

**NHS Lanarkshire in partnership with
North and South Lanarkshire Councils**

Lanarkshire Advocacy Plan 2011-2014

**Stakeholder Consultation Event
5 April 2011**

Summary Report



1. Introduction

This short report summarises the outputs from a joint consultation event hosted by NHS Lanarkshire in partnership with North and South Lanarkshire Councils to gather views on a new Advocacy Plan for Lanarkshire. The event involved 54 stakeholders from across the Lanarkshire local authority areas and was facilitated by ODS Consulting. The report highlights the main issues raised during three workshop sessions.

2. The framework for the new plan

2.1 What should the objectives of the new plan be?

The following key objectives were proposed for the Plan:

- Vision and strategic direction – the Plan should ensure that services are developed strategically rather than in a piecemeal fashion.
- Structure and coordination - The plan should lead to a more coordinated approach to advocacy across Lanarkshire.
- Clarity and definition – the Plan should give clarity on what advocacy is and the services available.
- Recognises legislative requirements (as a minimum) – the Plan needs to meet current legislation; but should go beyond those requirements and look to widen access to advocacy for the most vulnerable.
- Identifying and meeting needs – the Plan should identify needs and help ensure services match these needs.
- Considers wider options – the Plan should recognise all the models of advocacy and delivery options that are available.
- Giving advocacy a ‘voice’ – the Plan should promote advocacy and raise awareness and understanding around the idea of advocacy.
- Reflect a range of views - the Plan should reflect a wide set of views – including the views of service users.

2.2 What should the new plan contain?

The participants considered the elements that should be contained in the plan:

- The Plan should set out a vision for moving forward (and be a more strategic document than the previous Plan).

- Needs assessment - There should be a description of current provision, an assessment of local needs and issues – and an identification of any gaps.
- The Plan should only include commitments that are likely to be deliverable.
- It is important that individual services and the Plan are all outcome focused.
- The Plan should reflect the current legislation. There should be clarity on entitlements for service users, so they know when and how to access advocacy.
- There should be clear priorities and needs from a funder point of view – where possible, these should be shared.
- The new Plan should focus on how collaboration can work better.
- The Plan should help agencies maximise the impact of available resources.

2.3 Who is the audience for the Plan?

Participants felt that the audience for the Plan will include the following groups:

- “Everybody” who is interested in advocacy in Lanarkshire.
- Statutory agencies – funders and commissioners; the Scottish Government and other public agencies.
- Advocacy service providers and potential future providers in Lanarkshire.
- The voluntary sector and providers of other support services.
- Planning managers in a range of different services.

2.4 How can it be an active Plan?

The participants considered how the Advocacy Plan can be an active, working plan:

- The Plan should reflect clear senior commitment to advocacy – for example the three Chief Executives of the public agencies signing it and promoting it.
- The Plan should be realistic and achievable.
- The Plan should include clear indicators and ongoing arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. It should include commitments for different partners.
- The document should be relevant and accessible. It should be informative and readable. It might include case studies and real life examples of advocacy.
- Summary information relating to the Plan should be made widely available.
- Promotion of the new Advocacy Plan should be a joint responsibility across sectors.

3. Identifying and prioritising gaps in current provision

3.1 Where are the gaps in current advocacy provision and why?

The stakeholders considered whether there are any gaps in current provision.

Specific gaps were identified in relation to client groups. These included:

- Carers (including parent carers);
- Foster and kinship carers;
- Foster placements;
- People with addictions and their families;
- Children and young people with mental health problems;
- Children in the child protection system;
- People subject to welfare guardianships;
- People affected by long term conditions and physical disability (not related to age);
- People affected by acquired brain damage;
- Minority ethnic groups;
- Asylum seekers;
- Those involved in the justice system;
- Patient advocacy;
- Older young people;
- Young people generally (not just those with disabilities)

Several issues were raised in relation to **geographical** differences in provision.

Many stakeholders noted that there are currently differences in the services provided in North and South Lanarkshire. It is not clear whether this is as a result of an objective assessment of need – or because of practice and custom. Other comments in relation to ‘gaps’ or weaknesses in advocacy provision included:

- There may be issues around the assessment process for advocacy - identifying who actually needs advocacy, what they need, and where to refer people to.
- There may be gaps in the type of advocacy provided. There is scope for more volunteer led or citizen advocacy.
- There may be gaps / issues in relation to helping people effectively disengage from (professional) advocacy, e.g. through things like peer and self-advocacy.

3.2 How would you go about prioritising provision in future?

The main issues raised in relation to setting priorities were:

- Meeting needs – the Plan has to be ‘needs led’. This might build on feedback from local service user groups.

