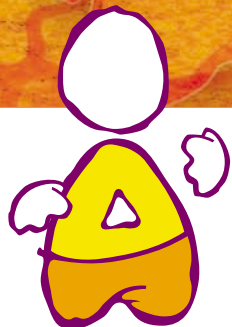




Speaking up for Advocacy



Welcome to the first Comhairle Advocacy newsletter.

Comhairle is the agency responsible for the provision of information, advice and advocacy to members of the public on social services. The Comhairle Act, 2000 defines advocacy services as those in which the interests of a person seeking a social service are represented in order to assist such a person in securing entitlement to such a service but does not include legal representation. Advocacy is now getting a higher profile and in this newsletter we hope to let you know about some of the advocacy projects that are going on around the country. Within Comhairle advocacy is the responsibility of the Development and Social Policy team under Helen Lahert. Máiride Woods is the Advocacy Executive.

Research

A sub-group of the Joint Working Group on Advocacy looked at current advocacy services in key CIC's and how they should develop.

They found that :

- All key CIC's already take on straightforward advocacy work.
- 58% could build an appeal case and represent clients.
- 76% of CIC's saw a need for more advocacy work

One third of key CIC's had three or more staff with these skills.

Areas of need: Social Welfare, Employment, Health Board appeals.

CIC's believed advocacy could best be provided by:

- building up the skills of existing staff
- providing dedicated staff within specialist areas
- employing a dedicated advocacy worker
- providing a back-up team of experts
- training with a practical basis

Comhairle's actions on advocacy since 2002

- 11 Regional Advocacy Fora for community and voluntary organisations throughout the country.
- Activities and issues relating to advocacy within the Citizen Information Service examined by a Joint Working Group on Advocacy.
- Weafer Associates completed a research project on Advocacy which will be published shortly under the title *The Jigsaw of Advocacy*.
- Two 12 month pilot projects in Clondalkin and Sligo nearing completion.
- Regional funding allocated for advocacy projects.
- A National Seminar in Tullamore organised in collaboration with APT, the Midland Health Board and the National Disability Authority.

Do you know of an advocacy project in your area? If so please contact Máiride at 01-605 9035.

Advocacy around the Regions – the Fora Report

This report covers the deliberations of 11 regional consultations Fora. Participants came from Comhairle, the CIC's and from voluntary and community organisations which provided advocacy.

Eleven forums were held with the objectives of:

identifying the organisations providing advocacy services in each region, describing these advocacy services, identifying gaps in provision, identifying implications for development

Three broad approaches to advocacy were identified – A representational model, an empowerment model, a support model.

Advocacy work was seen as demanding of resources, skills and time. Resources were needed to establish a professional service with trained staff and background supports. Work was needed to identify models of good practice. The report sounded a cautionary note – advocacy is not a panacea for all ills! The full report is available from Mia Bolger at 01-605 9073

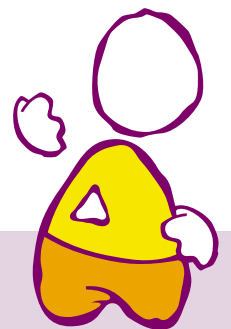
Interagency Advocacy Movement

IAM is a network of people in the South Dublin and North Wicklow regions. They work to promote the use of advocacy for people with learning disabilities. IAM held a very successful launch and information day on 30th April in the Stillorgan Park Hotel Conference Centre. An important feature of the day were the presentations by people with intellectual disabilities from the Brothers of Charity and St. John of God's services. These included an enjoyable presentation by Shadow Box Theatre Company.

The graphics for the very attractive brochure were prepared by Language who held a number of workshops with people from services. The result was some striking and original artwork. The Interagency Advocacy Movement is supported by Comhairle. It can be contacted through Gerry Keane of Carmona Services 01-285 2900.



"I don't like the word advocacy – I prefer to say speaking out" – Service user at IAM launch.



Irish Advocacy Network

The Irish Advocacy Network is a user-run user-led organisation promoting peer advocacy on an island-wide basis. It is an independent organisation which offers support and information to fellow users and survivors to empower them to speak up, speak out and take back control of their own lives.

The Irish Advocacy Network received funding from the Department of Health and Children in September 2002. I.A.N currently employs peer advocates within a number of Health Boards, the

SHB, MHB, NEHB, WHB, & ERHA. Advocates are about to take up positions within the SEHB area and two further advocates within the ERHA.

The Irish Advocacy Network have just appointed their Director of Development for Northern Ireland. Peer advocates are former users of the services and receive accredited training in peer advocacy through the training department of the Irish Advocacy Network with accreditation through the Northern Ireland Open College

Network. In conjunction with the ERHA and Dublin City University the Irish Advocacy Network have also designed a course introducing the concept of peer advocacy to health service workers.

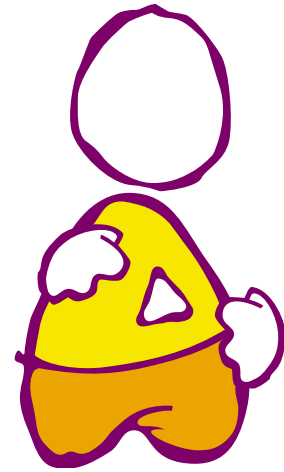
The Irish Advocacy Network is based in Rooskey, Monaghan, Co Monaghan and can be contacted at 047 38918.

