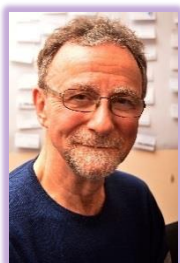




Annual Report 2021-22



Bill Robertson (Chairperson)

Dear members and friends,

I trust you are all safe and well.

The year 21-22 was one where we all worked with the 'roadmap out of lockdown' and the gradual lifting of restrictions arising from Covid-19. It has been a long and complex journey with twists and turns including the Omicron variant. We have all become familiar with lateral flow tests, vaccine certification, which we had to load onto iPhones! and new ways of socialising and working in accordance with the latest Scottish Government guidelines. It is perhaps worth noting that this journey back to 'normal' is still ongoing and taking shape.

Once again, I should like to pay tribute to the imagination, creativity and resilience of Vicky and the team including our Advocators and our volunteers for the way they have kept the show on the road and continued to support our membership and our Advocacy partners.

During 21-22 we were able to consolidate our staffing model with Vicky being appointed as the Team Support Manager, Gillian being appointed to a dual position of Advocacy Support Worker and Systems Support Worker including a deputising role and Ashley, Heather and Ali, our Advocators being given an amended contract with guaranteed weekly hours. We were very pleased to welcome Nadia as our new Advocacy Worker in July 2021 and Alena in January 2022 to work in hospital settings with short-term initial NHS funding. Alena also supported our self-advocacy groups, and other activities.

Our team has worked with the Board in shaping a hybrid model of working with the core objective of supporting our membership and Advocacy partners but also taking full account of the health and wellbeing of our staff. This remained work in progress during 21-22 and is further advancing within the current year.

We had regular meetings with our Commissioners who have remained very supportive and we are now entering a new conversation around the levels of activity of the organisation as we emerge from Covid-19 and address the heightened awareness and appreciation of the need for and role of Independent Advocacy within our society.

At our last AGM we were able to welcome Susan Buell as a new Board member. Once again, I would like to thank Susan, Gemma Matthew our Treasurer and Luke Burr, Kris Stevenson, Cathy Dyer, and Royce Barton for continuing in their roles as Board members and supporting the organisation. We did not manage to resume Board meetings at Ryehill Lane during 21-22 but we are having our AGM at The Steeple Church and I am delighted that we shall resume physical Board meetings at Ryehill Lane on the 23rd of August 2022.

During 21-22 we continued to develop our close working relationship with DIAS and in particular on the development of Collective Advocacy within NHS settings (Strathmartine and Carseview). This is still work in progress and we shall adapt and modify our approach during the coming year.

Whilst we welcomed new members to the organisation, during 21-22, sadly we lost Petra Ryce who made a huge impact during her far too short a time with the organisation. She would have been delighted that we are now in the process of resuming our meetings in Ryehill Lane.

Elsewhere in the main body of this report you will be able to read about the wide range of activities which the team and the membership have been able to organise and deliver during 21-22. Unfortunately, our Champions have been restricted to participating in the Aitegether4change group and we very much look forward being able to resume our work on "Tutti" and in particular our workshops with Dundee and Angus College, and activities around the Dundee Safe Place Initiative.

All in all, 21-22 was another successful year despite all the uncertainties and restrictions but it did create imbalances across the range of activities which we are addressing both in terms of planning and resource allocation as we go forward. Fortunately, we have a Board, a staff team, volunteers, and members who will embrace this challenge with enthusiasm.

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 2021-22



Members

There were 48 members of Advocating Together 4 of whom are also volunteers. 7 of these members also act as Charity Trustees.



Members continued to join us online for weekly Zoom meetings. Numbers of participants joining by Zoom had dropped by the end of the year as more services reopened.

We continued to keep in touch by phone with members who asked for regular contact.

We always made it clear that members could contact us whenever they needed to.

Members also enjoyed taking part in recruiting 2 new members of staff.

Everyone at Advocating Together was sad to hear about the passing of one of our newer members Petra Ryce.

She may not have been a member for long but definitely made an impact with staff and members, always happy to take part in activities.



Staffing

Staff mostly worked from home, but time in the office increased over the year.



Gregory left the organisation in July 2021 and Nadia Baczynska became our new Advocacy Worker.

We would like to thank Gregory for all of his work at Advocating Together, our members enjoyed working with him.



In January Alena Schurings joined Advocating Together as an Advocacy Worker. Her role was to help facilitate self-advocacy groups and work on a new project with funding from the Mental Health Outcome Framework.

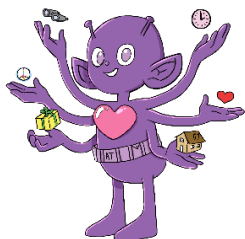
Charity Trustees

Our Board continued to meet regularly online.



We would also like to thank our Chairperson, Bill Robertson, for continuing to give extra time to staff over the year.

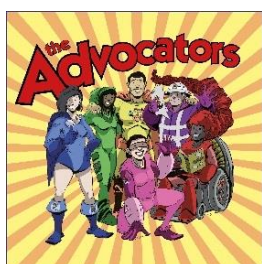
Volunteers



A big thank you to our volunteers who continue to support our work.

