

The Advocacy Project
Camden & Westminster Citizen Advocacy

**Citizen Advocacy in
Camden and Westminster**

*An independent evaluation
funded by BILD
April 2003*



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DEFINITIONS

TAP	The shortened name for ‘The Advocacy Project’, registered with the charity commission as a working name.
Adult with a Learning Disability	Our client group, for example people who have Autism or Downs Syndrome. They may also have sensory impairments and/ or a physical disability.
User	The Adults with a Learning Disability who use our service.
Citizen Advocacy	Where service users and volunteers from the same community are linked, they develop a friendship and in turn the volunteer supports their partner to advocate for themselves or advocates on their behalf.
Citizen Advocate Volunteer	The volunteer that we recruit, train, link to a service user and support during their partnership.
Citizen Advocacy Project Worker	The TAP staff responsible for recruiting, training and supporting the Citizen Advocate Volunteers.
Formal Advocacy	Where paid advocates support service users who need help immediately with one particular issue. This is a short-term advocacy relationship.
Self Advocacy	The supporting of users to develop skills either individually or in a group to tell people what they want for themselves.
Our Choice Project	The self-advocacy project supported by TAP
Service provider	Agencies that provide housing, care, transport, day opportunities, leisure or health services for adults with a Learning Disability
Professionals	Paid workers outside of TAP. These may be from Social Services, Health or others.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation has been an invaluable exercise and we are grateful to BILD for their funding support. It has enabled us to look at citizen advocacy from many angles and listen to differing opinions as well as take stock across the service.

What is absolutely clear from this evaluation is the need for advocacy continues. This is true of both Formal and Citizen Advocacy. Issues such as quality of services, daily activities, personal reviews and finances appear to be important with service users.

Forty-nine people in 2001 were seeking Citizen Advocate Volunteers and this rose to seventy-nine in 2003. Reasons may be as simple as the growth in expectations of the service users coupled with the limited resources of current service providers leaving a gap in delivery.

It is widely recognised by the service user, the service provider and authorities that the key to citizen advocacy is 'support'. Citizen Advocate Volunteers enable our service users to experience choice, independence and inclusion all of which are cornerstones of the governments 'Valuing People' White Paper which service users are now becoming more familiar with.

What the evaluation also shows us is the limited and sometimes mistaken understanding of the role of advocacy and The Advocacy Project (TAP). This appears to be greatest amongst those we rely on inside the system, namely, house staff, managers and service providers. It may therefore follow that this might also be true externally of funders and potential funders. It is clear therefore that we need to create an educational programme to ensure this gap is filled.

Overall past and present volunteers have given positive feedback informally and formally. Many of the concerns or issues they have raised have already been addressed or are in the process of changing. For example, the training programme for new volunteers has been revamped and the need for enhanced support during the initial training helped by creating a 'training buddy'. A volunteer directory is being collated ensuring all volunteers are up to date with contact details for fellow volunteers. We have produced a staff guide for volunteers identifying staff and their specialist areas of expertise. The quarterly support meetings now focus on the successes and aim to give practical help on issues; this so far has also been welcomed. It is envisioned the new web site will give us further scope to keep everyone updated with things we think could be helpful to partnerships as well as in the recruitment of new Citizen Advocate Volunteers.

A new Citizen Advocacy Project Worker for Westminster joined in December 2002, working alongside the existing worker for Camden. This does give a greater front line boost, as well as the opportunity for greater feedback from service users and volunteers. However, both posts are part time and we need to discuss further whether they should be full time to meet the increasing demands.



One area that still needs to be addressed is the management of ‘change’ within established partnerships. This is often an issue when the volunteer or partner’s circumstances alter.

Staff maintain their deep commitment to service users and welcome the role of the volunteer in the life of the service user. The volunteer Management Committee recognises the significance of their role in shaping the charity for the future. They have identified the areas of expertise still required by the committee and have been actively seeking new members to fill these roles. They have recently recruited two new members, one specifically to focus on volunteers and one with specialised legal knowledge.

Recruiting and training more volunteers remains an important focus if TAP is to meet the demand from service users. TAP has already begun to revise this process with a revamped application pack, re-contacting those who showed initial interest, devising a postcard and assessing how to use the new web site. This will clearly be an ongoing process and a priority for the next few months.

One further issue is what motivates people to volunteer. Many of the newer volunteers are actively seeking practical experience to support career development, course work or new skills training. This ‘learning’ aspect may afford even more potential for TAP and is currently being explored.

In the meantime, we now plan that each year we will formally review all of the areas covered in the evaluation prior to our AGM. We fully expect to use the AGM as a platform to report our findings and seek feedback from service users, volunteers, Management Committee members, supporters, funders and staff.

In summary this evaluation has demonstrated to TAP the value and need for advocacy in our community. Advocacy continues to ensure that adults with a learning disability:

- Have a voice.
- Experience choice
- Have an opportunity to live fulfilling, purposeful lives.
- Are recognised and welcomed as a part of our society.

Interestingly all of this can be achieved through the friendship and the support of a Citizen Advocate Volunteer.

The Advocacy Project wishes to acknowledge and thank Nicci Carruthers and Jane Abraham for their invaluable contribution to this evaluation.



BACKGROUND

The Advocacy Project is an organisation working to provide advocacy representation to, adults with learning disabilities in Camden, Westminster and more recently in Kensington & Chelsea. We provide Citizen Advocacy and Formal Advocacy as well as support for 'Our Choice Project' a self-advocacy project.

The funds we have secured for this evaluation cover the citizen advocacy work of TAP in Camden and Westminster

Citizen Advocacy

Citizen Advocacy is the linking of one adult with a learning disability with one volunteer from their local community. Over recent years the number of volunteers has been in decline, specifically the last two years. We do not have an issue with the retention of volunteers; partnerships mostly remain in place longer than a year and some have been linked for over six years. We need to recruit more Citizen Advocate Volunteers to fulfil demand from our users. In 2001 we were seeking 49 new volunteers and in 2003 we are looking for 79.

We feel it is not fair to offer a service we cannot actually deliver and so want this informed evaluation to help us in considering the future of this project.

Use

This evaluation will

- Inform the decision-making process and long-term strategies of TAP.
- Ensure that users are involved in the process and support future funding applications

Focus

Citizen Advocacy was the initial priority for the charity. Now it is equal with the Formal Advocacy in its importance to our users and us. Citizen Advocacy is the service that attracted most funding and support because of the use of volunteers. It is a real possibility that our potential funding sources will be reduced if we did not utilise volunteers in our work.

Current Volunteer Numbers

In the last twelve months we have had:

- 7 volunteers in Westminster
- 13 volunteers in Camden
- 8 volunteers have been partnered for more than two years
- We have trained 5 new volunteers and matched 4 and are currently training two more.
- 79 people are currently seeking Citizen Advocate Volunteers (40 Westminster, 39 Camden)

OVERALL EVALUATION OBJECTIVE

The expectation is that the evaluation will enhance our abilities to serve our current and potential users and inform our future running of the Citizen Advocacy Project. We expect it to enable us to reach and recruit more volunteers.

Specific Topics

- Independent assessment of our current advocacy service. Assessing current volunteer recruitment, training and evaluation.
- We need to analyse our current working practices, attitudes, skills, policies and procedures
- Input is required from our current, prospective and past users. We should speak to those who have volunteers and those who do not. In addition we should seek input from volunteers, staff, management, committee members, service providers and other voluntary organisations
- Gathering of ideas, comments and concerns from people that might not usually comment, and incorporate the results in our future plans and project developments.
- Development of ideas for self evaluation procedures
- Increase in volunteer recruitment numbers

Reporting Back

We envisage making the evaluation available to others to learn from in the form of a report which is specific and not too long and if enough interest in talks. This report should include specific case studies to highlight the service provided and current issues.

