

SIAA Annual Report

2024 to
2025



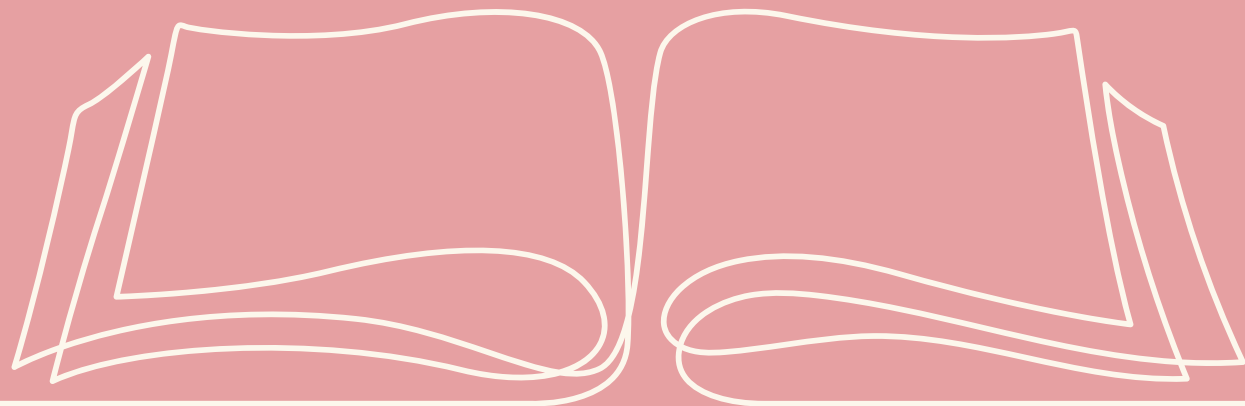
Scottish
**Independent
Advocacy**
Alliance



Supporting
Promoting
Advocating



Introduction



We're delighted to share this year's annual report with you. At the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA), we believe in the power of independent advocacy to uphold human rights, amplify voices, and challenge inequality. This report offers a seasonal snapshot of our work, three highlights from each quarter, showcasing the breadth of activity, collaboration across the year.

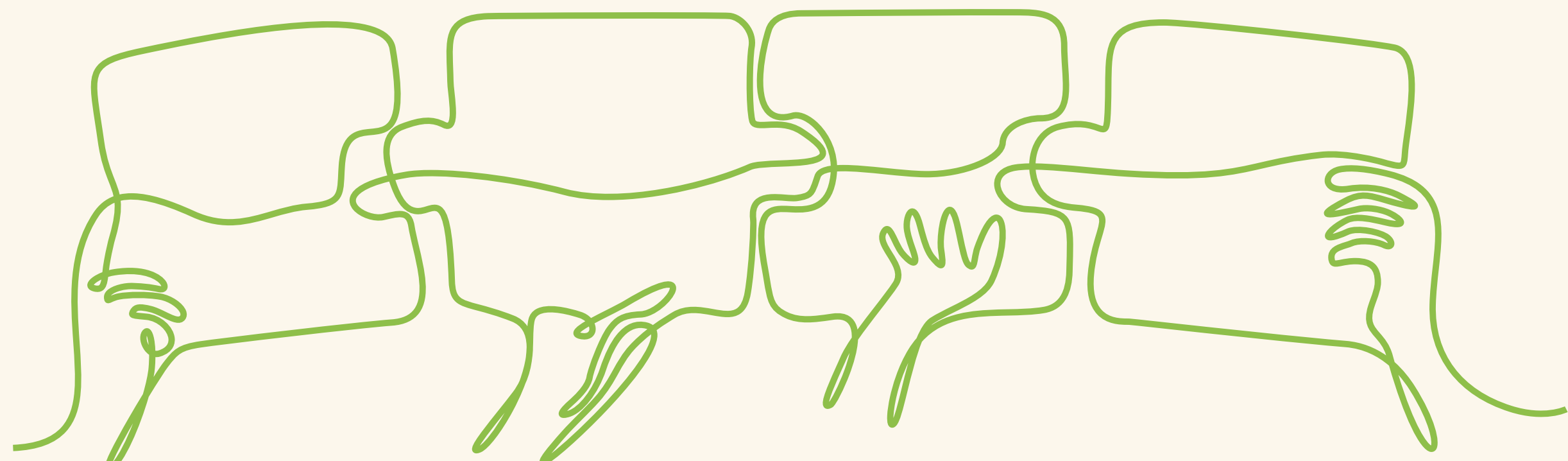
As the national intermediary organisation for independent advocacy in Scotland, SIAA promotes, supports, and advocates for high-quality independent advocacy, working to widen access for those who face barriers to being heard.

