

a city-wide advocacy project

AdvoCard

AGM Report 2018-19

AdvoCard is a service user-led, independent advocacy organisation. Our services are primarily for people with experience of mental ill health or problematic substance use in Edinburgh. We aim to provide opportunities for people to participate more effectively in decisions that affect all aspects of their lives.

AdvoCard is committed to equality, inclusion and human rights.

Highlights of the Year

- ◆ 1,606 people received individual advocacy, compared to 1,581 in the previous year.
- We secured funding from the Scottish Government and the Edinburgh Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, and developed a new advocacy service for people affected by problematic substance use.
- We published reports from the research on side effects of mental health medication and treatment and support for physical health issues.
- ◆ Having successfully campaigned for the inclusion of independent advocacy in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, we continue our efforts to influence the forthcoming social security system, in line with the views of service users.
- ◆ We continue our successful partnerships with the Royal Edinburgh Hospital Patients Council and Edinburgh Carers Council.


Volunteer Advocacy

- ◆ In January 2019, Advocacy Manager Karen Anderson left AdvoCard after 25 years with the organisation.
- ◆ We have been advocating for people around housing, support, access to services, children and families work, complaints about treatment from the police, CEC and NHS. We have seen an increase in the need for providing food bank vouchers.
- ◆ Thanks go to our small team of fantastic volunteers who work hard, providing advocacy across the City. We couldn't do it without you!

Mental Health Act Advocacy

- ◆ We attended 32 Mental Health Tribunals and worked with 50 service users who were on Community Compulsory Treatment Orders (CCTOs). We attended 31 Care and Treatment Reviews dealing mostly with these people on CCTOs.
- ◆ We attended 12 Adult Protection Case Conferences which is not representative of the number of times adult protection was dealt with by AdvoCard staff on the whole (141).
- ◆ We worked with 35 people in hospitals other than Royal Edinburgh (REH). Many of those worked with were detained in these general hospital facilities for extended periods due to lack of bed spaces at REH.

Prison Advocacy

- ◆ The service is in its 6th year of existence in HMP Edinburgh, working with 237 people, compared to 301 the previous year. We are working with all four main groups of prisoners (short-term, long-term, remand and women).
 - ◆ Advocacy assists prisoners accessing services, both in community and in prison, including health and social care and legal assistance.
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Royal Edinburgh Hospital Individual Advocacy

- ◆ In July 2019, Katie James left her role as Project Manager at the REH Individual Advocacy Service.
- ◆ 519 service users were supported in 2018/19, compared to 570 last year.
- ◆ Most advocacy relates to compulsory detention under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. We continue to see a large number of individuals detained on short term detentions in general adult wards, and who are often asking for support around Mental Health Tribunals.
- ◆ We were involved with 219 tribunals this year. There has been a decline in the appeals that people wish to make, in spite of an increase in the use of short term and emergency orders.
- ◆ The main issues are around restrictions that are placed on people, particularly around smoking and time away from the wards. The availability of medical staff is more limited now and it is harder for people to participate directly in their care planning.

Welfare Reform and Social Security Advocacy

- ◆ In its sixth year, this service saw a 56% increase in overall referrals from 465 in 2017/18 to 725.
- ◆ Most advocacy work is still around Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). However, we now also work with people claiming Universal Credit.
- ◆ We have supported people to join the Social Security experience panels, contribute to consultations and join focus groups with the Scottish Government.
- ◆ Following the inclusion of independent advocacy in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, we are part of the Scottish Government's Independent Advocacy Working Group.

Collective Advocacy

- ♦ Reports from the research on side effects of mental health medication and treatment and support for physical health issues have been published on our website.
- ♦ We also brought out the Emergency Card. This came from our 'A&E | All and Equal' project. This is to help people get across their needs and wishes to the nurses, doctors and other staff if they ever need to go the Emergency Department.
- ♦ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is increasingly being discussed at senior strategic levels and, as a result, rights-based care and treatment is becoming a key area of work in mental health advocacy.
- ♦ In May 2019, Edinburgh Community Voices collaborated with LEARN and the REH Patients Council to host the first 'Mind Our Rights!' event at The Hive in the grounds of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital.

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