

a city-wide advocacy project

AdvoCard

for users of mental health services

What do we do?

AdvoCard is an independent advocacy service for mental health service users living in Edinburgh. We provide independent advocacy to individuals around a wide range of issues that affect their lives. This service is delivered through volunteer advocacy workers. We also provide an independent advocacy service to individuals who are facing compulsory treatment under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment)(Scotland) Act 2003. This service is delivered through contracted advocacy workers.

What is independent advocacy?

Independent advocacy is when someone is with you to help you get your point of view across to others. Your point of view can be your wishes or your feelings or what you would like to happen. Independent advocacy helps ensure that your point of view is taken account of by others. Independent advocacy can help you influence decisions made about your life and your care and treatment.

Why is our independence important?

Our independence is important because we are there solely to help you. It is important that we are not influenced by other people or organisations that provide services to you.

How do you contact us?

Simply ring us or pop in to see us at Leith Walk. Or you can write to or email us. You can also have someone else contact us on your behalf. Contact details are on the back panel of this report.

Confidentiality

AdvoCard recognises the importance of strict working practice with regard to confidentiality and sets high standards with a strict confidentiality policy.

Annual Report 2006

November 2005 -
October 2006

Convener's Report

This has been a year of consolidation for AdvoCard following the implementation of the Mental Health Act last year. I will be stepping down as Convener this year and I'm pleased to be doing so at a time when things are going so well.

We have managed to review and amend our Constitution and will be presenting this for adoption by our membership at this year's AGM. This is a great achievement because we have updated our Mission Statement, our Purposes and our Objectives as well as simplifying the language used where possible.

The Committee membership has improved and I'm happy to report that we have a near full compliment at time of writing. This is despite the very sad departure of Brian Sneddon. We would like to thank Brian for all his efforts both as Secretary and general Committee member.

At AdvoCard we aim to continually improve the effectiveness of the Management Committee. Many of the Committee members have undergone training on various topics. We have a system for properly inducting new members on to the Committee and all new members are taken through the policies and procedures.

We have deliberately tried to ensure that the Committee is as diverse as possible in order that we have a range of views, ideas and experiences that can influence how AdvoCard grows. This work continues as new members are recruited. Details of the Committee members are at the back of the Annual Report.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Committee for all their support. I would also like to thank the staff team and our volunteers for their continued professionalism and commitment to AdvoCard and our service users.

Project Manager's Report

As Jean has already stated this has been a year within which we have been poised to deal with the demands resulting from the implementation of the Act.

We have seen a steady growth in the use of our services since implementation. People have become aware of the new right of access they have to independent advocacy and have contacted us in increasing numbers both at the Volunteer Delivered Service and the Mental Health Act Service. More information on activity is available elsewhere in this report.

We have been thorough in our monitoring in relation to take up of the Mental Health Act service and have contributed to giving feedback to the Scottish Executive about our experience post implementation and the experiences of the service users who contact us.

We have developed a robust set of policies and procedures and are currently in the process of delivering training on certain policies to staff, Committee members and volunteers.

We have concentrated on providing training on the new Act to all of our volunteers and certain members of staff and Committee members and continue to update and deliver this training to make sure that we keep up to date.

In this coming year we will be developing the extent to which we are service user-led as well as making the service increasingly accessible to other groups. We may well look to relocate in the very near future in order that the team can work together and all services are offered from the one place.

Thank you to everyone for all your hard work and commitment. You have all made what could have been a difficult year that bit easier.

Mental Health Act Advocacy Service

This service provides advocacy through contracted advocacy workers and is aimed at individuals who are compelled or facing compulsion under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. The service also offers advocacy around some of the Safeguards within the Act such as Named Persons and Advance Statements.

Advocacy workers can help a person prepare for a Tribunal Hearing. They can help locate a lawyer and to gather and understand the paperwork involved. They can also deal with the mental health officer involved and other professionals. The advocacy workers are always very careful that the advocacy relationship is not compromised when they are dealing with other professionals involved in the service user's care and treatment.

There has been a steady growth in the use of this service during the 12 months since the implementation of the Act. What started as fairly slow take up has now changed to a steady flow of referrals. The most recent quarter monitored was the most busy.

It is easy to access the service. Individuals can refer themselves or be referred by a worker. It is possible to contact the office Monday to Friday between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm and someone will answer the phone or respond to any message left. The service is based at Norton Park and the address is at the end of the Annual Report.

In the last 12 months:

- 123 people have contacted the service
- 60 referrals were from men and 63 from women
- Each bringing with them issues relating to the Act and also their care and treatment as varied as those received at the volunteer service
- Workers have attended 26 Tribunal Hearings
- Over 350 hours have been allocated to preparing and attending those hearings
- Most referrals are self-referrals and from people living at home
- Generally positive feedback from the service users point of view about how hearings are going
- Service has done more work with people around Advance Statements than other services
- There is a low take up of Named Person nominations

The team has worked well together and has developed robust systems for monitoring. If anyone is interested in finding out more information about activity then please contact the office.

The service has worked with other advocacy organisations to ensure that gaps in advocacy service provision are filled in areas such as general hospitals and nursing homes. Contact has also been made with the mental health team at Saughton Prison.

The team has been very active in promoting the service to service users across Edinburgh and to the various professionals in the field such as community mental health teams, mental health officers and housing and support providers . This work continues and regular sessions are being held in certain of the day units.