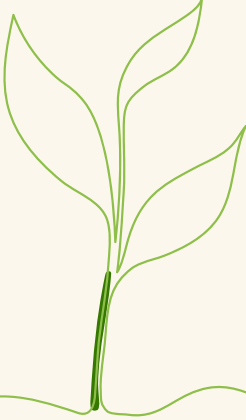
SIAA has 32 unique member organisations that span the length and breadth of Scotland, delivering both collective and individual independent advocacy to communities and individuals navigating complex systems and decisions.

This year, our dedicated Board of Trustees continued to guide our strategic direction and support our small but mighty staff team. Together, we've delivered work aligned with our values and priorities—strengthening the sector and deepening our impact on national policy and local practice.

"If it wasn't for the network and support that SIAA provides, I wouldn't be where I am today. I appreciate that you're true to your own words and actually provide the support that you promise".

— SIAA member organisation





Spring Highlights

Apr - Jun 2024

Peer support sessions

- **36 sessions** delivered
- **25** member organisations attended **at least one** peer support session.
- **12** member organisations attended **5 or more** peer support sessions.

Groups included:

- Prisons, forensic settings, criminal justice
- Non-instructed advocacy
- Collective advocacy
- Citizen advocacy
- Advocacy Leaders
- Open to everyone

The main focus was on providing regular and frequent opportunities to meet. The sessions explored peer-led emerging topics and issues. The aim was to encourage reflective practice, the sharing of expertise, peer learning, and promoting wellbeing at work.

Toolkit for Demonstrating Impact of Independent Advocacy is Launched

The Toolkit was co-developed with SIAA members over seven years. Its launch, facilitated by Joette Thomas - who had been involved from the start - featured insights from CAPS Independent Advocacy and Dunfermline Advocacy who shared their experiences on using outcomes to evidence impact.

Representatives from 24 member organisations attended the launch. Since then, SIAA has offered tailored support to members using the Framework for reporting and learning.

LGBT Charter and Pride Month Campaign

Throughout the year, SIAA team worked towards achieving the LGBT Charter for Organisations and was successfully awarded the Bronze Award in January 2025.

In June, we organised a **Pride Month campaign**, which consisted of:

- Weekly "Pride updates" posted to the SIAA Liaisons' Teams channel
- Roundtable event for Members, co-organised with CAPS Independent Advocacy
- Publishing the Intersectional Resources Pack to SIAA's website
- Joined CAPS Independent Advocacy at their stall during Edinburgh Pride.

**LGBTQIA+
Workshop**



“The most useful part, was the Peer aspect. To connect with other in the same role across Scotland. The session was honest and supportive.”

— SIAA member organisation





Summer Highlights

Jul - Sep 2024

Conference 2024: Amplifying Impact

SIAA hosted our 2024 conference focusing on **amplifying the impact of independent advocacy**. We were joined by 26 SIAA member organisations, collective advocacy group members, civil society organisations, Scottish Government representatives and commissioners.

SIAA welcomed the then **Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing & Sport, Maree Todd MSP**, and **Professor Alan Miller** as keynote speakers. The Minister spoke powerfully about the value of different advocacy models and her commitment to leveraging existing independent advocacy expertise in planning future provision. Professor Miller discussed the National Collaborative's work strengthening human rights for people affected by substance use, noting independent advocacy's important role in supporting people to understand and access their rights.

Workshop highlights included 21 attendees brainstorming 52 questions about quality provision of independent advocacy in Scotland, and participants reporting increased confidence in their advocacy skills. We heard that; **"The facilitators were excellent. My expectations of the content of both workshops I attended were surpassed."** Thank you to all workshop facilitators, particularly the LGBTQIA+ collective advocacy group members who shared their expertise with us.

