



Press Pack 2018

Helpful information for the media

Summary

Hello, thank you for your interest in Advocacy Focus. In this Press Pack we will explain who we are, what we do, our key people and what we are available to comment on in the media.

By covering our stories and including us in your publication you will:

- Be supporting and promoting a registered charity which relies on funding from local councils and the public
- Be supporting people with mental health issues or those who lack capacity
- Help spread the word of our services and those we can help; be directly involved in helping those who can't communicate effectively or speak up for themselves
- Directly improve peoples' lives with the use of independent advocacy services across the North-West
- Raise awareness of advocacy services and the need for advocacy

About Advocacy Focus

Formed in 1998, we have been providing independent advocacy services since the inception of advocacy. Previously known as East Lancashire Advocacy, we changed our name in 2009 to reflect our growing service across Lancashire and the North-West.

Our specialist Advocates support a wide range of individuals with varying health and social care needs. We give people back control of their lives and help them to speak up about important decisions surrounding their mental health care, health care and social care.

From someone who is detained in hospital to someone who lives in a care home; we are experienced in working with people with mental health needs, learning disabilities, dementia, individuals that lack capacity and more. We also work directly with carers, ensuring their voices are heard and needs are met.

We help people communicate their needs to the right people/services and work to secure their rights, represent their interests and find the services they need. We are completely independent, free and confidential.

Our Services

The word advocacy is quite complex, but behind the word is a vital and supportive service aimed at helping people take control of their lives. Our services cover:

- Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) - Practical support to help people who are in emotional distress – or those with mental health issues – to make informed choices to represent themselves and access health or social care services
- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) - a statutory service provided under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 which aims to empower and protect people who lack capacity to make decisions for themselves. As part of the Act, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) aim to make sure that people living in care homes, hospitals and supported living are looked after in a way that does not inappropriately restrict their freedom. IMCAs also support decisions such as Serious Medical Treatment, Change of Accommodation and Care Reviews
- Care Act Advocacy - Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a duty to provide independent advocacy for all adults and carers, as part of their own assessment, care planning and care reviews
- NHS and Social Care Complaints Advocacy - This statutory duty comprises of assisting and supporting adults in making a formal complaint to the National Health Service and Adult Social Services. This service is designed to support anyone who feels they cannot initiate and complete a formal complaint against health and social care services.
- Return to Care – we provide Return to Care interviews for runaway children in Bradford. In Bradford the number of children who have ran away from care in the last year has doubled, this vital service is aimed at understanding why they have run away in order to prevent this from happening and ensure all children's' safety.

Mission Statement

We help people to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in their lives, by providing high quality advocacy.

Key information

- Founded in 1998 when advocacy was in its infancy, we helped pioneer independent advocacy services in Lancashire as well as help develop the national training and qualifications as they stand today
- Over 60 staff members and volunteers help make Advocacy Focus the advocacy charity of choice
- We have five strategically placed offices in Accrington (Head Office), Leyland, Lancaster, Blackpool (this office supports the people of Fylde and Wyre) and Trafford – we can also provide advocacy services on a national basis via spot purchasing
- We are QPM accredited – recognising quality in independent advocacy
- Winner of Enterprise in Society (Selnet) Award for 'Excellence in Training and Mentoring'
- Shortlisted for Charity of the Year and Volunteer Manager of the Year at the North West Charity Awards 2017
- We are funded by local councils, including our main commissioner, Lancashire County Council, Trafford Council and Bradford Council and rely on donations from the general public and local businesses
- Our service is free of charge, confidential and completely independent
- We have a strategic expansion plan in place to deliver high quality advocacy services with multiple councils across the UK
- Investors in People – we care about the wellbeing of our staff and provide plenty of opportunity for mentoring, training and development.

Key Staff

Available to provide opinions, quotes and comment pieces:

Justine Hodgkinson – CEO



Justine joined the Advocacy Focus team as Chief Executive Officer in 2014 at a time of real change affecting the delivery of advocacy services. Committed to helping commissioners meet and exceed their statutory advocacy requirement, Justine is spearheading major developments in the sector.

Justine made the move from private sector to social/third sector around 15 years ago as she realised her real motivation for work was to reach out to the most vulnerable sectors of society and those that don't have a voice.

She has experience as a social worker as well as working for national charity, Booktrust, where she worked as Head of the Universal Bookstart programme for six years. As part of this role Justine developed the Bookstart Corner programme which aimed to tackle social exclusion through improved literacy.