The service has recently acquired 2 sessional workers to be on standby should demand outstrip the contracted team of 2 full time and one part time advocacy worker. These sessional workers are experienced voluntary advocacy workers and have received the necessary training.

Training

This service provides training to all our staff and volunteers and Committee members on a range of topics necessary to provide a good quality service. As well as good service provision, training also aims to promote positive personal development for all.

All of our advocacy workers, be they volunteer, or contracted, receive training on how to be an advocacy worker when they first join the project. They also receive on-going training in more specific subject areas necessary to do the job. The training function within Advocard also coordinates the training of all non-advocacy staff and the Management Committee along with the Project Manager.

Initial 10 week training programme for advocacy workers

The content of this training has been thoroughly updated and extended to ensure it is up to date with the concepts of advocacy and the legislation we work with. It has also been extended from 25 hours of session time to 30 hours. We have trained two substantially sized groups in the past 12 months on this basis.

Follow on Training

This training covers a range of different subjects such as benefits or boundaries and is training we organise internally either delivered from our own trainers or outside providers. We try to run this training at least twice a year. We had an event recently covering benefits delivered by the Rights Office which proved very popular.

Refresher Training

If an advocacy worker does not work for us for 6 months or more we ask that they undergo refresher training. This is two days of training and covers the concepts and legislation, and also includes opportunities to practice skills through role play. We try to deliver this twice a year or when needed. Feedback we received recently indicated that people found it useful and wanted to do more role play!

External Training Courses

We regularly fund our staff and volunteers to attend training courses provided by other organisations. People we use regularly are the Legal Services Agency (LSA), Mindfileds College, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), and Volunteer Centre Edinburgh (VCE) to name but a few.

Personal Development Training

Where possible staff and volunteers are encouraged to request and attend training which will have a personal development benefit to them. We chart the training volunteers receive in their portfolios in order that they can use this as a record when perhaps applying for jobs or other voluntary opportunities.

Mental Health Act Training

We are continually looking to update and develop further the training we receive and deliver on the Act. One area we are currently considering is delivering training on parts of the Act to service users. We are considering if this is needed and if it is, in what form relaying the information should take.

We have planned events involving a psychiatrist and a mental health officer talking to our volunteers about their experience of the past 12 months. We plan to also make contact with a lawyer to give their experience.

Another planned area of training will be covering Local Authority and Health Board duties under the Act.

Volunteer Advocacy Service

Since the implementation of the new Act we have seen a steady growth in the use of the volunteer delivered service based at Leith Walk. This service works with service users around a wide range of issues that can affect a person's life. These include benefits, housing, medication, access to services as well as many more.

Throughout our existence we have seen increasing use of the service year by year. Below you can see how the number of requests for advocacy has steadily grown, culminating in this, our busiest year.

Many of the issues that people bring to us can be very complex and can lead to many appointments demanding many hours of staff and particularly volunteer time.

Last 12 Months of volunteer advocacy

Requests for Advocacy	297
Individual people	246
Men	137
Women	160
Appointments	875
Volunteer Hours	1,745
Home visits	39

Growth over the years in volunteer advocacy

	Requests (per year)	Average (per month)
2000 - 2001	68	6
2001 - 2002	87	7
2002 - 2003	157	13
2003 - 2004	193	16
2004 - 2005	225	19
2005 - 2006	297	25

Thank you to all our volunteers for providing so much advocacy to so many people!

Treasurer's Report and Accounts

Extracts from the Financial Statements of AdvoCard for the year ended 31st March, 2006 are shown below. Copies of the full audited Financial Statements are available from the AdvoCard office.

INCOME (in pounds)		EXPENDITURE (in pounds)	
MHSG	158,899	Salaries & Staff Costs	226,824
Section 10	142,500	Property & Equip (inc. depr.)	49,754
Bank Interest	119	Supplies & Admin	17,148
		Sessional/Vol. Expenses	8,843
TOTAL	301,518	TOTAL	302,569
DEFICIT	(1,051)		

Management Committee Members

Executive

Convener:	Jean Bartlett
Vice Convener:	Fiona Ross
Treasurer:	Diane Walters
Secretary:	Dot Twyman

Committee Members

Nick Gardner
Fenella Hayes
Ruth Hughes (joined May 2006)
Steven Copeland (joined May 2006)
Charlotte Mitchell (joined September 2006)
Andrew Hogg
Geoff Allan
Brian Sneddon (left June 2006)

Adviser - MHSG Assessor

Paul Flaherty, Mental Health Officer,
City of Edinburgh Department of Health & Social Care

Advisers

Graeme Pettie (Community Psychiatric Nurse)
Susan McMeel (Lothian Health Board)
P.C. Tony Kot (Community Involvement Officer)

Staff Team

Jean Crombie:	Receptionist - Admin
Janette McDougall:	Finance Worker
Jackie McGinty:	Advocacy Assistant
Jane Cairns:	Assistant Trainer
Bryan Davies:	Project Manager
Marion Hadland:	Clerical Worker
Devrim Turkey:	Advocacy Worker
Jane Laidlaw:	Advocacy Worker
Karen Anderson:	Advocacy Manager
Jane Rubens	Training Manager
Vincent Gill:	Advocacy Worker

AdvoCard

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