

ADVOCARD 2008: ANNUAL REPORT

PROJECT MANAGER'S REPORT

This has been another busy year for AdvoCard with both achievements and challenges. Our Project Manager, Bryan Davies was offered a year's secondment with Scottish Borders Council. For him to take this up we reorganised the staff team and as a result I have been Acting Project Manager since May. This has been a very interesting experience.

The Service Level Agreement with Edinburgh City Council Department of Health and Social Care was signed in April. On signing this, our funding level was set for 3 years. This means that by 2011 we'll have been on a 'standstill' budget for 6 years.

The development of our website has continued. It is an excellent resource containing a wealth of information about our project, how it operates and how to access our advocacy service. Please have a look – the address is www.advocard.org.uk

A lot of hard work and time has gone into considering our future development over the next 3 years. This is detailed in our Forward Plan and our Equality and Diversity strategy, however in a time of financial constraints we may need to demonstrate a degree of ingenuity to achieve the aims that we have set. Undoubtedly the coming year will bring us new challenges.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the efforts of our dedicated and hard working staff team, our excellent volunteers and the management committee, who have been extremely supportive throughout the year. Thanks also to all our service users who are, after all the most important part of our project.

- Karen Anderson

CONVENOR'S REPORT

AdvoCard has further strengthened itself this year. Our first 3-year service level agreement with Edinburgh Council began in April. With this longer-term funding in place, a representative working group drafted our development plan: *Planning the Way Forward for AdvoCard 2008-2011*.

We consulted widely by seeking views from 200 plus people with an interest in AdvoCard. We offered 1:1 interviews (by phone or in person) to anyone who wanted help to feedback and held an event at our office where direct feedback was given.

Thanks to all 44 people who took part. We were very pleased so many people took the time and trouble to reflect on our future. We've reviewed and amended our plans in light of this. We feel it's all the better for having sought a wide range of views and are launching it at this AGM.

One aim of our plan is to increase our accessibility. A working group developed an *Equality and Diversity Strategy*, which is also launched at this AGM. The strategy will lead to improvements and innovations in AdvoCard and requires additional financial resources. This will challenge us in a time of financial restrictions, so fundraising will be a new direction of our plans.

I'm grateful for the hard work of committee members in directly supporting AdvoCard's development through committee meetings, working groups and training with staff about our policies. We're striving to improve AdvoCard by focusing on our ethos of being responsive to service users.

Positive day-to-day work carries on thanks to the efforts of our volunteers and staff. There are added challenges ahead for service users. Coming changes, such as welfare reform and new systems protecting vulnerable adults, will continue to be responded to with AdvoCard's commitment to offering service users the unique support of an independent advocacy worker.

- Dot Twyman

VOLUNTEER DELIVERED ADVOCACY

The service has continued to provide support and assistance to those experiencing mental health difficulties in Edinburgh, with various issues including medical appointments, housing, benefits and support services.

This year has seen a shift in the volunteer base, with many of our volunteers successfully moving into employment and attending university courses. As such, the team has faced great challenges in meeting ongoing and, at times, intensive demand, for the service, and is at present continuing to develop strategies for prioritising service user requests.

We have started working towards, and are close to achieving, the award of Investing in Volunteers. This is a UK recognised award, which we hope will enhance our volunteer management skills, and will demonstrate our commitment to providing effective, and appropriate, support and training for our voluntary workers.

In addition, there have been changes in the Staff Team. With Karen taking the role of Acting Project Manager, Diana Simcock and David McTaggart have temporarily assumed the role of Advocacy Support Worker in order to assist Jackie McGinty in the delivery of the service.

Volunteer Delivered Advocacy October 2007 - September 2008

Service Users	247
No of Requests	301
Requests from Males	112
Requests from Females	189
No of Appointments	754
No of Home Visits	57
Total Volunteer Hours	1602

MENTAL HEALTH ACT ADVOCACY

We're pleased to have welcomed David McTaggart (part-time Advocacy Worker) to our team. Vincent Gill and Devrim Turkay (full-time Advocacy Workers) have been in post since the service was funded in 2005. Diana Simcock (Sessional Advocacy Worker) now offers advocacy for service users who need a female worker.

Our service users have experienced the following changes during the past year:

- significantly more time (on average) with each service user throughout the process of being detained and made to take treatment against their will (meetings, reviews, tribunals etc) under the Mental Health Act
- slightly more time spent (on average) with each service user, with similar numbers referred as last year
- Mental Health Tribunals carried out mandatory two yearly reviews of some service users' compulsory treatment orders (CTO)
- liaison with a wider range of solicitors, with a continued focus on ensuring service users are well represented
- met with some service user groups and workers who were new to us, to raise awareness of our service and advocacy in general

Mental Health Act Advocacy October 2007 – September 2008

Service Users	166
Males	94
Females	72
Informal	79
Compulsory Treatment	87
Tribunals attended	28
Advance Statements Signed & witnessed	25 10

TRAINING

Opportunities for training, learning and personal development are a central part of the AdvoCard service. Over the past year we have offered:

□ *Stage 1 Training for New Volunteers*
We completed two 10-session (30-hours) Training programmes, training 17 people. Our course has been revised and updated. New volunteers find the programme valuable and informative for beginning their advocacy role.