Policy work: Advocating for independent advocacy

In our policy work, SIAA responded to Scottish Government consultations on policy areas where we identified significant gaps in independent advocacy provision:

- Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill
- Adults with Incapacity Amendments Act
- Consultations relating to The Promise

Through these responses, **SIAA highlighted provision gaps reported by our members and advocated for citizen and collective advocacy**. We made recommendations on quality and funding models that would enable independent and sustainable advocacy. Significantly, analysis of these consultations identified independent advocacy as a common theme, with stakeholders broadly advocating for increased provision.

Policy work: Connections

SIAA have participated in a number of Scottish Government led working groups including work around the then National Care Service Bill, LDAN Bill and Human Rights Bill. SIAA sit on strategic stakeholder groups related to Adult Support and Protection, Mental Health and third sector intermediaries. Some examples of the results of our involvement include:

- Significant contribution to guidance on **'Best practice for effective access and involvement of independent advocacy in Adult Support and Protection'**
- Ensured **'independence' is noted as a core principle** in The Promise scoping for lifelong independent advocacy.
- Lobbied to have **independent advocacy strengthened in the Care Reform Bill**.





Feedback on ‘first look’ tour of the SIAA learning platform: “This looks fantastic, great to see this happening and it is good to have that consistent approach to learning across all member orgs. Thanks to the SIAA team for this amazing work.”

— SIAA member organisation



Autumn Highlights

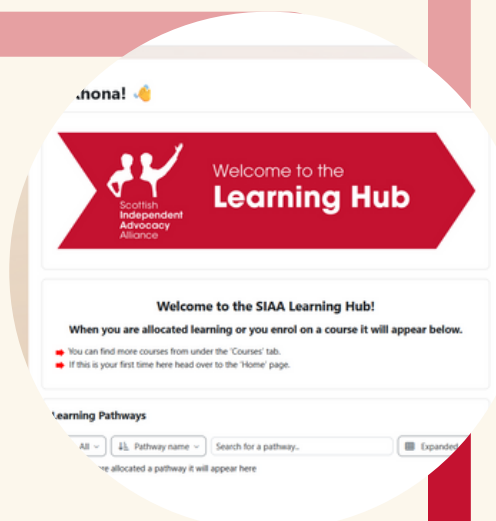
Oct - Dec 2024

Introducing Learning Hub at the AGM

In 2024 we began work on an SIAA Learning Hub, a central space for independent advocacy learning. This was a long requested resource by SIAA members to enable a more equal access to consistent and cohesive learning provision across Scotland.

The SIAA Learning Hub was introduced to members during the 23-24 AGM. The purpose was to gauge members readiness for the financial and time investment into a membership wide resource, with space to voice concerns and share feedback on the project. The response from members was overwhelmingly positive highlighting not only the long-term cost savings, but also the opportunities for members to come together and influence the future of the work.

The Learning Hub will be going through a testing phase with members in 2025. This will involve onboarding member organisations onto the platform and evaluation of the engagement and accessibility of the platform.



SPSO session

Following a member inquiry about Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) involvement in independent advocacy complaints, SIAA sought clarification from the SPSO. Under section 259 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Scotland Act 2003, local authorities must secure **availability** of independent advocacy services, not provide them directly. SIAA liased with SPSO staff to confirm that complaints about the **availability** of independent advocacy can be escalated to SPSO through the local authority's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP), as these relate to the LA's statutory duty to ensure access.

SIAA shared this guidance with members and hosted a joint event with SPSO to discuss the issue and SPSO's broader role in public services complaints.