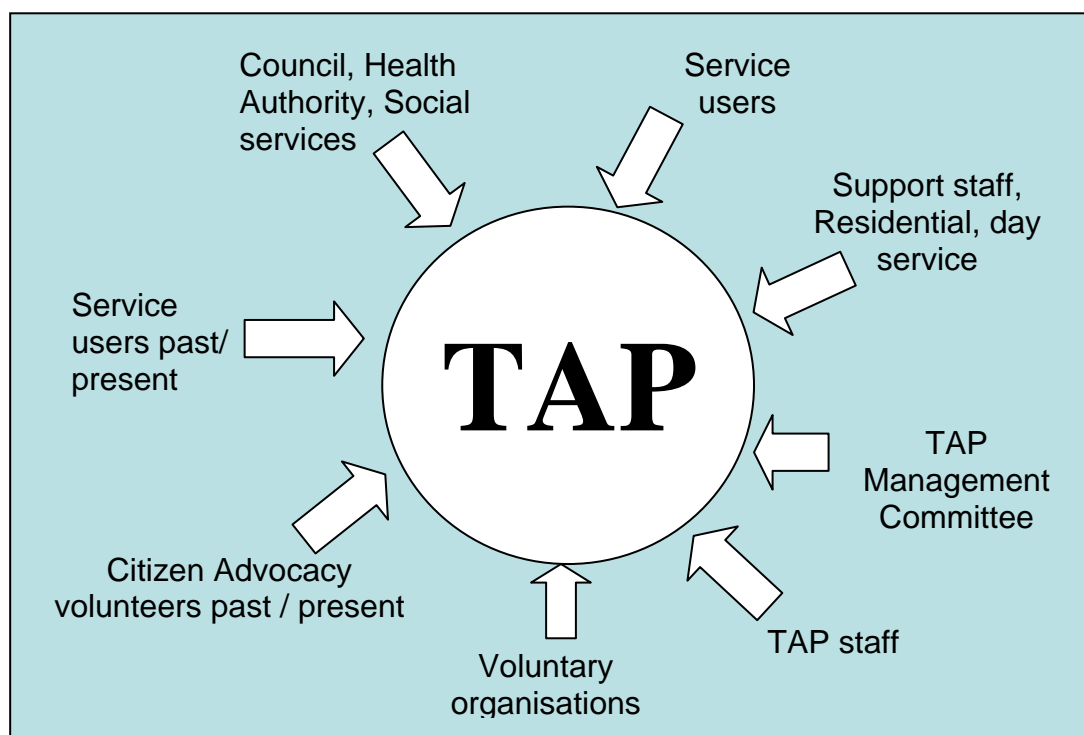
METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of this evaluation is the views of service users, current, prospective and past. Since many users have difficulty with language a specialist in the learning disability field was employed to conduct semi structured interviews across a variety of service users and their partners. (Summaries of these interviews are in the Appendix).

In addition another independent consultant carried out face to face and telephone interviews with Citizen Advocate Volunteers past and present, TAP staff, Management Committee members, house staff, service providers and other voluntary organisations.

A wide range of service users were consulted including users with and without Citizen Advocate Volunteers, some who are waiting for an advocate and those who had and advocate previously but not now.

This method has enabled us to gain a 360-degree perspective with the variety of opinions and ideas this would include:



VOLUNTEERING IN THE UK

- Six out of ten volunteers said that volunteering gave them an opportunity to learn a new skill
- 22 million adults are involved in formal volunteering each year
- The economic value of volunteering has been estimated at over £40 billion per year
- Formal volunteers put in 90 million hours of voluntary work a week
- One survey found that volunteering gave the greatest joy followed closely behind by dancing
- 10 million people volunteer each week
- Half of the volunteers get involved because they are were asked to help
- 90 percent of the population agree with the notion that a society with volunteers shows it is a caring society
- Eight out of ten people feel that volunteers offer something different that cannot be provided by the state

Source: All statistics taken from Davis Smith (1998), the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering, published by the National Centre for Volunteering, except 5 which is from Argyle M (1996), The Social Psychology of Leisure.

NORTH WEST LONDON ADVOCACY INFORMATION

Project	Advocacy Type	Volunteers	Paid Staff
The Advocacy Project	Citizen Advocacy Formal Advocacy Our Choice Project Self- Advocacy Partnership Board	20 Not needed Not needed Not needed	2 Part-time (21hrs wk) 2 full-time 1 full-time Part-time (14 hr wk)
Brent Advocacy Concerns	Generic for disabled People in Brent including Mental Health	38 Volunteers 60% Peer advocates	2 full time workers one part time
Advocacy in Barnet	Anyone over 16 in Barnet having difficulty accessing health and social services. All issue based advocacy	Up to 10 volunteers 8 at present	3 paid workers part time
Hillingdon Age Concern (Homes)	Advocacy in care homes. Issues and crisis advocacy. 90% of clients have mental health problems	7 volunteers across 16 homes	1 part time worker
Hillingdon Age Concern (Community)	Crisis advocacy	10 volunteers	1 part time worker
Loud and Clear	Specialist mental health advocacy. Issue based	2 advocacy volunteers	3 full time staff. 2 locums

Source: NW Advocacy Forum 28th May 2002



THE ROLE OF THE CITIZEN ADVOCATE VOLUNTEER

Citizen Advocacy is the linking of a service user and a volunteer with similar interests. TAP's service users are adults with a learning disability. The volunteer is recruited from the local community. We follow an equal opportunities recruitment process, then train and induct the volunteer into TAP.

In taking a request for an advocate we ask what sort of person the adult with a learning disability wants to get to know. We ask the same questions of the volunteer. The Citizen Advocacy Project Worker introduces and supports the individuals in getting to know each other. While TAP seeks volunteers for individuals they receive advocacy from their Citizen Advocacy Project Worker.

The aim of the Citizen Advocacy partnership is for the Citizen Advocate Volunteer and their partner, to first build a trusting and understanding relationship. This enables the partner to say or have the volunteer say on their behalf what they think, want and need.

Within the structure of residential care many of our users only come into contact with people paid to be with them. Many adults with a learning disability have no family contact, or friends they choose themselves, this is why it is important for them to have an independent volunteer they trust.

Citizen Advocate Volunteers support the wishes and needs of the person they are partnered with. This can include attending meetings to ensure the person has their say, helping people to understand the things happening around them, reading letters out to them in language they understand, introducing them to services or people they may not be aware of, supporting them in developing or progressing skills and interests to name but a few.

The volunteers are trusted independent friends and these relationships are developed over time. They do not have an agenda of their own, what is discussed is controlled by the partner and it is confidential. Citizen Advocate Volunteers support the wishes of the individual only. They are not paid and visit in their own time. They only advocate for one person and are therefore fully committed to that person.

Citizen Advocate Volunteers enhance the social aspect of learning disabled persons life doing things that friends do, visiting the cinema, the pub, music concerts. They do things that interest them both.

As the volunteer is not from a learning disability service and often has little or no experience in this field they ask questions and often raise issues that professionals might not. For example: many adults with a learning disability have reduced opportunities to go out at weekends. This is because staffing levels are kept to a minimum to manage costs sometimes a house of six residents may have only two staff. This means the residents often stay in for the weekend. When a volunteer asks for change we have found that it can make a difference.



What TAP is looking for in a Citizen Advocate Volunteer?