- Legal requirements – prioritising advocacy covered by statutory requirements.
- Active promotion of advocacy – for example offering outreach or ‘surgery’ sessions rather than waiting for referrals.
- Develop networks – developing the (existing) advocacy networks in Lanarkshire.
- Prioritise early intervention.

4. Thinking ‘outside the box’ – finding solutions to gaps

4.1 Sources of funding

The participants were asked if they thought there are other ways of funding services, other than from statutory bodies, for instance through independent funding sources.

The stakeholders raised the following issues:

- There are opportunities to use funding from charities and trusts. However, it is still only a small part of the overall expenditure in Lanarkshire.
- Charitable and lottery funding is available to support advocacy services so long as it is not a statutory service.
- Charitable trusts are also being squeezed - and with legislation making certain aspects of advocacy a statutory responsibility it makes it more difficult to access independent funding.

Many stakeholders considered more collaborative approaches to securing funding. Other comments on funding related to charging organisations for support services, the idea of individuals contributing to the costs of advocacy, and the potential for advocacy to be delivered by service user groups.

4.2 Could more use be made of volunteers?

There was strong recognition of the valuable role that volunteers play in advocacy services – but there was caution about capacity issues and concerns that volunteering should not be viewed as an affordable alternative to statutory provision.

- Several stakeholders felt that using volunteers really adds value. But it is a challenge to recruit and retain volunteers. Using volunteers is not always appropriate. Sometimes people need intense support that requires specialist knowledge, and time to dedicate over a short period of time.
- There was a strong sense that volunteers can contribute to community and peer advocacy and other (lower) levels of advocacy and support – and this should be

tapped into. Community advocacy and voluntary support groups are out there – it is about coming to an accommodation with and using all the resources that are out there currently.

4.3 Generic or specialist advocacy services?

The groups considered the advantages and disadvantages of generic and specialist advocacy services. Across the workshops there was general consensus that specialist services are preferable to generic although this was not universally the case. Participants raised the following issues:

- Stakeholders felt that generic services dilute the quality of advocacy services.
- There was concern that having generic services might mean an erosion of choice; some client groups being neglected; and a loss of connection to particular client groups.
- There is a continuing need for specialist advocacy services in key areas, for example children and young people, carers and a number of other groups.
- Relationship building is important in advocacy services – this is more likely in specialist services because service users tend to come back time and again.

4.4 Advocacy services provided by local or national organisations?

The stakeholders discussed the relative advantages and disadvantages of local and national advocacy organisations. Views were mixed on this issue and there was no consensus among stakeholders on any ‘right’ model for provision. There was recognition that there are advantages to both local and national organisations and scope for better linkages between both levels of organisation.

- National organisations can bring advantages of awareness at a Scottish level – and of a broader range of in-house expertise.
- National organisations bring advantages in terms of greater resources and capacity to move them around the country. However, their on-costs can be higher if they don’t have a local base.
- Local organisations can know their communities and local situation better – and can be more responsive. However, they may have limited resources.

4.5 Is the use of collective advocacy appropriate in any situations?

There was general consensus that collective advocacy has strong potential and should be part of the landscape of advocacy provision. Stakeholders raised the following key points:

- Collective advocacy works well as a way to engage volunteers. Key groups – such as young people – may particularly benefit from the approach.
- It may be easier to attract funding to collective advocacy compared with other models.
- Collective advocacy can also be a good consultative tool for service providers to get feedback on provision or on duties and services.
- Collective advocacy is not always appropriate. One to one support is better at relationship building with the service user and provider.

4.6 Formalised partnership working between advocacy organisations

The stakeholders discussed whether there is any value in considering formalised partnership working between advocacy organisations. Generally stakeholders felt that there is scope for more collaboration on key areas such as training. And that there is a role for commissioning bodies to support change.

- Stakeholders felt that it has to be acknowledged that organisations are often in competition for the same funds – and this could bring tensions and conflicts. Nonetheless, there could (and should) be improvements in information sharing; joint planning; and, generally, working together amongst organisations which had similar objectives.
- There is scope for more partnership working but this may require commissioning bodies to create the impetus for change. Unless they encourage formalised partnerships there will always be the tendency for organisations to see themselves as being in competition. Some early discussions have been taking place on this theme.
- There are immediate opportunities to work together in terms of training, capacity building and operating more effectively. The two advocacy networks in North and South Lanarkshire are talking have a big role to play.
- There could be strong partnership work on setting priorities (for example through the new Plan).