

THE SPEAKER

the newsletter of



Independent Advocacy
Perth & Kinross

Summer 2010

Welcome to our 2010 Summer edition of The Speaker.

Staff Updates

We will be saying a sad goodbye to both Norrie and Jordan in July. We are currently recruiting both Mental Health and Children and Young People's Advocacy Workers, and will keep you posted on our two new members of staff...

Sandra will be going part-time, job sharing with Angela. I would like to say a big thank you to both Norrie and Jordan on behalf of IAPK for all their work and commitment, and to say we will miss them both – and the humour they have both brought to the office.

Clare Gallagher, Manager

Here are a few words from them.....

Reflections on Independent Advocacy



I have been involved with Independent Advocacy Perth & Kinross for seven years. When I first became interested in volunteering with the organisation it was still based at the Gateway and was

going through the process of becoming a separate entity and no longer part of PKAVS (Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Services).

I remember liking the concept of not taking decisions for people and instead helping them to find out and think through the options which might be available.

In practice, to begin with I found it quite difficult not to take decisions or influence the person. Very soon, however, I realised the importance of allowing people the space to make their own decisions, without passing judgement or giving an opinion.

I have supported many different advocacy partners with a wide variety of issues. We may not always have been successful in achieving the desired outcome but at the very least their voice has been heard, their opinions made known and their wishes communicated. There are a number of favourite memories which I have of these advocacy partnerships; however, confidentiality prevents me from giving details. Suffice to say they still bring a smile to my face!

In the past four years as an employee of the organisation I have concentrated on Mental Health Advocacy. I still remember clearly the feeling when I went into a locked psychiatric unit for the first time – I was in new territory and was uncertain what to expect. However, I soon became accustomed to this new environment. Virtually all the staff I have encountered have been helpful and supportive even when challenging questions have been asked!

A big "thank you" goes to all the volunteers who helped me during these years either by taking on individual partnerships or by passing on words of wisdom. Another big "thank you" to all at 90 Tay Street – I will be sorry to leave the team. A more committed, energetic, supportive group of people you are unlikely to meet. And a final "thank you" to all the people I have supported, who let me become a part of their lives for a period. Without their involvement the job would not have been worth doing.

The time has arrived for me to move on.

Unfortunately I cannot do what I plan to do and still be part of IAPK. However, I hope to be able to continue involvement with the wider independent advocacy sector in future.

To anyone who may be reading this in an edition of "The Speaker" I would wholeheartedly commend Independent Advocacy to you. It can be challenging, sometimes very difficult and frustrating, but ultimately also very rewarding.

With best wishes to IAPK and everyone involved.

Norrie Stewart

Goodbye

It does not seem that long ago I was writing my hello I am speech for the speaker.

Some of you may be aware that I am leaving Independent Advocacy after



nearly two years in post. I have enjoyed my work over the past while and have found it very challenging at times and of course very rewarding.

I have supported over 40 young people with various mental health needs and I feel together we have achieved lots of positive outcomes.

I am moving to a full time post in my home town of Dundee with a Charity called Carolina House Trust. I am going to be working with young people who come out of foster care and into the big bad world, supporting them with budget management, life skills and anything else they need someone by their side with. This is going to be a fresh challenge for me and I am looking forward to moving on.....I am of course sad to be leaving Independent Advocacy as being the Children & Young Peoples Advocacy Worker has been one of the best jobs I have had.

It has been really good and fun working with the team and volunteers.

Thank you for making my time here so enjoyable.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Jordan

Training

The ½ day training held in April was a great success. The speakers from Salvation Army and the Drug & Alcohol team were very well received and there was a very good attendance by volunteers. Thanks to all of you who were able to come and support them.

The next ½ day training will be held at the beginning of October.

Peer Support Groups

Towards the end of the year we will be carrying out a consultation with all peer support groups to look at what you would like the focus of the groups to be and if there are any topics you would like to cover, for example boundaries & dilemmas. Angela and Rhona are currently providing 'Endings training' with peer support groups; sometimes it can be hard to know when to end the support with a partner or if the partner ends the relationship themselves, and there can be many feelings attached to these situations.