1. Do they have time to share with a person who needs them?
(Most Citizen Advocate Volunteers see their partner fortnightly)
2. Can they “listen” to someone who has a communication difficulty?
3. Are they concerned about social justice, and the way people with a learning disability are supported in the community?
4. Are they willing to make a commitment for at least a year?
5. Can they stay with a problem/issue & be assertive if needed?
6. Do they want to be a caring friend to someone when everyone else in their life is paid to be with them?
7. Are they able to take part in our training program and attend support groups quarterly?
8. Do they live or work within easy travelling distance of Camden or Westminster, where people seeking Citizen Advocate Volunteers live?

Benefits of becoming a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

- Useful, practical experience to help with future employment.
- Opportunity to learn a new skill.
- Contribution to society by actively helping someone to become more involved in their community.
- Opportunity to make a friend outside their normal circle of experience

The role of the advocate

- Gets to know their partner through spending time together and sharing activities.
- Finds out what their partner needs/wants.
- Liaises with their partner’s support staff/ key worker, and seeks information that will help them in their advocacy role.
- Enables their partner to have their views heard & taken seriously, always putting their point of view, even if they don’t agree.
- Always acts in their best interest if the partner is not able to express their choices and feelings about an issue(s).
- Respect their partner’s confidentiality at all times.
- Monitor the quality of their partner’s lifestyle and question negative or restrictive attitudes.
- Be loyal to their partner and maintain independence from all other parties, therefore avoiding any conflict of interest.
- Use The Advocacy Project for support, information and monitoring.

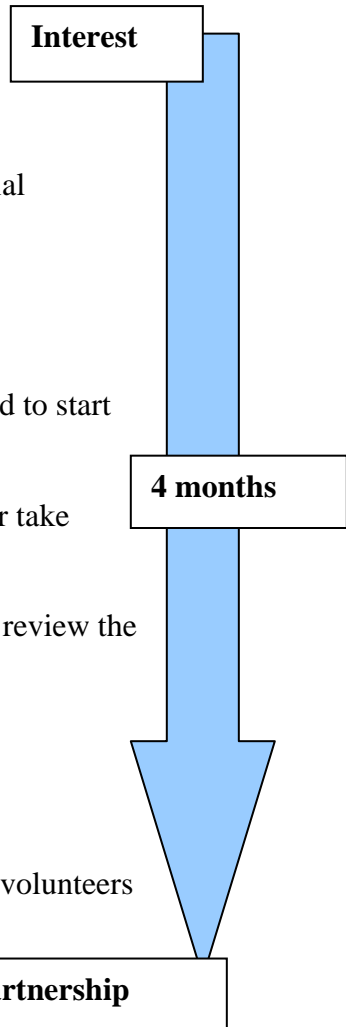


Selection Programme

All potential volunteers go through a deliberately lengthy application process including receipt of information, contacting us for the application form and attending an informal chat before the completion of a comprehensive application form and interview. This is to establish their suitability but also their commitment. We do not want to introduce a volunteer into the service user's life to have them disappear within a few weeks.

The Partnership Process

1. Interest shown from a potential volunteer.
2. Basic information sent including about the role and how to apply.
3. Request from applicant for application form.
4. The Citizen Advocacy Project Worker meets informally with the potential volunteer and gives them an application form.
5. Application form submitted.
6. Formal Interview with 2 TAP staff
7. 3 references are taken up and checked
8. Volunteer attends four training sessions
9. Meeting with Citizen Advocacy Project Worker to check on progress and to start matching process.
10. Partner identified.
11. Two initial meetings of the Citizen Advocate Volunteer and their partner take place with Citizen Advocacy Project Workers' support
12. Two further visits take place
13. Individual meetings with the Citizen Advocate Volunteer and partner to review the partnership and discuss any issues or concerns.
14. At this stage partnership continued or new matching begins.
15. Thereafter there are quarterly support group meetings, regular one:one or phone support and help if necessary or requested.



We are in the process of registering with the Criminal Records Bureau and once this is complete an enhanced police check for all potential volunteers will form part of the partnership process.

Information produced

Keeping people informed about the work of TAP, opportunities in TAP and events people might be interested in is addressed via the quarterly newsletter. All information produced by TAP including the newsletter is written in accessible formats, using easy words, photos and pictures.

TAP are in the process of developing a web-site (www.advocacyproject.org.uk) A website is considered an excellent way to reach people who may or may not already know about the project. The site has information about TAP services including Citizen Advocate Volunteering. This site is being worked on by TAP's 'Making Better Leaflets' group to ensure it is accessible..



Current Training Programme for new volunteers (Induction)

Training takes place three to four times per year and covers four modules:

1. Citizen Advocacy and Learning Disabilities

This session covers understanding what is a learning disability, the principles of advocacy, circles of support, how you access services and a great deal of interactive exercises and case studies to watch and discuss.

2. Community Care

This session helps trainees understand the health service, social services, authorities and service providers. It helps them see where they fit in as Citizen Advocate Volunteers and where their partners fit in. It looks at how the system works, introducing the Valuing People White Paper & drawing on case studies.

3. Advocacy Skills and Responsibilities

The volunteers in this session gain an insight into their responsibilities and the role they will play. The session covers many concerns or issues that may have arisen as they have gone through the previous two sessions. Formal Advocates and the Self-advocacy Worker at TAP give insights into their work as advocates and offer help and answer questions.

4. Communication

Prior to Citizen Advocate Volunteers meeting their partners this communication session covers the practicalities of communicating with their own partner offering ideas and covering any problems or issues they may have. It also highlights ways to work with professionals and staff ensuring clear boundaries.

Monitoring, Supervision and Evaluation

Once linked with a partner the Citizen Advocacy Project Worker supports the relationship. It is intended that the partnership is reviewed formally annually, although this hasn't happened in the last 2 years. Informal reviews have taken place with independent visits to users and talks to volunteers to ask how they feel the partnership is going. The quarterly volunteer support evenings where all volunteers come together to share experiences, learning, success stories and problems are obligatory.

Current Volunteer Profile

80% are female and 20% male. 55% are under 40 and 45% are over 40.

In the last year we have had 38 enquiries about volunteering from the Camden Volunteer Bureau, Westminster Volunteer bureau, Community Care, the Internet, posters, Millennium Volunteers, word of mouth and community notice boards.

DEMOGRAPHICS & DATA

Advocacy whilst waiting for a volunteer

Whilst waiting for a volunteer the Citizen Advocacy Project workers have advocated on the following issues:

Issue	Camden	Westminster
Quality of Support	3	4
Communication	2	1
Health	3	1
Finances	5	3
Day Opportunities	4	1
Complaints	2	0
Review Meetings	9	4
Relationships	4	4
TOTAL	32	18

Summary of number of users supported by TAP (Camden & Westminster)

Users	Apr 98 - Mar99	Apr 99 - Mar00	Apr 00 - Mar01	Apr 01- Mar02
Citizen Advocacy Project Worker	37	44	77	81
Citizen Advocacy Volunteers	16	19	22	20
Formal Advocates	5 (started 99)	102	121	179
Self Advocacy				8 (started Jan)
Referred On			3	3
TOTAL	58	165	223	291

Age Breakdown Formal Advocacy users (April 2001- March 2002)

17-18	19-25	26-59	60+
4	58	87	30

Ethnic Origin Formal Advocacy users (April 2001- March 2002)

White British	103	Middle Eastern	5
White Irish	15	Pakistani	1
Black Caribbean	11	Bangladeshi	4
Black African	4	Chinese	1
Unknown	33		
Indian	2	TOTAL	179

KEY FINDINGS

This section describes the findings of the evaluation showing supporting information. Corresponding recommendations follow in the next section.

