensive regulation ensures that:

- A consistent definition of independent advocacy is applied across the sector.
- Shared standards are interpreted and implemented uniformly across different regions.
- All models of independent advocacy are treated equally when funding decisions are made.

Comprehensive and clear regulation that enables all stakeholders to follow shared standards inherently supports the independence of independent advocacy, a core tenet which quality is founded and dependent upon.

Findings from the research strongly indicate that the current Scottish regulations are insufficient to fully support the quality and consistency of independent advocacy. While it is possible to practice, manage, and commission high-quality independent advocacy within the existing landscape, doing so consistently across the sector requires significant effort from all stakeholders. Navigating the complex legislative landscape is challenging; ensuring that it is interpreted uniformly across Scotland, especially without a regulatory body with a full mandate to oversee that alignment, requires trust on one hand, and constant presence at the national table advocating for local realities while keeping in

check with the shared standards on the other. While this collaboration is not without its benefits, the reality is that not every organisation and commissioner has sufficient capacity to do so on a regular basis. Further, a more comprehensive set of regulations could help by freeing up time and redirecting collaborative efforts toward improving the experience of Advocacy Partners and groups, or widening access to independent advocacy, rather than revisiting foundational principles.

It is important to recognise that meaningful changes to regulation demand substantial resources and influence and cannot be achieved instantly. Therefore, all stakeholders should commit to working collaboratively toward strengthening and expanding regulation over time.

Recommendations for organisations and practitioners

- Actively contribute to shaping regulation, ensuring that contributions align with shared standards and reflect the experiences of Advocacy Partners and the communities the organisation supports.

Recommendations for policymakers

- Lead the development of legislation that includes a full, sector-agreed definition of independent advocacy.
- Ensure that regulations clearly outline shared standards and how they are to be applied across all levels of delivery and commissioning.
- Embed flexibility into regulations, allowing organisations to respond meaningfully to local contexts and community needs.
- Build in mechanisms for updating the regulations and best practice guidance to remain responsive to sector developments.
- Facilitate these updates through participatory processes involving Advocacy Partners, collective advocacy groups, and other stakeholders.

SIAA and the pillars of quality

As the intermediary organisation for independent advocacy in Scotland, SIAA is uniquely positioned to support and strengthen the quality across the sector. Some of our current activities are already aligned with the five key pillars of quality.

We advocate for legislation and regulation that includes a full, sector-agreed definition of independent advocacy, and aim to ensure that all models are

recognised and valued by decision-makers. SIAA build relationships across the sector, aiming to reconcile different views and voices, and facilitating opportunities for stakeholders to meet, collaborate, and discuss shared issues - through our annual conference, the AGM, and roundtables.

We have led the co-creation of the sector's foundational documents, ensuring they are applicable across all models of advocacy. These resources are freely available on SIAA's website. We also collect, analyse, and publish data to inform increased understanding of the independent advocacy landscape in Scotland, highlighting areas of alignment and divergence.

SIAA provides dedicated learning and training opportunities for independent advocacy practitioners, including an online learning platform, in-person and digital training, and peer support sessions. Through targeted communications and individual engagement, we connect members and stakeholders to relevant training and resources. This area of SIAA's work is highly collaborative; member organisations are involved at every stage of developing the learning, from identifying needs to co-designing courses and providing feedback on published materials. By drawing on members' expertise, we ensure that the content is relevant and responsive to sector needs, while also fostering peer learning across diverse settings. This approach helps us stay closely aligned with the realities of the sector and increases cohesion amongst the diverse membership.

We also work closely with policymakers and commissioners to improve their understanding of independent advocacy principles and practice. By promoting reflective practice and collaboration, we strive to contribute to a culture of learning and continuous improvement across the sector.

Looking ahead: Future opportunities

While SIAA already plays a key role in supporting the pillars of quality independent advocacy, there are opportunities to further strengthen our contribution. Building on the key takeaways from the Conversation Café activity, particularly the importance of collaborative working, a human rights-based approach, and raising awareness – we may explore new ways to uphold these principles across our work.

For instance, we could consider enhancing the accessibility of our published materials, with a goal of all Advocacy Partners to be not only informed but actively included in sector-wide conversations. Currently, only the “Independent Advocacy Principles, Standards, and Code of Best Practice” (2019) are available in Easy Read format - expanding this to other key documents could help make our

work more inclusive and impactful. Beyond that, SIAA could explore other ways to ensure that people with lived experience can meaningfully participate in the development of independent advocacy.

