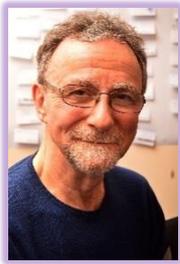




# Annual Report 2019-20



Bill Robertson (Chairperson)

Dear members and friends,

I trust you are all safe and well.

I am sitting at home reading today's Courier which is reporting on Dundee joining the central belt in Tier 3 status in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Last year when I was reflecting on our 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary, I was reflecting on the impact of digital technology and in particular social media. None of us could have foreseen the way in which we would now be relying on this technology for so many of our activities in the current year. These are reflected in this Annual Report. It is a great credit to our staff, Advocators, Communication Champions, volunteers, members and partners that we have been able to adapt so quickly and comprehensively to this new reality.

As we go forward into winter and indeed the spring of next year, we have to accept that this is new normal for now and we hope that we shall be able to meet in person in the not too distant future.

During the past year there have been some changes in our staff team and we are currently operating with an interim staffing model which has in part been shaped in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope to have a permanent staffing structure in place before the end of April next year.

We said goodbye to Director, Carina Mitchell and Elle Gemmell who laterally became our Champion Support Worker. We thank them both for their contributions to Advocating Together.

Our current interim staffing team has Vicky as our Team Support Manager, Gillian as the Systems Support and Advocacy Worker, and Gregory our new team member who is an Advocacy Worker. They have been involved in adapting all of our activities onto online platforms and I would like to record my appreciation for their hard work, imagination and resilience in adapting to home working/office based working lives.

Our Board, Advocators, Champions, volunteers and members have also adapted brilliantly to our new ways of working even if we all miss coming together like before.

Because of the nature of the Covid-19 virus, much of the NHS and national media focus has been on the elderly and those with underlying conditions which render them vulnerable. Covid-19 has also been exposing and intensifying structural inequalities within our society which have existed for some considerable time. Within all of this we have a responsibility to ensure a strong collective and individual voice for people with learning disabilities and autistic people who are also placed at risk as a result of the pandemic and the prioritisation of resources in response to it.

Within this we are well placed and supported locally to make our contribution to the Dundee Health & Social Care Partnership and through it to the broader national agenda. We are also developing partnership working with other local independent advocacy organisations and I should like to record my personal thanks to DIAS for their support and sharing of resources with us over the past year. We look forward to building even stronger partnership and joint working approaches across Independent Advocacy in Dundee in the coming period.

In the report below you will be able to read about our developments in Tutti Led by Advocating Together and the workshop which has been produced by our Champions in partnership with the Dundee & Angus College. We look forward to resuming this activity at the earliest opportunity and indeed to extending it into other workshops and training modules.

**Advocating Together (Dundee) SCIO is an independent advocacy, capacity building organisation which benefits people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people with complex communication needs.**

**We will defend and safeguard their human rights. Our ethos is based on creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive society.**

## **Activities and Highlights of 2019-20**

	<p>There are nearly 50 members of Advocating Together and 9 volunteers (not including our Charity Trustees), a range of staff and contractors who have helped take Advocating Together forward this year.</p>
	<p>We welcome Gregory Visart to the team as our new Advocacy Worker.</p> <p>Although the pandemic slowed down recruitment, Gregory was able to do some casual hours for us until August when he took on his permanent role.</p>
	<p>There have also been a change amongst our Charity Trustees.</p> <p>We would like to thank John MacMillan for his time and support.</p>



As always our volunteers have been incredible. Thank you!

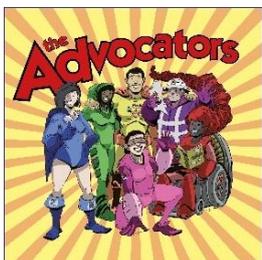
Our Advocacy Assistants are dedicated to the group work they do.

They continue to build great relationships with our members.

Our Communication Champions have had a very busy year.

They have put in a lot of hard work which we will discuss in greater detail.

Unfortunately Volunteers Week was cancelled, but we look to celebrate again in 2021.



Our team of Advocators, Heather, Ashley and Ali, have been hard at work as usual.

- We would like to thank Donna Sorrie for her many years of hard work as a Say Rep and Advocator.
- Ashley is a member of the co-design panel for the Dundee Science Centre's CONNECT project. She has worked with the team to design an exhibit to be featured in the new café area.
- All Advocators and Communication Champion Royce supported a Key to Life event in October 2019. They



helped facilitate discussion groups and collect important feedback.

- Heather attended training with the Carers Centre and is now a Dementia Friend.
- Ali attended the Homes Not Hospitals Event in Glasgow in November.
- The Advocators took part in Class Rep training at Dundee and Angus College. This was to help them to support students as class reps with their role. This activity did not continue due to the pandemic.
- In her role with SCLD Keys to Life Expert Group, Heather attended 2 meetings in Glasgow to select winners for the SCLD awards. The awards have been postponed until further notice.
- Advocators were meant to support Police Scotland during hate crime awareness month, but unfortunately this was cancelled due to the pandemic.
- Ashley continues to support an informed and involved group at the Wellgate Day Centre.



Our Communication Champions have had a very exciting year which was unfortunately affected by the pandemic.

- The Communication Champions all worked incredibly hard from January to March 2020 to create a workshop with support from Elle and Craig Strachan, as part of a developing partnership with Dundee and Angus College. The workshop is called 'Removing Barriers to Access and Communication'. Their first training session for



Dundee Science Centre had to be cancelled at short notice due to the pandemic.