Meeting members

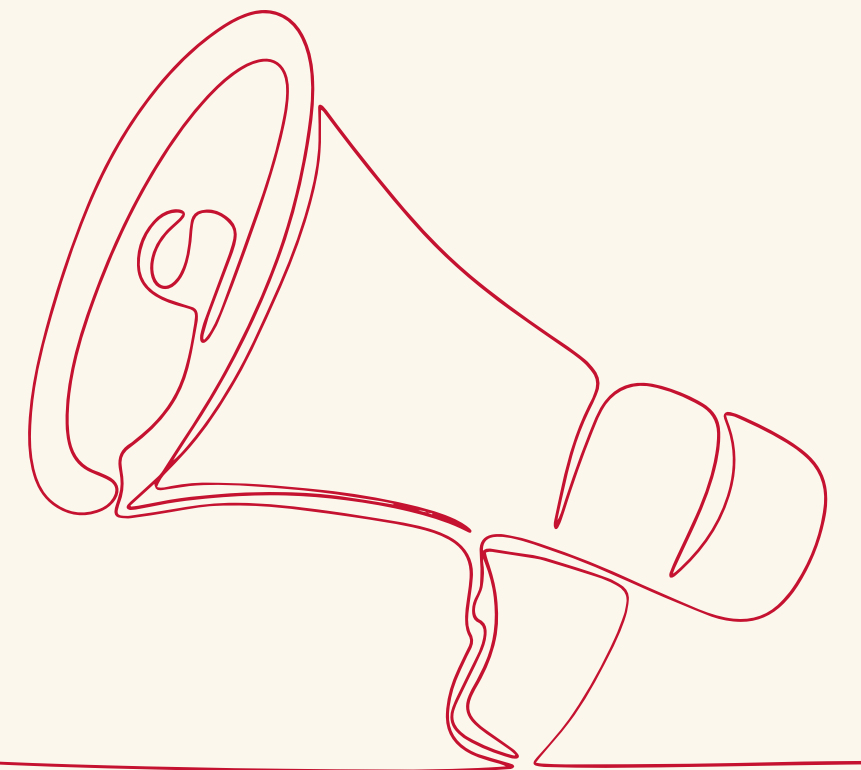
Regular engagement with members remains central to SIAA's work, ensuring we remain responsive to their evolving needs. We facilitated this through:

- 45 events, held both online and in person
- Introductory meetings with 16 member organisations, which helped us better understand their learning and engagement priorities.
- One-to-one meetings with new Chief Officers, offering tailored support.
- Team presentations, introducing staff to SIAA and the role of independent advocacy.

These activities have strengthened relationships across the membership and informed the development of our support and resources.

“I found the ideas from the other organisations have inspired me and they have given me new ideas use in my organisation and in my practice.”

— SIAA member organisation





Winter Highlights

Jan - Apr 2025

Independent Advocacy for Independent Lives report event

SIAA sit on the Henry Smith independent advocacy advisory board. In 2022, [The Henry Smith Charity](#) set up a £2.6M fund, giving grants to 15 organisations reaching 1667 people. Two of the grantees were Scottish organisations and SIAA members – [Advocacy Service Aberdeen](#) (ASA) and [Central Advocacy Partners](#) (CAP) in Forth Valley. Social Finance, the programme's evaluation partner, worked with grantees and people with lived experience over three years to build an evidence base on independent advocacy benefits for people with learning disabilities and autistic people. In March, SIAA hosted an event launching the final evaluation report '[Independent advocacy for independent lives](#)'. Social Finance presented groundbreaking evidence on increasing access to independent advocacy, including its financial impact: for every £1 spent, advocacy generated benefits worth £12.

ASA and CAP shared examples of people they supported through the fund, demonstrating that independent advocacy helps people achieve self-defined goals and creates meaningful, lasting differences in people's lives.

Members Resource Library

In response to frequent member requests, we signposted a wide range of resources and quickly identified the need for a centralised library. As a result, we developed the **Members Resource Library** - a searchable Airtable database using existing tools at no additional cost to SIAA.

The Library includes both external and SIAA-produced resources such as training materials, reports, guidance, and videos, organised by topic, format, and audience. It is embedded in the Members' Area of the SIAA website and accessible exclusively to members, who can contribute resources via a submission form. All entries are moderated by the SIAA team.

Co-designing learning with members

We want the learning and the learning hub to be what members need it to be. This means that we aim to include members in designing, developing and deciding on learning.

- A testing of the learning hub was launched in March. Members to feedback on the hub, it's accessibility, and the courses available.
- Developing an introductory module for independent advocacy with members influencing the content and developing the content.
- Members input into what courses or modules will be developed next.



**Independent
advocacy for
independent lives:**

Acknowledgements

Independent advocacy in Scotland and the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance continue to grow stronger through the contributions of many.

Thank you to our Scottiash Government funders for investing in independent advocacy across Scotland. To our members for your expertise, passion, and tireless work championing rights. To our civil society partners for your collaboration and shared commitment.