Given the complexity of the policy landscape and the evolving nature of shared standards, it might also be helpful to develop a centralised resource that brings together all relevant standards and guidance. This could support stakeholders in navigating expectations more easily and promote greater consistency across the sector.

There may also be value in deepening our focus on supporting stakeholders in embedding human rights into independent advocacy practice. This could involve developing new learning resources and working with expert organisations to provide more training. In addition, we might consider how to highlight and better understand models of independent advocacy that are less common and under-resourced, such as collective, citizen, and peer advocacy. Practitioners working with these models may benefit from more tailored support and increased awareness of the impact of their work. Those ideas could help fulfil Recommendation 11.24 from the Scottish Mental Health Law Review, which calls for SIAA and collective advocacy groups to work together to develop a system for meaningful support, monitoring and evaluation of the groups; it also as recommends establishing a dedicated, opt-in learning programme to support their development, including training on anti-racism, intersectionality and human rights.

Lastly, findings in this report will inform the next stages of the Quality Project, particularly the development of a logic model and shared measurement framework to evidence the collective impact of independent advocacy. This upcoming work presents a timely opportunity to bring stakeholders together to reflect on how our shared standards are interpreted and applied in different contexts. This could help identify gaps, surface good practice, and inform future developments. By remaining responsive to shifts in the sector and creating space for dialogue, we can help ensure that the standards guiding independent advocacy continue to reflect its realities and shared values.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of both activities, a shared understanding of quality independent advocacy has emerged, effectively addressing research question by outlining five key pillars. These pillars - Advocacy Partners' experience, evidence-based improvement, on-going learning and development, alignment in shared standards, and effective regulation - underpin and support quality independent advocacy. This expanded understanding does not seek to "reinvent the wheel", but rather to establish shared language and reference points, taking a whole-system approach to articulating a collective understanding of quality.

In its intermediary role, SIAA's core activities and functions involve engaging with a variety of stakeholders. Over the years, we have observed that the language used to describe independent advocacy - its core aims, activities, how it is evaluated, and even people that it supports - varies significantly. This diversity reflects regional differences in how independent advocacy is delivered, managed, and commissioned across Scotland, but it is also a result of a complex policy and regulatory landscape and a testament to the dynamic evolution of the relatively young sector.

However, developing a common language across the sector could foster greater cohesion and solidarity, enabling even deeper collaboration across stakeholder groups. When we speak about our work in consistent terms, it enhances the collective understanding, resulting in strengthened ability to influence policy and practice. Shared standards and comprehensive regulation can provide a foundation for this common language, while professional development opportunities help ensure everyone is equipped to engage with it meaningfully. In essence, aligning how we communicate about independent advocacy is a vital step toward building a more unified and impactful sector.

This work has highlighted how crucial it is for all stakeholders to align efforts, regulations, standards, and practice in order to ensure quality of independent advocacy. With its sector-wide perspective, SIAA is well-placed to identify areas that may require further development or a more tailored approach, and can do so through research, thus documenting a current consensus amongst the stakeholders. and may also serve as a foundation for future initiatives.

Together, these efforts aim to recognise, strengthen, and celebrate the quality that already exists across the independent advocacy landscape, while supporting its continued growth and evolution.

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Appendix 1

Workshop Questions

1. What is the evidence?
2. How can performance match policy and legislation?
3. Which standards work too?
4. How do changes occur in services?
5. How do we have lived and living experience at all levels?
6. Do we need a framework?
7. How do you get it the same across all geographic areas?
8. Can we measure it [quality]?
9. How do we link different areas and types of advocacy?
10. How do we know we are being flexible enough?
11. What is the standard?
12. How do we evaluate and action recommendations (external, focused)?
13. What about a qualification?
14. Who is responsible and sets the standards?
15. Is there regulation?
16. What's the definition of quality (whose perception?)
17. Who would regulate?
18. How do we remain objective?
19. Whose perception of quality?
20. Is it quality delivery or quality outcomes?
21. Is "high" quality a valid measure?
22. Do we need different quality measures for a) advocacy partners ; b) organisations c) commissioners or should/can they be aligned?
23. How can we determine outcomes for people?
24. How do we measure quality?
25. What is the baseline of quality?
26. How do you measure feedback?
27. How do we measure and determine outcomes?
28. How do we measure it?
29. Is the measure of quality for the individual, if what we control are outputs?
30. Is there training?
31. Is it [the training] accessible?
32. How do we ensure we are skilled in relevant legislation?
33. How do we keep up-to-date with standards / legislation / policy?
34. Is it [the training] available?