1. Advocacy provided by TAP is felt to be an invaluable service for Adults with a Learning Disability

Everyone asked understands the benefits and believes in the philosophy of advocacy. It was felt in all quarters that advocacy can make a real difference to individuals. Independence, being there for only that person and friendship were particularly felt to be important. Interviewees' highlighted particular instances and examples of TAP's work that helped them form this opinion of advocacy. TAP staff and volunteers are seen as friends to users; monitors of services, confidence givers, and independent support, helping people understand options and make choices.

"I'm limited by what my organisation says I can do and Care Managers are limited too. We all have constraints. It's important to have someone who doesn't have the constraints of budget; whose concerns are solely about the person." Commented a service provider staff member

"It's good to get input from people who aren't providing a service or commissioning a service or are family members. I certainly see it positively." Commented a service provider staff member

"...writing regarding my positive experience of advocacy services.....it has allowed residents the opportunity to express their goals and dreams, something that is so essential." Comment of a health professional

"I like Ann helping me to be confident to say what I think about things like when we talked about new people moving into the house. I want a Lady. If they put in another man - I'm moving." Comment of a partner about their Citizen Advocate Volunteer.

"I've been in meetings where people listen better because an advocate is speaking because we (professional) all have our own agenda and people see that. The different perspective is valuable. The more we can develop it the better." Comment of a health professional

"An example of her (Citizen Advocate Volunteer) support: She talked to staff about the change in my Church attendance. I've been going weekly to my local (Anglican) Church. My care staff were worried that I was not attending a Catholic Church (as I am a Catholic) so stopped taking me. However they were not able to support me to go regularly to the Catholic Church, which is further away. I also missed (and was missed by) my friends at Church. Claudia helped to sort out that it was OK for me to attend." Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer on behalf of a user

"I have noticed when there is no advocate residents say very little and tend to withdraw from the whole process. This leads to very different outcomes and decisions in the meeting and the voice of the client is not always heard." Comment of a health professional



2. There is confusion about the difference between Citizen Advocate Volunteers, Citizen Advocacy Project Workers and Formal Advocacy services provided by TAP

Service Providers particularly expressed concern that they were not clear about the different forms of advocacy and who did what at TAP. This led people to hesitate in referring someone new to the Project as they were not sure who to speak to or how the organisation operated. Confusion is more pronounced in the Citizen Advocacy service when there are Citizen Advocacy Project Workers involved with someone who has or is seeking a Citizen Advocate Volunteer. Users of Formal and Citizen Advocacy services provided by TAP, although not always completely clear about the difference, were happy with the support they receive from TAP.

“Becky (TAP staff) came in with a Citizen Advocate to explain their role to a key worker. But later the key worker was concerned who was responsible for the client. There was confusion about who the key worker was to respond to.” Comment of housing provider staff.

“It would be good to know more about crisis (Formal) advocacy, we might learn something useful to help staff differentiate between us and that” Comment of a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“It’s a match made in heaven. Residents like to see people. The advocates are really friendly” Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“Ali is my advocate until she finds someone else. She does some advocacy for me.” Comment of a User about TAP staff.

“I can talk to Sam about things when I feel happy or sad” Commented a User about their Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“It was different going out with her but I can’t explain why”. Commented a User about their Citizen Advocate Volunteer

3. Some staff, particularly residential staff, are not clear about the role of advocates

Citizen Advocacy, Befriending and other volunteer projects are getting confused. Citizen Advocate Volunteers reported being asked to take on responsibilities of residential workers. Professionals often see advocacy as a way of monitoring their service and of ensuring that they are seen to have done the ‘right thing’. TAP strongly feels that they are there for the individuals. Other benefits are in addition to this.

“I don’t want to be used for things that care workers are supposed to do.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“Staff see advocates as trouble shooters. It is difficult to extend their thinking.” Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“The Citizen Advocate Volunteer was turned away and told she could not see him because he was sick – the staff member did not even go and asked the partner, I’m sure she wouldn’t have liked her friend turned away like that!” Comment of TAP staff



“It’s a form of monitoring for professionals.” Comment of Social Services Staff

“Having a volunteer/Advocate meant Jackie was able to get out more. Jackie really likes going out but is not able to on her own and staff are not available to go as much as she would like”.
Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“I want an advocate. I don’t mind waiting. I don’t mind as long as I get one. If I don’t get one, I’ll have to find out why. Maybe they’ll say “You are too independent” but that won’t make no difference -I’ll still need one. It will help me to go out.” Comment of a User

4. There is need for service providers and Citizen Advocate Volunteers to build better working relationships

Citizen Advocate Volunteers, service providers and users voiced concern about communication between advocates and staff. It is important to ensure that all people in a person’s life work together to help that person express him or herself. This was not happening as it might. Current Citizen Advocate Volunteers expressed concern that this be addressed urgently to prevent any new volunteers experiencing the difficulties they did during the early stages of developing their partnerships.

“There is an issue of how advocates come across. It would be better to try to work in partnership- although that’s two way” Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“Sometimes advocates need to slow down and take stock of the situation. It’s good to stand back and watch before rushing in, although there may be time when rushing in is called for.”
Comment of Social Services Staff

“Citizen Advocates need maturity and knowledge to make sense- developing coherent ideas rather than oppositional ones.” Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“Staff will listen to what she (Citizen Advocate Volunteer) says - but don’t always take up her ideas.” Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“Sometimes I would arrive to take my partner out and she would have gone somewhere else even though I had arranged it in advance and told the staff. This happened a lot and was one of the reasons I stopped. (being a Citizen Advocate Volunteer)” Commented a past Citizen Advocate Volunteer.

“I took the training so seriously, I was going to follow it to the letter. I didn’t make an effort at first with staff. At the support meeting I heard how people did need to rely on staff and I know I have to build that relationship.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

5. Citizen Advocate Volunteers need training and reassurance to prepare them for developing a partnership.

The 4-session induction training got both positive and constructive feedback from all Citizen Advocate Volunteers. However, it was felt that it was not specific enough for the volunteers to understand what is happening now for Adults with a Learning Disability and that more positive images of Citizen Advocacy partnerships are needed. Citizen Advocate Volunteers also felt, following the training, that they still lacked



confidence to communicate with their partners, and were nervous as well as excited about the unknown ahead.

“I thought the training was very good but it wasn’t about where people are now.” Commented a past Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“I’d like to know more about the issues of formal advocacy, maybe we could learn something and see if we are tackling things in the right way.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“I didn’t even go to the toilet when with my partner, she couldn’t stay on her own, I didn’t know what to do. I should have been told about those sorts of things.” Commented a past Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“It would have been good to come to a residential home on the training after the 2nd or 3rd sessions.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“It would be good if we could shadow an existing Citizen Advocate Volunteer to see what really happens.” Commented a new Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“There was a feeling at the beginning of ‘I’m off to change the world’. I felt pressure, but I calmed down after a while. It’s much more important to get to know each other.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“Existing citizen advocates should come to the training and talk about their experiences and answer any questions from the new volunteers.” Commented a new Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“The training needs more reassurance about going into the unknown.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

6. Good understanding of the people and excellent communication skills between Citizen Advocate Volunteers and their partners are vital.

Most people who contact TAP about becoming a volunteer do not understand who is referred to by the term ‘Learning Disability’; those who do, often do not know anyone with a Learning Disability. One quarter of the induction training is put aside to help Citizen Advocate Volunteers to develop their communication skills with this client group. Is this enough? When Adults with a Learning Disability communicate it is not always in words. Communication is not only about what, how, when and why you communicate, but also about whether it was successful and understood?

“I had a mixed experience with a Citizen Advocate I worked with. There were times when he wasn’t terribly well connected to the partner. He was full of personal passion about advocacy but over time it felt different” Comment of Social Services Staff.