Our staff team and Board of Trustees deserve special recognition, particular thanks to Iain Templeton and Leanne Murdoch, who stepped down from the Board in 2024, for their invaluable contributions over the years.

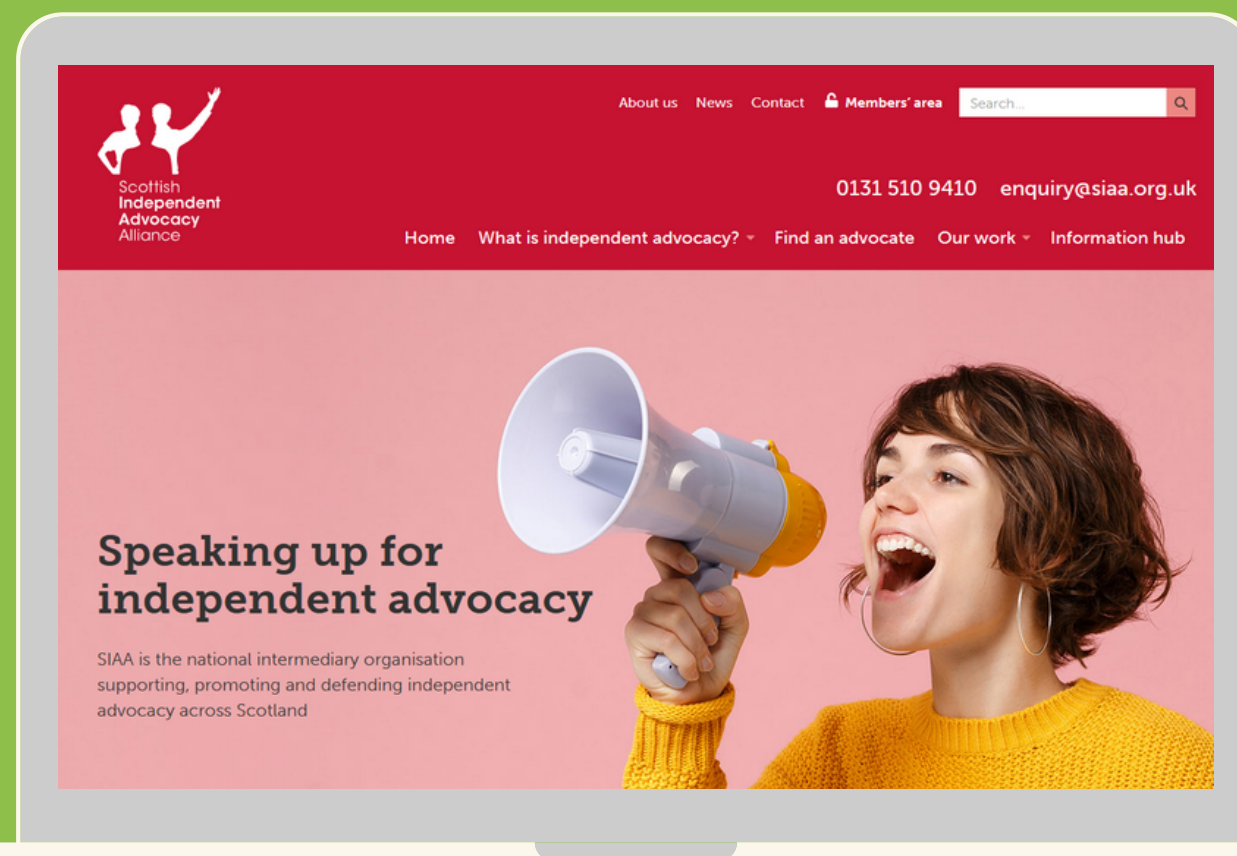
If you'd like to explore any aspect of this annual report in more depth, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Independent advocacy began in Scotland over thirty years ago through people connecting to advocate together for fair treatment. Conversation and collaboration remain at the heart of our work, our networks are our strength. Thank you for reading and supporting independent advocacy in Scotland.

Suzanne Swinton
Chief Executive Officer
Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance



Contact

Supporting
Promoting
Advocating



Website: www.siaa.org.uk

Find an advocate: www.siaa.org.uk/find-advocate/

Email: enquiry@siaa.org.uk

Phone: 0131 510 9410