Our Advocacy Assistants continue to support members on Zoom and keep spirits up.

Advocators



Our team of Advocators, Heather, Ashley, and Ali, continued to work digitally but also had more in person meetings to go to.

Their activities included:

- Online sessions for Learning Disability Week 2022, the theme was Human Rights.
- The launch of SCLD's Human Rights Town app.
- The Learning Disability Strategic Planning Group (SPG), which restarted in person with a smaller group of members.
- Starting work with Joyce Barclay (HSCP) on the learning disability strategic plan.
- A visit to the newly refurbished Dundee Science Centre.
- SCLD group about the environment and discussions about COP26.
- Feeding back on the National Care Service Consultation with some other members.

They continued to attend their regular meetings:

- Adult Support and Protection Committee

- Keys to Life Expert Group
- Dundee Involvement Network
- National Involvement Network

Self-advocacy



We facilitated 3 regular self-advocacy groups online by Zoom.

Some of the highlights have been:

- Relationship session held during LD Week 2021.
- Some took part in Reading for Fun research with Susan Buell.
- Sessions created by Nadia on human rights, equalities, and climate change.
- Guests from Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), Central Library, Social Security Scotland, Dundee Science Centre, V&A Dundee, Care Inspectorate

Some members helped with filming at the Dundee Science Centre.

At the end of March 2022 some members were able to meet in person again for a visit to Waterfront Place.

We planned small in person groups for Christmas but they had to be cancelled due to Covid. All groups came together for an online Christmas Party by Zoom.

Communication Champions



This work could not restart due to funding availability.

We look to restart our work with Dundee & Angus college again on the Tutti workshop(s) and modules as soon as we can with this linked to the Curious Communicators role within the Dundee Safe Place Initiative and other local settings.

Professional Advocacy



We continued to keep in touch with partners on the phone or in video calls. We were able to increase our face-to-face contact with partners over the year.

We received 18 new referrals.

We supported 35 partners.

We closed 6 cases.

Some were self-referrals, but we also worked closely with DIAS to transfer some of their partners or referrals from their waiting list. We had an increase in referrals from other agencies, such as Care Managers, Social Prescribing Link Workers, and LD Nurses.

Sadly, two of our advocacy partners passed away at the beginning of 2022, they were great characters who will be missed.

Collective Advocacy



Our Skype group with Wellgate Day Centre stopped over summer 2021 and participants started moving back to the Centre to receive services.

We look to restart this group.

Advocacy on Ward

This year we received £20,000 in funding from the Mental Health Outcome Framework.



This money was for an Advocacy Worker (Alena) for 3 days a week at Strathmartine and the Learning Disability Assessment Unit (LDAU) at Carseview.

Alena worked closely with a colleague from DIAS, who received the same funding.

Their role was to promote advocacy on wards and build relationships with patients in order to develop collective advocacy groups.

This project has been very slow moving, but some good relationships were made.

Your Say



We produced issues 32 and 33 of the 'YOUR SAY' newsletter.

Topics have included the environment, Adult Disability Payments and the Census.

Both issues 32 and 33 were circulated online and copies of 33 were sent to our members and other organisations.

Working Together



We continued to enjoy a closer relationship with other local Independent Advocacy organisations, DIAS, and PIA, who have been a fantastic support.

We were able to share skills and knowledge. Staff attended training and information sessions arranged by DIAS.

We also provided Talking Mats training to some of their staff.

The organisation met regularly to discuss meetings we attended and share helpful local or national information.

This helped us promote advocacy in Dundee on a wider scale. We all represent advocacy in Dundee not just our own organisations.



Meetings attended

Members and support staff attended many meetings, mostly still online, such as:

- Learning Disability Strategic Planning Group
- Adult Support and Protection Committee
- Dundee Providers Forum
- SIAA peer support and managers support meetings
- Tayside Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy meetings
 - Learning Disability Inpatient Expert Panel
 - Learning Disability Communications short life working group
 - Adult Neurodevelopment Meetings
 - Whole Systems Approach Meetings
- Social Security Scotland Inclusive Communication External Stakeholder Reference Group
- Carers Partnership
- DHSCP Strategic and Commissioning Plan Review - Stakeholder Consultation Session
- We are also part of the Dundee Alliance- represented by other Advocacy Services

Social Media



- We continued to use Facebook and Twitter as a way of sharing important or interesting information.
- We shared information on the easing of lockdown.
- We promoted Learning Disability Week and shared a wonderful poem by Ali.

Other people who we would like to thank:

- Laura Menzies and Arlene Mitchell for their support throughout the year.
- Joyce Barclay for always keeping up with our Advocators.
- Dundee Independent Advocacy Support (DIAS) and Partners in Advocacy (PIA) for their support.
- Katherine Laidlay and team (for the design of the 'YOUR SAY' newsletters).
- Findlays Chartered Accountants for their ongoing support with our payroll.
- Andrew McQueen 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:



Advocating Together (Dundee) SCIO
13 Ryehill Lane,
Dundee,
DD1 4DD

@ email: enquiries@advocating-together.org.uk



phone: **01382 666601**

Website – www.advocating-together.org.uk