“He had more of a personal dialogue with his partner. The advocate quieted down, moved on and developed a style of engaging with the partner that was fine. He only spoke when the partner wanted” Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“Wanting to do the best for the client is not always the same as listening to what the client is saying.” Commented a day service staff member



A community team manager highlighted diversity and would like to see volunteers of different ethnic backgrounds, social class and age.

“She talks about my jobs. She talks to me about different things like if I want to do a job, if I want to go to meetings. She came yesterday. She took me to a meeting in Marylebone. She says so many things - I forget what.” Commented a User about their Advocate

“If I had an Advocate I’d want them to come (to my review meetings). I want them to say things at my IP meeting. I need them to listen to what I think.” Commented a User

“I’d like to see Ann more often. Because I do not see as much of her as I used to, I am worried that she doesn’t like me any more and does not want to be my friend. I haven’t done anything to her.” Commented a User about their Citizen Advocate Volunteer

7. Citizen Advocate Volunteers are committed to their partners.

TAP asks for a minimum of a year’s commitment from Citizen Advocate Volunteers. Some volunteers are still linked 6 years later. Most stay linked for 2 1/2 years and often they end due to extenuating circumstances that would try any friendship.

“I have Claudia. She has been my advocate for over 2 years.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer on behalf of a user

“It’s more rewarding than I imagined. It’s been a really positive experience. I wish I could get more people interested.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“I’ve done things I never would have done.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“It provides them with fun, pleasure, satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment, learning patience, persistence, a different perspective (seeing things from their partner’s point of view). They recognise a better work or retirement/ life balance.” Commented a Health Service Staff member

“Because of lots of changes in his support staff, John has had very little stability in his life recently. Having Sam has been a constant but not regular support”. Comment of Housing Provider staff.

“I have an Advocate called Leslie. He started in August. We meet about every 4 weeks. I am looking forward to it”. Commented a partner about their Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“She just pops in - like she does with her other friends -rather than makes an appointment”. Comment of a Citizen Advocate Volunteer on behalf of their partner

8. TAP have not exhausted all their opportunities in the recruitment of new Citizen Advocate Volunteers

There is a wide degree of interest and ideas about recruiting volunteers from people spoken to during this evaluation. Relevant organisations questioned how strategic TAP’s recruitment of volunteers is. It was felt that there are many opportunities for advertising that have not been tried or that could be done better. TAP’s image about



Citizen Advocacy is good and friendly but they just don't reach all the people who could potentially volunteer.

"Is it difficult to recruit or is it that TAP hasn't done it well so far?" Commented staff from another voluntary organisation

It was commented the posters used by TAP were "Boring, if you want to get people's attention you need to make it bigger, more colourful." Commented staff from another voluntary organisation

"Recruitment needs a real commitment of time; we lose people to Camden Society and Westminster Society." Comment of TAP staff.

"TAP could target people with time on their hands like the retired, particularly male volunteers." Commented staff from another voluntary organisation

"Recruitment needs time invested in hitting the local businesses, sports centres, building relationships with the local community." Commented staff from another voluntary organisation

"Is there scope for interested adults with a Learning Disability to become Citizen Advocate Volunteers themselves?" Commented staff from another voluntary organisation

"Some people use volunteering as a way into the employment market, I wonder if this has been used to attract people." Commented staff from another voluntary organisation

One bureau suggested developing a leaflet highlighting 5 things that TAP needs from a volunteer and 5 things a volunteer would get from the experience.

9. The process, literature and policies in place for Citizen Advocate Volunteers have not changed with the times.

- TAP believe that a potential Citizen Advocate Volunteer needs to be able to take the lead in seeking information during the recruitment process. Although TAP has all the information to hand they make the process deliberately long.
- It is good practice in agencies using volunteers to have equivalents of job descriptions and terms and conditions which supervisions; appraisals and training ensure the individual is supported to follow. Although there is a code of conduct, volunteers are not asked to sign it. There are no formal agreements for the Citizen Advocate Volunteers.

"We have the highest drop-out between the information being sent and the prospective volunteer not calling for an application pack." Comment of TAP staff

"We feel that The Advocacy Project does not have enough resources to respond to need." Comment of Housing Provider staff.

"I've been waiting such a long time, the last couple of years. I keep asking about it. Ali said she was going to get hold of someone. She said it could take a couple of days (we agreed this meant weeks or years - a long time) to find someone for me. It all depends on when she can get hold of someone." Comment of a User



10. TAP are good at engaging and supporting people, especially the current Citizen Advocate Volunteers and potential volunteers when they apply

Staff at TAP have received praise in this evaluation for their skills, knowledge, availability and support, however there still needs to be more praise, given to particularly the Citizen Advocate Volunteers. In all roles, TAP staff, Management Committee and Citizen Advocate Volunteers, there is a low turnover. Service users, providers and commissioners across all Boroughs value this consistency.

“Ali has been a great support to me as I develop this new relationship. She calls after I have met my partner and answers any queries and encourages me.” Commented a user

“I’d like to have had more positive feedback.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“I did feel a bit pressured to find advocacy issues.” Commented a past Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“TAP staff have been amazing, when I didn’t know quite what to do a quick phone call to Penny helped tremendously, giving ideas and support, I felt more confident.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“Volunteers work out of the goodness of their hearts and you don’t want to pressure or insult them but make sure they are involved and appreciated, that they make a real difference. They need a lot of leeway as well as guidance.” Commented staff from another voluntary organisation

“He was my advocate. He was a good worker. I miss him. He was nice, friendly. He understood my needs and wants. He helped me do a letter - a formal complaint. This helped get the problems sorted out. He came here and wrote what I wanted to say. He helped arrange a meeting.” Commented a user

“Becky is my Advocate. I don’t want anyone else. She’s nice. I like her. I can talk to her.” Commented a user

11. There is a need for periodic evaluations of each partnership.

In the recent history of TAP there have not been formal evaluations of the partnerships. People feel that they are able to speak with TAP and raise any concerns but there is no systematic way of assessing what has worked or not worked.

“If I have a problem I know I can call the TAP office and someone will help me.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“I’d like to have more positive feedback.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“If there were a problem with the volunteer we now we can call The Advocacy Project.” Commented a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“Although we have reviewed the evaluation tools, the forms are now more accessible; with changes internally the actual evaluations just didn’t get done. Some were started but when



forms were not returned they were not followed up as they needed to be. They will without exception in the future.” Comment from TAP staff

12. There is a need for further training for volunteers after they are linked.

Once partnered sometimes things can change within the relationship. Maybe the person doesn't want to go out anymore, or the regularity or time of visits change, these are issues that have not been addressed with either partners or Citizen Advocate Volunteers. Established partnerships need specific further training to come to terms with changes. For Citizen Advocate Volunteers additional development training might also keep them linked longer as difficult issues are resolved and a more in depth knowledge gained.

“I wanted more on-going training to understand my partners medication and disability better.” Commented a past Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“The bereavement training was good but there haven't been anymore – lots of the current volunteers haven't had anything but the induction training.” Commented a TAP Staff member

“...that the meetings are so infrequent that John gets very emotional about seeing Sam. He stays by the door waiting on the day he knows he's coming but then the meeting might not go well especially if it is in the evening when John is tired.” Commented housing support staff

“... “It was sad” when Sam didn't visit for about 3 months over the summer. He is not visiting regularly at the moment - he did not make contact for my birthday (yesterday). Staff thinks he might be away travelling.” Commented a user

“I don't want to stay indoors any more. If Ann can't do them (activities) with me, I want someone else to.” Commented a user

Because I do not see as much of her as I used to, I am worried that she doesn't like me any more and does not want to be my friend. “I haven't done anything to her.” Commented a user about her fears relating to her Citizen Advocate Volunteer

13. The information produced by TAP is clear, colourful and well received by adults with a Learning Disability in Camden, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea

A newsletter is sent to all users past and present, Citizen Advocate Volunteers, supporters and Management Committee members quarterly. The feedback about the newsletter is positive. TAP are working to make it more colourful and make it even easier to read by involving the 'Making better leaflets group'. This group is made up of people interested in easy words and pictures.