□ *Time Out for Advocacy*
New programme for experienced volunteers to meet and share experience about advocacy work facilitated by AdvoCard workers.

□ *Follow On Training*
Regular sessions are offered to experienced advocacy workers to update information on specific topics and to continuously develop advocacy skills. The sessions over the last 12 months were:

- *Welfare Reform, Benefits and Mental Health*
- *Supporting People with Borderline Personality Disorder – a Service User Perspective*

- *Understanding Self Harm*
- *The Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007: What are the implications for mental health advocacy?*

□ *Policy Training for Management Committee and Staff*

We're progressing through a programme of training to look in detail at a number of our policies and procedures. In the last year we have covered Confidentiality, Health & Safety (repeated), Lone Working and *Complaints and Getting Feedback About the Service*.

In addition, our All Project Meeting (for staff) in May had a training focus on *Dealing With a Violent Incident at Leith Walk (our office)*.

□ *Volunteer Recruitment Microsite*
We've developed an excellent 'microsite' with Riley's recruitment, which is linked to our website and is aimed at volunteer recruitment. It is a valuable addition to our website, is interesting and informative, will help keep our volunteer numbers up and as an added bonus will help keep volunteer recruitment costs down.

TREASURER'S REPORT & ACCOUNTS

Extracts from the Financial Statements of AdvoCard for the year ended 31 March 2008 are shown below. Copies of the full audited Financial Statements are available from AdvoCard.

Income (in Pounds)		Expenditure (in Pounds)	
Mental Health Specific Grant	158 899	Salaries & Staffing Costs	252 162
Service Level Agreement Grant Aid	142 500	Premises Costs	34 984
Bank Interest	101	Running Costs	17 964
		Volunteer & Travel Costs	6 165
		Interest & Finance Charges	33
		Depreciation	7 032
		Governance Costs	3 565
Total	301 500	Total	321 905

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive

Dot Twyman (Convenor)
Jean Bartlett (Vice-Convenor) (left Oct 08)
Diana Walters (Treasurer) (left Nov 08)
Nick Gardner (Secretary)

Committee Members

Geoff Allan (left Jul 08)
David Atiyah
David Cameron (left Oct 08)
Steven Copeland
Andrew Hogg
Ruth Hughes
Charlotte Mitchell (left Dec 07)

Adviser – MHSO Assessor

Paul Flaherty
(Mental Health Officer, Central MHO Team)

Advisers

Graeme Pettie (Community Psychiatric Nurse)
Susan McMeel (NHS Lothian) (left Sep 08)
Tony Kot (Police)
Fiona Ross
Brian Sneddon (left Jan 08)
Alan Sharp

Web: www.advocard.org.uk

STAFF TEAM

Manager

Karen Anderson (Acting Project Manager)
Bryan Davies (Project Manager on secondment)

Finance & Administration

Jean Crombie (Receptionist/Administrator)
Marion Hadland (Clerical Worker)
Janette McDougall (Finance Worker)

Volunteer Delivered Advocacy

Jackie McGinty (Senior Advocacy Support Worker)
David McTaggart (Advocacy Support Worker)
Diana Simcock (Advocacy Support Worker)

Training

Jane Cairns (Training Worker)
Jane Rubens (Training Manager)

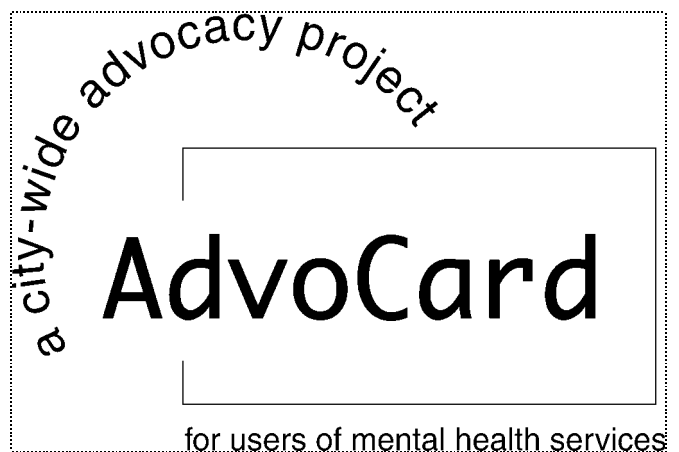
Mental Health Act Advocacy

Vincent Gill (Advocacy Worker)
David McTaggart (Advocacy Worker)
Diana Simcock (Sessional Advocacy Worker)
Devrim Turkey (Advocacy Worker)

MISSION STATEMENT

AdvoCard is an Edinburgh-wide advocacy project for adults who have experience of mental ill health. We provide a free, independent and confidential service which supports people in getting their voice heard.

Our long-term aim is to work towards a community where each individual's needs are met and where people have greater influence over the services they use.



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Scottish Charity Number SCO 231 81

Funded by City of Edinburgh Council
Department of Health & Social Care

We are striving to be an equal opportunities employer