Justine says: "Advocacy means the most vulnerable people have someone in their corner to empower them to have a voice. I know from my own personal experience when my mother was diagnosed with dementia six years ago, how hard it is as a lay person to work through the minefield of legislation and protocols to access the appropriate services and support at what is, by definition, an incredibly stressful time for everybody concerned. Had I known that advocacy support was available to me at the time and what that support could achieve, it would have made a significant difference to my mum and to our family."

Justine is available to comment on:

- Charity news / running and operating a charity
- Mental health, mental health news and legislation
- Care act news and legislation
- Advocacy services in the UK
- Women in business
- Mental health in the workplace

John Hutchison – Operations Director



John joined the Advocacy Focus team as an IMCA (Independent Mental Capacity Advocate) before being promoted to Advocacy Manager and then to Operations Director. He is instrumental in developing our strategic plans for the advocacy service going forwards.

Before joining Advocacy Focus, John worked in sales and marketing and was a Sales Director for a successful business travel company. He was influenced in his move to the third sector by his partner and his daughter, who both work in mental health.

He says: “In advocacy you have to be able to communicate with many different types of people, from the service user to health and social care professionals and also with our partners and commissioners. Having an intuitive empathy and understanding of other people, and the ability to communicate this in a compelling way is a key part of our everyday work.

“I have managed teams in many of the companies I have worked for and have always been mindful of the need to encourage my employees to build in stress relief strategies and activities in their lifestyle.”

John is available to comment on:

- Charity news
- Charity funding and fundraising
- Operational running of a successful charity
- Mental health, mental health news and legislation
- HR news
- Our awards, accreditations and Investors in People status

Leanne Hignett – Service Delivery Manager



As Service Delivery Manager, Leanne ensures that we deliver high quality equitable and accessible advocacy services throughout our contracted areas. Leading and managing the Advocacy Team, she is passionate about providing a caring and supportive service; Leanne ensures our commitment and quality in advocacy is second to none.

Leanne is a trained social worker as well as a trained and experienced Independent Mental Capacity Advocate and has experience in advocating on behalf of individuals who lack capacity in relation to specific decisions under the Mental Capacity Act.

Leanne says: "My passion is to ensure that service users' voices are heard, ensuring individuals are aware of their rights and they are upheld. Above all my main focus is to support individuals to have choice and control over their own care and support."

Leanne is available to comment on:

- Independent Mental Health Advocacy
- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy
- Care Act Advocacy
- NHS and Social Care Complaints Advocacy
- Our advocacy team and service delivery
- Changes in legislation relating to advocacy services

Lauren Lovelace – Volunteer Manager



Lauren joined the team as an IMCA (Independent Mental Capacity Advocate) and was appointed Volunteer Manager in August 2015. Today, Lauren is responsible for steering the development of the volunteering strategy and recruits, trains and manages the broad team of volunteers working with Advocacy Focus.

In 2016/17 Lauren implemented a new Volunteer Strategy which saw our intake of volunteers grow by 85.75%. This saw her win a Highly Commended Award at the North West Charity Awards 2017. Lauren also won the Selnet award for Excellence in Training and Mentoring in 2017.

Before joining Advocacy Focus, Lauren volunteered for Home Start, completing 1000 hours as a Family Support Worker. She also volunteered at Lifeline, a young person's drug and alcohol organisation where she worked her way up to Volunteer Coordinator.

Lauren says: "Volunteering is really important to Advocacy Focus and our volunteers are integrated across the business, with different skill sets from IT and administration, to fundraising, to marketing and promotion as well as working alongside the advocates, providing signposting for service users to the kind of support they are able to access and, where appropriate, referring service users to direct advocacy support."

Lauren is available to comment on:

- Volunteer strategy
- Importance of volunteers for charitable businesses
- Our volunteers
- Recruitment and marketing of volunteers
- Why people should volunteer / benefits of volunteering

How to write about us

Please refer to our full name at all times, 'Advocacy Focus' – do not shorten.

Quick sentences about us you can use:

- 'Providing independent advocacy since 1998'
- 'Our specialist service supports a wide range of individuals with varying health and social care needs'
- 'We give people the skills to stand up, speak up and be heard through the provision of high quality advocacy'

We understand writing about what we do is confusing so we have provided some FAQs below to help you:

What is advocacy?

Advocacy in all its forms seeks to ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to:

- Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them
- Defend and safeguard their rights
- Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

- Express their views and concerns
- Access information and services
- Defend and promote their rights and responsibilities
- Explore choices and options

How many Advocates do you have?

We have over 35 trained Advocates to the national standard. We welcome people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Full training is provided by Advocacy Focus.

What is the role of an Advocate?