“I'm just writing to thank you for sending the last edition of your newsletter and to say how refreshing I found it: the splash of colour, the addition of photos, the large font and the use of white space” User involvement worker Westminster

“I get it in the post. I read it. I like it it's nice.” User comment

“I get the newsletter. I look at it when it arrives. I like the pictures. If there are things that look interesting, I get someone to read it to me.” User comment

RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation has been undertaken over the last year. Feedback of findings has been on a monthly basis so some issues have already been addressed. Details are outlined in the 'actions' below the recommendations. We are committed to improving TAP services and intend to follow the other recommendations as laid out below over the next year.

1. Advocacy Provision

Citizen Advocacy must continue in the boroughs of Camden and Westminster

Citizen Advocacy Project Workers need to be extended to full-time as soon as funding is available, to ensure additional time to recruit and support volunteers.

That advocacy continues in all its forms.

Action: additional funding is being sought.

2. Clarify the different advocacy services provided

TAP staff from each project to be involved in training the Citizen Advocate Volunteers to ensure they understand the different roles.

Use the newsletter to tell everyone clearly what each role is, who everyone is and what they do

Write a structural Chart of TAP staff and distribute to all providers

Keep providers up to date with changes

Work with other advocacy providers in the boroughs served to use existing networks to tell people and agencies what staff do.

Action: Staff did attend last training, with positive feedback, and the structural chart is ready to circulate.

3 & 4. Educate provider staff and build better TAP/ provider relationships

Develop and distribute new literature for providers of services about advocacy and the role of advocacy

Develop links with providers to deliver training directly to new staff during their inductions and existing staff through training days.

Offer training to Community Volunteer Bureaus and University Volunteer Bureaus to inform their front-line staff about opportunities in TAP



5. Reassure and train Citizen Advocate Volunteers

Encourage training buddies. This is where people who train together support each other outside the training this peer support could be very powerful in the initial stages of building a relationship with their respective partners.

An induction pack needs to be produced specific to each Citizen Advocacy partnership. It should include contact details for the partner, their training buddy and TAP, communication hints, likes and dislikes.

Investigate diaries for Citizen Advocate Volunteers and their partners to record their partnership. This is useful to recognise positive and difficult times. This must be accessible to the partner, using pictures and photos.

Action: Training buddies and induction packs are working for new Citizen Advocacy partnerships.

6. Communication skills training for volunteers

The induction training needs to have basic communication skills training for volunteers before they meet their partners.

The full communication training session, including how to communicate with professionals must follow the partner and Citizen Advocate Volunteer meeting for 4-6 times. The training must address the real issues for each partnership.

Action: The training has been completely re-vamped. The fourth session now takes place after the Citizen Advocate Volunteer and their partner have met at least 4 times. Basic communication training, including working with professionals is in earlier sessions.

7. Encourage further commitment to TAP

More positive feedback needs to be given to Citizen Advocate Volunteers.

Highlight to potential and existing volunteers what difference this experience could make to their careers, lives and opportunities. What TAP can do for you!

Action: This is now a priority for the TAP staff, and is the focus of support groups quarterly. They talk about what has gone right and praise each other as well as staff doing the praising.



8. Recruitment opportunities

In advertising and information packs use examples of what volunteers get out of their commitment, highlighting experience towards work, chances to do things they wouldn't otherwise do, build friendship they would not otherwise have, training.

Develop postcards to advertise the volunteer opportunities in targeted places

Consider recruiting students from specific courses looking for experience during their studies or placements, ie: social work students

Use positive comments from Citizen Advocate Volunteers to encourage new people to volunteer.

Re-vamp the “boring” posters with photos and pictures of real life people and images of Citizen Advocacy partnerships.

Write a recruitment strategy, outlining time, funds and methods of recruitment. This will make sure that recruitment is pro-active rather than re-active

Ensure the Web-site has clear information to attract interest and applications

Action: Postcards are in development and posters now have photos of Citizen Advocacy partnerships. We are now targeting groups that we need volunteers from, ie: men interested in watching sports via football clubs locally.

9. Volunteer agreements and role descriptions

‘Volunteer agreements’ needs to be written and Citizen Advocate Volunteers need to agree to adhere and sign them. They inform TAP and volunteers what their roles and responsibilities are.

Shorten the recruitment process by sending the information and application forms together.

Re-contact volunteers who did not call for application packs following receiving the information pack.

Action: We have re-contacted people that received information but did not call for the application pack over the last year. Although two were still interested after following up again, they have not turned up for interviews or become Citizen Advocates. We intend to continue sending information and applications separately.



10. Additional support for Citizen Advocate Volunteers

As discussed develop training buddy system

Create a volunteer directory, so all volunteers interested have the details of peers that they can contact or be contacted by for support and advice.

Form a position on the Management Committee responsible for overseeing all aspects of working with volunteers. This is a strategic position which will help develop good practice such as the recommendations in section 9 above.

Informal support drop in sessions for each Borough to be offered by the Citizen Advocacy Project Workers

Action: A Management Committee member with interest in volunteers has taken on the responsibility as outlined above. Informal drop-ins were run, but were not popular. Volunteers said they were happy to call if they needed additional support and did not need a session for it.

11. There is a need for periodic evaluations of each partnership

Partnerships need to be evaluated every year without fail

Exit interviews need to be started with all departing Citizen Advocate Volunteers. The information learnt to be acted on.

Action: We now conduct formal exit interviews for all volunteers and are committed to partnership evaluations.

12. Further training for Citizen Advocate Volunteers

Development training needs to be provided to existing and established Citizen Advocate Volunteers.

Training about changing relationships between partners and volunteers is essential immediately for at least 3 current individual partnerships going through change.

13. Information produced by TAP

Information needs to continue to be reviewed and developed.

Technology can be expensive and fast changing- funding requirements for hardware, software and equipment in the future need consideration.

Distribute the evaluation report. This can be a funding tool, used for helping others learn from TAP experience or to gain support from people and agencies locally and wider a field.

APPENDIX

SERVICE USER/ VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWS

Service users and volunteers have given their permission for these interviews to be published in this evaluation. We have however changed all names to protect identities.

Interview with Brian & Claudia

Brian does not use words. This interview uses the words of his Citizen Advocate Volunteer. Brian was read the interview.

My name is Brian. Jane came to my house on Sunday 19th January to meet my advocate Claudia and I. We talked about what Claudia and I do together. We went out for a walk.

My Advocate

I have Claudia. She has been my advocate for over 2 years.

What we do together.

We have one to one music sessions. We listen to Dusty Springfield on maximum volume and play tambourines.

We have been out to concerts. We went to The London Eye for my birthday last year. We have been to the circus.

What is good about your advocate?

She attends my review meetings at home and at the Day centre. At the Day Centre she pushed for them to get me trampolining - which I really enjoy. Sadly I'm not doing it now because the tutor has left.

My advocate will stand up for me. She will try to make sure I have the best quality of life possible - so at the moment is trying help me to get my own car as it is difficult for me to get out without the right transport.

She has kept an eye on the care I am getting. This has been particularly important over the last six months when my care provider has changed. If she is not happy she does something about it -so recently she has also written a complaint about the standard of care I am getting now.