35. which human rights have been infringed?
36. What barrier stops feedback + improvement?
37. How do we make sure we are not putting any barriers in place for advocacy partner?
38. what does a successful advocacy intervention look like?
39. feedback from professionals?
40. feedback from partners?
41. What has worked successfully for you previously?
42. Are we responding in an appropriate time frame?
43. What works best for you just now (as an organisation)?
44. What processes/models have been utilised?
45. Did the they [process/models] work? Why? Why not?
46. What are people's expectations?
47. What are person's needs?
48. How do people [advocacy partners] feel afterwards [accessing quality IA?]
49. How can we ensure that we have awareness of service users' needs when cognitive differences and communication difficulties may be present?
50. How can we ensure that systems for gathering information on service user needs are inclusive and accessible?
51. What has not worked successfully?
52. How do we ensure we get feedback?
53. Coding phases and final themes

[Quality questions - themes and coding](#) (Excel file)

Appendix 2

Conversation café key takeaways and themes

1. Benefits of networking
2. Local peer groups → advocacy plans?
3. Tender process fighting
4. Consistency/unified approach to learning and reflective practice using the SIAA framework
5. Recognising existing quality
6. Professionalisation
7. Ensure human rights and other rights threaded through all aspects of our work
8. Oversight of independence

9. Returning to roots - considering routes training and recognition qualification?
10. Self-learning - continue opportunities for joining up
11. Hope! human rights now feel more central
12. Take account of needs - how to ask people what is needed are we listening consistently?
13. Sharing tools
14. Evaluation
15. Reflection - continuous process
16. Developing training - ensuring its implementation through effective supportive supervision
17. Awareness (public)
18. Learning sessions for leaders → leadership and the role of succession planning
19. Listening - different communities - intersectional lens
20. Remember no-one is alone - come together : we are the IA experts, collective support and influence (keep the independence in advocacy!)
21. Training - needs to be expansive
22. Evaluation
23. Use human rights approaches
24. Accountability of local authorities - greater presence and links between SIAA and commissioners within local authorities
25. work together: agree as a sector what "good quality" governing body - what is accountable - differences in geographic areas?
26. training - standard way - demonstrate consistency
27. central resources being produced
28. Ensuring that we don't get stuck in specificity - links with fighting over funding. flexibility
29. Be open about inclusion - make these efforts visible
30. Implementation of the outcomes framework - measuring impact of independent advocacy
31. Good communication and positivity around awareness of IA (to advocacy partners/potential Aps, but also professionals)
32. Take the time to think, slow down, acknowledge the "human side", live our values with one another (let younger colleagues lead us - it seems more straightforward for them)
33. Need to understand differences - this could be challenging across different locations
34. Prioritise the good stuff/ bin "the guff"

- 35. SIAA sets the quality standard → quality mark
- 36. professional/practitioner awareness
- 37. Solidarity: all experience same issues
- 38. Outcomes

[Conversation cafe key takeaways and themes](#) (Excel)

[CC key takeaways - initial sorting \(AI\)](#) (Word)

Appendix 3

Skills in Quality Independent advocacy practice *(results emerging from a 2024 workshop)*

The following skills and knowledge were the most mentioned in a variety of way that each independent advocate requires to do their work. They are the core key skills needed for the work. Should be low on the skills and knowledge framework so that everyone has these skills when they start the work.

- Variety of communication methods
- Relationship building – understanding of different ways to make the AP feel comfortable and to open up about their views and wishes / non-judgemental
- Personal boundaries – respecting, knowing and reflecting
- Legislation, regulations and guidance
- Inquisitive/ curious/ open minded/ ready to find out more
- Reflective skills
- Active listening
- Problem solving, thinking outside of the box
- Critical thinking
- Empathy
- Human rights

Appendix 4

Key factors underpinning “good independent advocacy” as per Independent Advocacy Guide for Commissioners (2013, p. 12)

The key factors are:

1. “Advocacy groups should be firmly rooted in, supported by and accountable to a geographical community or a community of interest. ”
2. advocacy groups and those involved as advocates should be constitutionally and psychologically independent of local and national government;
3. advocacy groups should not be involved in the delivery of care services or the provision of other services to the individual who requires advocacy.
4. different approaches to independent advocacy are needed; there is no best model;
5. advocacy groups should maintain a clear and coherent focus of effort;
6. advocacy groups should undergo regular independent evaluation of their work, and commissioners should provide financial support for this”.