Accredited Advocacy Course with Sligo IT

Some organisations including Comhairle build in advocacy to their regular training but more advanced and accredited training is needed. Comhairle and Sligo Institute of Technology (IT Sligo) have taken the first steps towards the provision of an accredited advocacy course. If all goes according to plan the first advocacy modules could go ahead as soon as February 2004. Sligo IT has self-awarding status and has already run short courses in areas associated with advocacy. The part-time modular course envisaged could take various shapes– traditional with 2-3 evenings a week or distance format with some block attendance periods. Initial suggestions for modules were:

**Ethics, Communications, Social Policy,
Employment and Social Welfare Law, Equality Law,
Disability Awareness and Legislation, Types of advocacy**

Some modules would be core and others optional. The course is aimed at experienced information officers from CIC's, Health Board workers, and voluntary sector workers with an interest in advocacy. It is hoped that participants could proceed to a national certificate over time. One hundred organisations replied to initial information with sixty attending a planning meeting in Sligo IT in May where a steering group was formed to oversee the development of this course.



Cork Learning Disability Advocacy – initial meeting

St Patrick's Upton which provides residential and day services to people with learning disabilities, made an approach to Comhairle in 2002 concerning the provision of advocacy services. Comhairle could not provide such services but suggested holding a meeting with other interested groups. Helen Brougham of Comhairle in Cork chaired the meeting.

Independent advocacy was necessary in this sector because of;

- parents' reluctance to criticise a service on which they depend
- the tendency of people in residential care to seek direction from staff
- residents' inability to imagine any life outside their present service

Advocacy is also for older people

The Cork Older People's Advocacy Service was set up in 1999 and is a free, confidential Cork-based initiative for older people. Its purpose is to train, deploy and give ongoing support and supervision to volunteers who will serve as advocates to help empower older people who have difficulty in expressing their needs and concerns or accessing services. They may also help

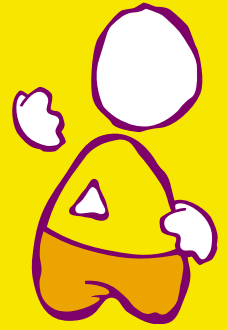
family or voluntary carers. Older people are taken to mean people of about sixty and upwards.

COPAS is attached to the Cork Social and Health Education Project and gets some funding from the Cork City Partnership and from the Dupuy Company. It employs a Coordinator and has provided training for eleven advocates who are now working with

older people in the Cork area. It emphasised the three sections to their training – listening, information and practice. Part of the training involved time spent within a CIC and they have ongoing links with Cork and Blackrock CIC's .

For COPAS advocacy is 'speaking on behalf of' but also 'helping people find their own voice.'

Types of Advocacy – What's yours?



From Advocacy: a Rights Issue?

Professional and crisis advocacy is used for a short-term crisis in a person's life – for example, loss of a job. The advocate is paid and trained and has access to legal and other experts. This is the one of the advocacy services provided by some CIC's.

My Voice, My Choice...

Advocacy Project at namhi. by Liza Kelly

namhi, the National Association for People with Intellectual Disability in Ireland has employed an advocacy officer, Liza Kelly to coordinate their advocacy project. This post is part funded by Comhairle. namhi is committed in its strategic plan 2001 to consumer representation and advocacy and actively encourages all member organisations to be proactive in this area. This project will enable namhi to provide information and resources to our 160 member organisations in every county on advocacy.

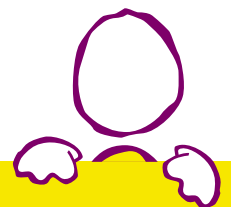
With few exceptions people with intellectual disability have very limited opportunities to participate in the political or social processes within Irish society or within the disability movement generally. The causal factors for this exclusion are complex. They are often linked to lack of awareness on the part of people with learning disabilities themselves about their right to participate and the limited opportunities available as many live in residential settings.

In recent years there has been recognition of the importance of advocacy for people with disabilities, particularly those in residential settings (Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, 1997). However there have been few initiatives in relation to people with intellectual disabilities. Some self advocacy groups have developed in an ad hoc way around the country, often associated with service providers who provide residential and day services for people with intellectual disability. There is no national

independent advocacy service, which could co-ordinate and facilitate such groupings.

Four months into this project, questionnaires have been sent and returned from all members to establish if they have any existing self-advocacy groups and to seek their views on how best advocacy can be integrated into their services. A survey of individual members and parents has also been completed to seek their views on advocacy.

Liza Kelly (Advocacy Officer) has been meeting self-advocates and facilitators nationwide to ascertain their views and aspirations for the future of advocacy services in this country. This project will also involve arranging consultative, regional meetings throughout the country for all interested groups. We aspire to developing training resources for self-advocates and for staff working with people with an intellectual disability based on outcomes of consultative meetings and best practice from other countries. Developed materials and resources will be disseminated through a variety of methods e.g. on line information, easy to read materials etc. Our advocacy officer will act as a resource to namhi members.



"Quality in service to others is a human product and it flows quite naturally from people who embody it, and is unlikely to be present in people who have not cultivated it in themselves...Quality is an outpouring from people of capacities that exist initially within them and which can respond to cultivation." – Michael Kendrick "Personal Leadership and its Contribution to Service to Others"

Michael Kendrick gave a presentation at the APT national training event "Living with Quality" on 14th March, 2003