She pushed the staff to organise Music Therapy for me as I enjoy our music sessions so much.

Staff will listen to what she says - but don't always take up her ideas.

An example of her support: She talked to staff about the change in my Church attendance. I've been going weekly to my local (Anglican) Church. My care staff were worried that I was not attending a Catholic Church (as I am a Catholic) so stopped taking me. However they were not able to support me to go regularly to the Catholic Church, which is further away. I also missed (and was missed by) my friends at Church. Claudia helped to sort out that it was OK for me to attend.

She just pops in - like she does with her other friends -rather than makes an appointment.



She knows me well. My staff team at the house has all changed and we often have agency staff. Claudia is able to tell them things like the fact I can choose which of 2 CDs I want to listen to if I am given the choice.

Other people in my life

My brother has recently been back in touch. He lives in Australia and visited in the summer - there is a photo of us on the TV. Through him, we have made contact with an old family friend who I met up with before Christmas. Claudia and I may go out for a meal with them soon.

Interview with Andrew

My name is Andrew. Jane came to my house on Wednesday 15th January and Friday 24th January 2003. We talked about my Advocate.

My Advocate

I have an Advocate called Leslie. He started in August. We meet “about every 4 weeks.” I am looking forward to it.

What do we do?

“We talk. He comes here. We chat. I like having meetings.”

“He came on Wednesday. We went to the pub. It was good.”

What is good about having an Advocate?

“He’s nice. I like it that he comes here. He is easy to talk to. He tells me about himself too. We are getting to know each other.”

Ali is my Professional Advocate. “It’s nice” “We talked about moving into the new house.”

The staff feel that Leslie is taking things at Andrew’s speed. Andrew takes time to feel confident with new people, so this month was the first time they have been out together on their own. The staff said that having an advocate “means Andrew gets motivated to go out”.

Other people in Andrew’s life

Andrew used to have a Citizen Advocate, who visited for about 3 years before she went back to Australia. Some of the things they did include “going to the cinema - James Bond”. “She gave me presents for Christmas - a video”

The mother of one of Andrew’s friends who passed away also visits about every couple of months.

Andrew does not have contact with his family so having an Advocate from outside the system and unpaid in his life is important.

Waiting for an Advocate

There was about a 6-month period between her last advocate leaving and Leslie starting. Andrew felt this was “a long time.”



Interview with Jackie

My name is Jackie. I met with Jane on Tuesday 14th January and Sunday 19th January 2003. We talked about my Advocate. The staff helped me to answer some of the questions Jane asked when I couldn't remember.

My Advocate

I "had Victoria". I have a picture of her (we could not find it) "My friend Victoria."

What I did with her

"I had tea at her house". "I liked her house". I went to her house "lots of time for tea". "She came to see me." "She took me shopping."

I had my nails done. We went clothes shopping. We went to the pub for meals. We went to The Beautiful Octopus Club. Victoria came when we went on holiday to The Isle of White. We went to Victoria's Dad's house for dinner.

We met about once a month.

What was good about having an Advocate?

Going to "Victoria's house for tea", "Go to the pub for a drink".

Staff said, "Having a volunteer/Advocate meant Jackie was able to get out more. Jackie really likes going out but is not able to on her own and staff are not available to go as much as she would like". "Victoria had a good relationship with Jackie. It took time to develop this relationship. Jackie had a volunteer from another scheme, but this did not seem to work as well -there wasn't the time."

What could have been better?

"I would have liked Victoria to come to my IPP meeting"

(Victoria was busy 9-5 so not able to attend)

"I would have liked to go out more often."

Why she left

"Victoria moved house." When she moved too far away she stopped visiting although Jackie is still in touch with Victoria 's father ("Dad") -she rings him occasionally." I ring Dad."

Other people in the Project

I think the picture for The Advocacy Project looks likes 2 skittles!

I know Ali. She does formal advocacy for me and other people in my flat.

Our flat gets a copy of the newsletter. It is put on the notice board in the kitchen.

Interview with Isabelle

My name is Isabelle. I met with Jane on 11th and 18th December 2002. She came to my house and we talked about The Advocacy Project. I know about The Advocacy Project. I see Becky. I've got an Advocate. Jane showed me photos of staff - I recognised Becky "She's my Advocate" and Penny -"She's not my worker." Becky has been my Advocate for a long time - about 2 years.



What does your advocate do?

She talks at my review meetings. She helps me to say what I want. She's nice. I like her. I can talk to her.

She talks. She talks about health. We talk about where I live - things like that.

She comes every 2 weeks. She's coming next week at half past one, my advocacy. She comes here. We just meet to talk.

If things were not OK she would talk to my Key worker. Sometimes we go out to the café - one time. I liked that.

I don't think anything could be better, but I'd like Rebecca to come more often - every week.

“I want her now.”

(Have you ever had problems that she has helped you sort out? “No. If I have problems I talk to my key worker”)

Who else might be involved as an advocate for you?

I've got a brother, but he lives a long way away. He's a policeman. He doesn't come to my review meetings but I would like him to.

Waiting for an advocate

I don't want anyone else. Becky is enough. If Becky had to stop being my advocate, I would want someone else.

Newsletter

I get it in the post. I read it. I like it its nice. Its got stuff about Becky in it.

Staff comment

After meeting Jane, Isabelle was clear that Becky was her Advocate and Jane was not. Isabelle likes people to stay in the role they have with her - she doesn't like change. She missed Becky when she was on maternity leave.

Interview with Lillian

My name is Lillian. Jane came to talk to me on 20th December 2002 and 10th January 2003.

We talked about The Advocacy Project. I have heard about The Advocacy Project. I get letters from Ali.

Jane showed me photos of people. I recognised Ali, Becky and David. I felt I might have met Andi.

We talked about Ali.

My advocate

“Ali is my advocate until she finds someone else. She does some advocacy for me.”

What we do.

“She talks about my jobs. She talks to me about different things like if I want to do a job, if I want to go to meetings. She came yesterday. She took me to a meeting in Marylebone. She says so many things - I forget what.”



“I get letters from her. She talks to me about the pictures she has in her files - about the jobs I want to do. She showed me pictures about the type of job I want to do. She gives me quite a lot of these (notes from their meetings).”

“I spoke to her about moving out. I want to move into a house with new people. (One of my house mates) is not getting on with me.” “Ali comes to my review meeting.” “She comes to see me a few times.”

What I think about my advocate.

“She loveable.” “I miss her when she is on holiday.”

Getting involved with The Advocacy Project

I am interested in finding out more about The Advocacy Project “I’d like to talk about the issues that come up with The Advocacy Project -if there was a way to get more involved in the organisation.”

“I would like to come along to it and find out more about it. I’ve only been once and I’d like to come again.”

I did not recognise the newsletter when Jane showed it to me. “I don’t get one. Maybe I should ask Ali to get me one.”

Waiting for a Citizen Advocate Volunteer

“Ali is trying to get in touch with someone to get an advocate. She says she is trying to get hold of someone but I don’t know if she has.”

“I want an advocate. I don’t mind waiting. I don’t mind as long as I get one. If I don’t get one, I’ll have to find out why. Maybe they’ll say “You are too independent” but that won’t make no difference -I’ll still need one. It will help me to go out.”

Why I am waiting

“I’ve been waiting such a long time, the last couple of years. I keep asking about it. Ali said she was going to get hold of someone. She said it could take a couple of days (we agreed this meant weeks or years - a long time) to find someone for me. It all depends on when she can get hold of someone.”

Why I want an Advocate.

“I would like an Advocate who could support me to go out and do things with me as well as chatting. I could introduce her to the area.”