- On the upside the Communication Champions completed several quality checks on Keep Safe premises. The reports produced were gratefully received. The Champions will continue to work closely with Police Scotland on this work.
- The Communication Champions supported customer feedback for the Dundee Science Centre's annual Science Festival. They delivered a Talking Mat during their Sensory Friendly Hours in October 2019 to anyone who wanted it. They wanted to find out people's experience of the Science Centre.
- Communication Champions delivered sessions to Police Scotland Youth Volunteers (PSYV) to increase their knowledge of disability hate crime and communication difficulties. They also showed PSYV how and why they do quality checking. They went out with the young people to look around shops to find good and bad examples of accessibility.



The Advocators and Champions come together regularly for the Aitegether4Change group. They have fed back to many consultations and surveys.

- They met with the Mental Welfare Commission to discuss The Independent Review of Learning Disability and Autism in the Mental Health Act. The group gave feedback on multiple sections of the review.

- They gave feedback on the National Transport Strategy.
- They also took part in the SNAP 2 consultation.
- The group also enjoyed a visit to MVV Environment Baldovie, where they got to see what happens to their waste. This trip highlighted what can happen when people do not recycle.



We have helped to facilitate the following Self-advocacy groups:

- Wizards
- Discovery
- Blethers
- Rose Lodgers
- TuttiYP

Some of the highlights have been:

- The summer walking groups. These walks were well attended by members, members got a water bottle for taking part. We had around 25 members at each of the 4 walks across the city. An Advocator, Communication Champion and two staff planned and led the walks
- Some groups visited a local business, the Little Green Larder. They learned about upcycling/fast fashion and made tops into tote bags.
- TuttiYP built on their relationship with the DCA. They were featured in a web story by DCA on their visits to



Theatre



the DCA this past year. They also visited some exhibitions. The DCA also kindly provided the young people with arts and crafts supplies and ideas during the pandemic.

- We were lucky enough to receive 10 tickets to the Oor Wullie show at the Rep, these were shared amongst our members. Everyone who has fed back enjoyed the show.
- All groups came together for a great Christmas Party at the Maxwell Centre. There was dancing, games and prizes.



### Professional Advocacy.

As people become more aware of this service our referrals are growing. We were working with 12 partners going into the lockdown and now have 4 new partners. We closed 4 cases last year.

We also have three staff providing professional advocacy. We are expanding the range of this work and developing our knowledge and skills within the team.

Our professional advocacy work has been developing within lockdown with risk assessments of activities and contacts. In this and other advocacy issues we have been working closely with other local Independent Advocacy organisations, in particular DIAS and PIA, who have been a great support.



## Tutti- Learn, Enable, Design

As mentioned above our Communication Champions were days away from delivering their first workshop when we went into lockdown.

The workshop was developed over 3 months and is called 'Removing Barriers to Access and Communication'. We are particularly grateful to the contribution that Elle made in her last 3 months with Advocating Together in supporting the production of the workshop. It will be a great memory for Elle as well.

Each Communication Champion has a role to play in the training and they deliver the full workshop together. Staff will only assist where needed.

The Board decided to invest money from our reserves into the development of this workshop. They believe this work will be a great opportunity for the Communication Champions and Tutti.

The workshops will in particular be available for Keep Safe places who are interested in improving communication.



## Lockdown

The first impact of lockdown was the cancellation of our first Tutti workshop to the Dundee Science Centre.

In the same week we were due to present our bid for the funding of annual inspections of and workshops to Keep Safe places to the Community Safety and Justice Board, which was also cancelled.

We are awaiting opportunities to restart this workshop activity, hopefully with the appropriate funding.

Staff have been working mainly from home during the pandemic and have had all the necessary equipment to adapt to this quickly.

Once things became clearer that lockdown was going to be long term, we moved our groups online. We now carry out weekly groups on Zoom.

For those unable to attend online we contact other members via phone, with a focus on members living alone.

Professional advocacy has also mainly been taking place over the phone or via video call.



We increased our use of Facebook when the pandemic started in order to share important information and keep in touch with

our members and followers.

People particularly enjoyed our series on what our members have been doing during lockdown, and our pictures for LD Week.

We also shared some throwback photos of fun memories.

We have produced issues 28 and 29 of the 'YOUR SAY' newsletter.

Your Say 29 is our first digital only issue. All issues can be found on our website. Issue 30 will be out soon.



Share Ordinary Places



Science Centre Talking Mats

A4C trip to the Glasgow Science Centre





Informed and Involved

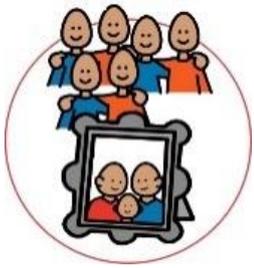
A4C at the Baldovie recycling centre



Keys to Life Event



Ashley & Elle co-design Connect



Build Friendships and Relationships



Halloween Party



Christmas Party



Member's messages on Facebook





Explore and develop healthy lifestyles



A4C Mental Health Review Team



Summer walking group



Choice and Responsibility



Volunteer Fair



Champions working on Tutti workshop





Increased awareness of safety



Police Scotland Youth Volunteer Programme



Ali & Jimmy  
quality-checking



## Other people who we would like to thank:

- The Casual Workers who have supported the organisation with their various skills. Neil Bell, media, Eve Hughes, admin, and Gail Thomson, self-advocacy.
- Heather Jack, HJBS Ltd, for her ongoing support with information governance.
- Joyce Barclay for always keeping up with our Advocators.
- Katherine Laidlay and team (for the design of the 'YOUR SAY' newsletters).
- Findlays Chartered Accountants for their ongoing support with our payroll.
- MMG Archbold for our annual accounts.
- 1 Office for supporting us with our IT systems.
- The support workers, family members and volunteers who ensure that self-advocates can participate in the groups.
- Everyone involved in the organisation who goes that extra mile.

### Contact details:

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