Depending on the service, an Advocate will help a service user understand and stand up for their rights in a health or social care setting. This could be by:

- Providing support to help service users find information so they can make their own decisions
- Helping people using the service to take control of meetings, encouraging them to speak out
- Building skills and confidence so service users are able to advocate for themselves without help
- Going to meetings, and helping service users to write letters, make phone calls, find information, make enquiries and make a complaint.

If you are not sure about how to write about us or are services please get in touch with us and we will be more than willing to help.

Upcoming events & campaigns

Event / Campaign	Date	Information
Trafford Launch	1 st April 2018	Our contract officially begins in Trafford on 1 st April 2018. Here we will begin to market our services in the area, working to demystify 'advocacy' and taking referrals from Trafford residents.
20 th Anniversary	2018	We are planning a fundraising campaign for our 20 th anniversary. Details to be announced soon.
Pop Up Advocacy	Throughout 2018	As part of our Pop Up Advocacy events, we'll be touring Lancashire and Trafford with our gazebo to make sure the public know exactly what advocacy is and how it could help them. We issue a press release before each date informing the public of the time and location.
Health and Social Care Complaints Drop In Sessions	Throughout 2018	We offer free 'drop in' events across Lancashire (to be rolled out in Trafford mid 2018) to give local people the support they need when making a complaint about the NHS or Social Services. Our highly trained Advocates can help them through the whole process of making a complaint.

Images

Example images you can use when writing about Advocacy Focus

Our logo:

Square:

advocacy
focus

Standard:

advocacy
focus

20th Anniversary Logo:

advocacy focus **20**
1998-2018

Example images you can use when writing about 'advocacy'





Example Press Release

- We will give you an option of headlines, although you are welcome to create your own to suit your house style and using this press pack
- If you choose to rewrite content please ensure you follow the advice outlined in this press pack
- We think it is important to provide a link to our website with all press releases in case there are readers who need to access the service

Advocacy Charity Wins Three Year Contract with Trafford Council

Award winning advocacy provider, Advocacy Focus, has won a three year contract with Trafford Council to provide free and independent advocacy support to the borough.

Advocacy Focus supports individuals by helping them to achieve the outcomes that matter to them, when dealing with health and social care services and local authorities. The charity already holds successful contracts with Lancashire County Council and Bradford Council, as well as private contracts across the UK.

Justine Hodgkinson, CEO, says: "We are delighted to have won the Trafford contract and are able to expand our award winning service further afield. We have a passion for helping people to express their views and uphold their rights at difficult times in their lives, so to be able to support even more people is fantastic."

The contract win comes after a very successful year that saw the organisation support over 3,000 individuals across Lancashire, and just in time for its 20th anniversary. Justine continues: "It's a big year for us this year, and we would obviously like to think our 20 years of experience puts us in the perfect position to really make a difference to the lives of Trafford residents."

Justine details that the new contract will bring a wealth of volunteering opportunities to the region, as well as new plans to help residents better understand what advocacy is.

She explains: "A lot of people are confused about advocacy and how it can help them and a lot of people don't even know that our type of service exists – and more importantly - that it is free. Advocacy helps those who are having difficulties communicating about a health and social matter with health services, social services and local councils. Together with the individual we seek outcomes that are in their best interest for the best quality of life."

Advocacy Focus will be providing Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA), Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA), Independent Care Act Advocacy (ICAA) and Health Complaints Advocacy as part of the contract. Much of which the charity has been providing in Lancashire for over a decade.

Justine continues: "We plan to mirror a lot of the success we have had in Lancashire. We will have dedicated Independent Advocates located at our new office on Chester Road, who will be regularly visiting adults across the borough. We also plan

to repeat the success of our Lancashire Pop Up Advocacy service, which will see us pitching up a gazebo and speaking with local residents.

“We also plan to carry out our mental health ward drop ins, where we speak to patients about what advocacy is and help them to understand their rights and make referrals.”

Justine finished: “Our team are passionate about achieving the best possible outcomes for the people using our service, so we look forward to helping the people of Trafford.”

Advocacy Focus regularly makes a difference to the lives of people across the North-West, helping those affected by ill mental health, social care challenges and caring responsibilities. To find out more about advocacy and how it could help you, visit advocacyfocus.org.uk.

ENDS

Words: 511

Press Contacts

Jenny Dixon (Maternity Cover) until May 2018

Email: Jenny@advocacyfocus.org.uk

Contact number: 01254 958 940

Vicky Jones – from May 2018

Email: Vicky@advocacyfocus.org.uk

Contact number: 01254 958 940