“I think they (the paid staff) are all too busy. I’d like a volunteer to take me out.” “I don’t mind if it’s a man or woman.”

“If I had an Advocate I’d want them to come (to my review meetings). I want them to say things at my IP meeting. I need them to listen to what I think.”

Interview with Steve

My name is Steve. I met with Jane at my house on 11th and 18th December 2002. Jane asked me about The Advocacy Project.

When we had finished talking a support worker, came in and helped me fill in some of the gaps- things I couldn’t remember.



The Advocacy Project

Jane showed me pictures of some of the staff at TAP.

I recognised David, Penny and Becky.

David has been to my house. He's talked to me. He talked to me about getting an Advocate. We just chatted.

David was my Advocate.

He helped me do a letter - a formal complaint. This helped get the problems sorted out. It was about a year ago. He came here and he wrote what I wanted to say. He helped arrange a meeting. We are monitoring the situation.

He also came to my meetings (care plan reviews) and some tenants meetings. He was a good worker. I miss him. We occasionally went out together but really we just worked together.

I've been to see Penny. I went to the office. I had a drink and a chat. We talked about getting an advocate.

Becky has been here. She talked to me about getting an advocate.

Waiting for an Advocate

I don't have an Advocate at the moment. I have been waiting a long time - since I've been living here (about 7-8 years). I think they are looking for someone for me. I don't know what type of person I want, but I want a man. I've been waiting so long now that if someone comes it will be nice, if not - well life goes on....

What is good about having an Advocate?

This is about David:

He was not staff in the house. It was easier to talk to about things that are problems in the house.

At meetings like reviews: He said what I wanted to say.

I miss David. He was nice, friendly. He understood my needs and wants. He was easy to talk to. He had lots of energy - he enjoyed doing what he was doing.

If I get a new advocate, I'd like them to meet with the staff here and me to find out my support needs.

I had a befriender from another project about 2 years ago. She only came about twice. (From staff - When she realised the amount of support Steve needed she was not prepared for it. This shows how important the support that the Project needs to give its Advocates is. This befriender was very worried and in quite a state when she stopped coming.)

Staff comment on behalf of Steve - we feel that The Advocacy Project does not have enough resources to respond to need. They wished the Project had more resources - and felt the service was not available because of lack of resources.

Interview with Craig

My name is Craig. I met Jane on Monday 6th January and Saturday 11th January 2003. My key worker also sat in and helped me when I could not answer Jane's questions. We talked about The Advocacy Project.



She showed me photos. I recognised Penny, David and Becky. Penny came to my house. We talked about me!

I used to have an advocate. My key worker reminded me that she used to come to see me, take me to the pub.

What I did with my advocate.

“Walked to the pub”, “I like drinking Guinness.”

She came about once a month.

“It was another opportunity for Craig to get out and about.”

“She was my friend.”

“I like going to the pub. I like drinking tea.”

What is good about having an advocate?

“She enjoyed Craig’s company and he enjoyed her - they got on well together.”

“It was different going out with her” but I can’t explain why.

What could have been better?

Having someone with more time would be better - “I’d like to go out more. I’d like to go to the pub, Party, Having a party, Going clubbing.”

Having an advocate who could advocate for Craig would be good. I have contact with mum and dad and go to stay at their house for weekend 3 times a year. In the house there are House meetings facilitated by staff when Craig and his housemates can talk about things. Having an advocate for these and for supporting Craig in his reviews would be good “Someone coming from a different angle seeing things the staff don’t see.”

Why did your advocate leave?

Craig did not seem to know. “I don’t see her any more.”

Waiting for an Advocate

I have been waiting for about a year, but staff feel I don’t really understand about waiting.

The worker suggested, “Craig would be best matched with someone who likes going to clubs and pubs - and also likes walks in the woods and things like that.”

Craig stays in touch with the Project - he gets the newsletter, which staff explain if there are things they think he will be interested in.

Interview with John

My name is John. I met with Jane on 19th and 25th January 2003. We talked about my Advocate.

My Advocate

I have an Advocate called Sam. “I really like him.”

(I also know Becky “She’s got a motorbike” and David.)

This is about Sam:

“I see him. He comes here. I go to Sam’s house. Sam has a car and we go in it.”



What we do.

“I play the guitar. Sam records it. I did a CD. I also do computers. We go bowling with him and his friends, Parties, Cinema. I like going in his car”. We have “been out for pizza.”

“He comes to review meetings.” I’ve met his girl friend and his mother.”

What Sam does for me.

“He talks at my review meetings.” Staff said that Sam is good because he gives views on what’s happening generally in my life.

“I can talk to Sam about things when I feel happy or sad”

We are planning for me to “stay at Sam’s house to sleep”.

At the moment, I don’t have contact with my family, so Sam is like a brother - we do things together.

Staff also said “Sam was able to help when we had problems with our heating - writing letters and speaking up on behalf of John.”

What could be better?

Because Sam is sometimes very busy his visits are not always very regular. “It was sad” when Sam didn’t visit for about 3 months over the summer. He is not visiting regularly at the moment - he did not make contact for my birthday (yesterday). Staff think he might be away travelling.

Because I like to talk to Sam, it is hard if I am feeling low and Sam is too busy to visit me.

Staff also feel that the meetings are so infrequent that John gets very emotional about seeing Sam. “He stays by the door waiting on the day he knows he’s coming but then the meeting might not go well especially if it is in the evening when John is tired.” If Sam could visit regularly at a weekend it might be better.

Because of lots of changes in his support staff, John has had very little stability in his life recently. Having Sam has been a constant but not regular support.

Other contact with the Project

“I get the newsletter. I look at it when it arrives. I like the pictures. If there are things that look interesting, I get someone to read it to me.”

Interview with Rachel

My name is Rachel. Jane came to my house on Monday 20th January and Friday 24th January. We talked about my advocate.

My advocate

I have an “advocate worker” called Ann. She comes to my house on Saturday mornings. “She has not been for a couple of weeks.” ”She’s busy at the moment - she might be working.”

“She should have come at the weekend and she didn’t come.” “This week she said she’s coming on Friday.”

We have been seeing each other “not very long”.



What do we do together?

“I sometimes go to her house. I used to go to her house and have dinner over there. She is a good cook.”

“Sometimes go to the café. She sometimes comes to my meetings - not always. We went to the teashop. She lives close by - we walk to her house.”

What things does Ann help me with?

“We made a rug - a small one -it’s not finished yet”

“When Ann is here, I don’t need staff to do things. I’m not going out on my own. I need someone with me.”

What is good about having an advocate?

I don’t have any family in this country “my sisters are in New Zealand and the other in Jersey”. “My mum and Dad are dead - passed away.” I like going out with Ann.

I like Ann helping me to be confident to say what I think about things like when we talked about new people moving into the house “I want a Lady. If they put in another man - I’m moving.”

What could be better?

“I’d like to see Ann more often.”

Because I do not see as much of her as I used to, I am worried that she doesn’t like me any more and does not want to be my friend. “I haven’t done anything to her.”

Jane said she would ring the Project to say this. The project has addressed this.

“It makes me angry when I have to wait for someone.”

“I don’t want to stay indoors any more. If Ann can’t do them (activities) with me, I want someone else to.”

I feel staff are trying to get me to go on holiday - I don’t want Ann to put pressure on me to go on holiday “I don’t want to go on holiday - I want to go on daytrips.”

Other contact with the Project

We get the newsletter “We’ve got one in the kitchen. I look at the pictures.”

“I know Penny too.”

The following documents are available upon request

1. Volunteer Code of Practice
2. Volunteer Policy
3. Confidentiality Policy
4. Annual Report
5. Annual Accounts

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