Refresher Course

A volunteer has suggested that for those volunteers who've been with us a while and prior to when the Codes of Practice and Principles & Standards documents came out it would be a good idea to have a refresher course. We think this is a good idea and will be adopting this as a policy.

Other volunteers have indicated that they would value this sort of course and find it useful as so much has changed since they began as volunteers. It is anticipated that this will be a day course and will probably be held in October/November.

Consultation Feedback

In March this year, as part of the Tayside Independent Advocacy Strategy, we carried out a consultation with ex-partners, contacting everyone who had had support from Independent Advocacy in the last 2 years. Below are some of the comments we received:

I can't thank all the staff at Independent Advocacy enough, they were very professional and understood my concerns without judgement, and they helped when no one else would

As a carer I have been through some traumatic times so I know that many people don't know where to turn until they are helped by independent advocacy through very difficult situations. I don't know what I would have done without them; advocacy is a vital service to everyone

Independent Advocacy gave me hope and strength to carry on in what were very stressful and upsetting circumstances

Allowed my voice to be heard at a time when I felt very vulnerable

What a fantastic piece of work and outcome. Everyone in that household will benefit enormously from this. Well done.

From a Social Worker

Explained contents of the agreement in words I could understand

Quotes from Advocacy Partners and other professionals

I cannot think of anything else I would have gained from Independent advocacy or how it can be improved. I am very glad to know it is there if I need it again in the future

Helps to clarify the situation when an advocate goes over the main picture with you

I was well matched to an extremely helpful and professional volunteer. I would not have been successful without their skills in helping preparing my case

I wouldn't change a thing. I think the employees and volunteers do a wonderful job. More volunteers needed

My advocate went the extra mile for me, researching information to help with other things as well as what we were working on

They were absolutely brilliant. I could not have succeeded without them. They made the difference between giving up completely (mentally and physically exhausted) and soldiering on finding a new purpose in life. Perhaps make your service more widely known. So many people from so many spheres of life could benefit from the ethos of your work and skills, from people who are professional and gracious. Train more volunteers and expand more into society

Of the 82 people who gave feedback:

- When asked if they would use Independent Advocacy again 79 said 'Yes' and 2 said 'no'
- When asked if they found Independent Advocacy helpful 79 said 'yes' and 3 said 'no'

Other Happenings

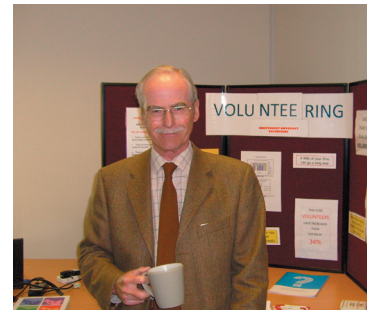
Open Day

We had a very successful Open Day in June. A wide range of organisations and agencies came and we were able to make some important links with people.



Volunteer Fair

We again had a stall at the Volunteer Fair in the middle of June. This was a very busy day where we had lots of enquiries about voluntary work



The Board

This year at the AGM Christine McLeod stepped down as Chair of the Board and was replaced by Jim Dow.

Our thanks go to Christine for all her hard work and support of Independent Advocacy in this role, though she will remain on the Board.



PUSH moves out

PUSH moved out of our office in April and into their own premises on New Row in Perth. We welcome Raine who heads up the Perth & Kinross Access Group. We will have more about what they do in the next issue.

Independent Advocacy Perth & Kinross

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Mission Statement:

To enable those people in Perth and Kinross experiencing mental health problems, learning and physical disabilities, dementia, frailty, people experiencing age related problems and also those who are carers, to have their voices heard by providing Independent Advocacy so that they are involved in decisions which affect their lives. We work together with volunteers to create a stronger community where people are valued.

The Home Team:

Clare Gallagher (Manager)
Sandra Young (Mental Health Support)
Jordan Burns (Children & YP MH Support)
Rhona Spowart (Carers Advocacy Worker)
Amanda Moore (Administration)

Norrie Stewart (Mental Health Support)
Sheina Bell (Strathmartine Advocacy Support)
Angela Wright (Mental Health Support Worker)
Adrienne Ruddock (Volunteer Co-ordinator)

The Board:

Christine McLeod
Norma Bibby
Marion McFadzean

Peter Fleming
Frank Parnell
Jim Dow