

# Defining “Quality” in Scottish Independent Advocacy

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Scottish  
**Independent  
Advocacy**  
Alliance

**Research Report Summary**

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September 2025



# RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODS



**SIAA** is a national organisation which **promotes, supports and advocates** the principles and practice of independent advocacy in Scotland.



## Research goal

Explore and articulate the **meaning of “quality” in Scottish independent advocacy** to inform stakeholders involved in its delivery, management, and commissioning.



## Research methods

To find out, we held **two facilitated sessions** with:

- Advocacy Partners
- Independent advocates
- Managers
- Civil servants
- Commissioners (Local authorities)
- Advocacy education specialists



The information gathered was later **analysed thematically**, identifying key themes and takeaways. Combined with **SIAA’s organisational context**, these formed the basis for the five pillars of quality independent advocacy.



# FIVE PILLARS OF QUALITY INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY



## Advocacy Partners' experience



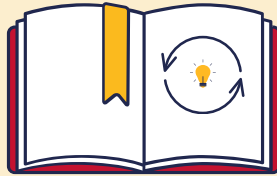
Quality independent advocacy places **Advocacy Partners' experience** at its core.

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



## Evidence-based improvement

## On-going learning and development



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

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



## Alignment in shared standards

## Effective regulation



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

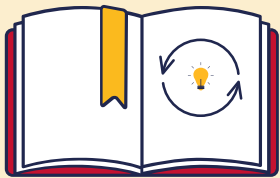


# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS AND PRACTITIONERS



- Proactively meet **accessibility** requirements.
- Have effective referral systems in place (**timely access**).
- Communicate gaps in resource to commissioners/funders.
- **Strengthen engagement** with communities.

- Have **effective and accessible** systems for collecting, reviewing, acting on evidence (including **feedback**).
- Ensure that measurement is **meaningful to all stakeholders**, including collective advocacy groups.



- Engage in **regular reflective practice**.
- Create spaces to identify **further development areas**.
- Protect time and resources for all workers' development.

- Ensure that **internal procedures and processes** reflect the shared standards.
- **Participate in discussions** about shared standards and speak up when they don't reflect realities of the work.
- When **standards change**, ensure that they reflect Advocacy Partners' and communities' needs.



- 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.

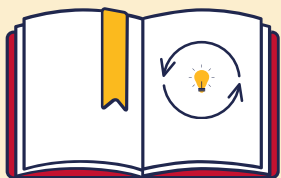


# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMISSIONERS AND FUNDERS



- Focus on Advocacy Partners' experience as the core purpose of evaluation and reporting.
- Work with organisations to **understand local needs** and allocate resources appropriately.
- Local Advocacy Plans should provision for a range of **independent advocacy models**.

- Work with organisations to allocate **appropriate funds** for evaluation activities.
- Structure the reporting activities to support organisations in **learning from gathered information**, and use it to improve understanding of the local need for independent advocacy.



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

- Stay up to date with developments (**shared standards**), ensuring the use of **most recent versions**.
- Use shared standards as the **foundation** during **all stages** of commissioning.
- Work with organisations to **understand the local context**, and use that information to **complement** the foundation built on shared standards.
- Support organisations in evaluating their work against shared standards.



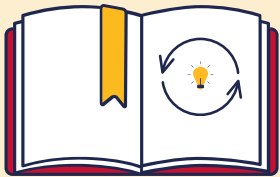


# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS



- **Involve** Advocacy Partners and collective advocacy groups **meaningfully** in the development of regulations.
- **Embed flexibility** allowing organisations to respond to **local contexts** and community needs.
- Support professionals by establishing **clear, consistent criteria** for when and how **referrals** should be made.

- Encourage the use of **evidence as a tool for learning**.
- Monitor and review the **impact of regulations**, ensuring they adapt to evolving communities' needs.



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

- Ensure that **best practice guidance** is regularly reviewed and updated. This includes both the creation of **new guidance** and the **revision of existing documents**.



- Ensure legislation includes a **full, sector-agreed definition** of independent advocacy.
- **Clearly outline shared standards** in regulations and their application across all levels of delivery and commissioning.
- Build-in mechanisms for **updating the regulations** and ensure meaningful stakeholder involvement.



# SIAA'S ROLE AND NEXT STEPS



Supporting  
Promoting  
Advocating

## SIAA upholds the pillars through:

- Advocating for a full definition and recognition of all models of independent advocacy in legislation and regulation.
- **Building relationships** across the sector, facilitating opportunities for dialogue.
- Leading the **co-creation of foundational documents**.
- **Collaborative approach to learning**, remaining responsive to members' needs.
- Working with policymakers and commissioners to **improve understanding** of independent advocacy.



## Looking ahead: Future opportunities



Explore ways for **people with lived experience** to actively contribute to the development of independent advocacy.



Enhance **accessibility** of our publications (Easy Read).



**Embed human rights** into independent advocacy practice through additional learning resources and training.



Improve **understanding and support** of the **less common models** of independent advocacy (collective, citizen, peer).



**Develop a resource** bringing together regulations, shared standards and guidance.

Raising awareness

Working collaboratively

Human rights-based



# STAY CONNECTED!



## Contact us!



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## Stay up to date with SIAA's work

-  [General bulletin \(open to everyone\)](#)
-  [Members-only newsletter](#)
-  [SIAA's News](#)
-  [Information Hub](#)

Includes more  
recommendations,  
analysis, and a full  
reference list

## Useful documents

