



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Our mission: To help people to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in their lives, by providing high quality advocacy.

“

"My Advocate is the only person I can trust, everyone has the right to challenge decisions made about their lives and my Advocate helped me do that."

CONTENTS

- 3 Vision & Values
- 4 Executive Summary
- 5 Chair's Report
- 7 A Message From The CEO
- 9 Service Delivery
- 11 Advocacy Services
- 13 Mental Health Reform & Liberty Protection safeguards
- 14 Success Story
- 17 Children & Young People Advocacy
- 22 Spot Purchase Advocacy
- 25 Community Engagement
- 26 Volunteer Services
- 27 Student Placements
- 28 Outcome Measures Feedback
- 29 Training & Development
- 30 Breaking Barriers
- 31 Marketing Statistics
- 32 My Focus - Self Advocacy App
- 33 Accreditations
- 34 Awards
- 35 Health & Wellbeing
- 36 Operations
- 39 Service Delivery Objectives
- 40 Company Information

VISION AND VALUES

VISION: Ensuring that advocacy is available to all who may need it in our communities.

As a team, we are passionate about what we do, and we actively encourage our people to fully embrace our shared core values with all those that they come into contact with.

Our values were co-produced with our team to create new values that reflect who we are as a growing organisation.

The decisions we make are a reflection of our values and beliefs, and they are always directed towards a specific purpose.



Quality

We deliver high quality advocacy – we have over 20 years' experience of providing expert, person-led advocacy and are sector leaders with the awards to prove it!



People

We put people at the heart of everything we do – we care about people and want to enable them to make positive change in their life.



Respectful

We are a respectful team – we treat everyone equitably and make sure everyone feels valued, respected and listened to.



Trust

You can trust us to keep your information private and safe.



Independent

We are independent of councils and health services and we are on your side.



Learning

We never stop learning – we are always improving and developing our services. We learn from the people we support, our partners and each other.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

6,381

people supported

120,000

ANNUAL WEBSITE VISITS



2,750 people supported through community & self advocacy provision



98% people understood their rights and entitlements



93% rated their support as excellent



100% of professionals said the advocate demonstrated an equitable, fair and inclusive approach



5,336 people supported with complex advocacy across Lancashire & Trafford

203

meetings attended with young people

1,712

referrals made for return to care interviews

143

average missing episodes per month

72 hours

all interviews attempted within this timeframe

615

YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED

950

community engagement contacts

295

people supported with immediate information at hub events

538

people now have raised awareness of advocacy

314

people supported with self advocacy

VOLUNTEERS PROVIDED 748 HOURS OF SUPPORT TO ADVOCACY FOCUS AND THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT



CHAIR'S REPORT

Diane Burridge, Chair of Trustees, Advocacy Focus

Welcome to our Advocacy Focus Annual Report for 2021/22. As the Chair of Trustees, I am delighted to introduce you to the outstanding work and impact delivered by our award-winning Charity over the last year.

The pandemic crisis and ongoing recovery continues to present significant pressures and challenges for the health and social care sector. There are few people in our communities who have not been affected in some way by the instability and uncertainty of the last couple of years, but for those experiencing difficulties with their mental health, physical health and social exclusion, the negative impacts have been profound in many cases. The wide-ranging services that we deliver at Advocacy Focus are a vital lifeline that supports anyone in a situation where they need to understand their rights, have their voice heard and be central to any decisions made about them.

Put simply, advocacy in all its forms embodies a person-led approach of nothing about me, without me.

Over the last year we have invested in a Building Back Stronger strategy, ensuring we deploy the collective resources we have available to create the greatest impact and outcomes for the 6381 people we have supported during that time.

Growing the different strands of our advocacy work has been an important theme in continuing to develop our adult core statutory and non-statutory delivery and our preventative and specialist services for children and young people, responding in all these areas to ever growing demand. Considering the number of people in our communities needing different forms of advocacy, we have also built a portfolio of self advocacy tools and resources during this year including the launch of our new app and website.

Significant changes are also in progress within the policy and legislative environment with consultations and reforms to the Mental Health Act, Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) replacing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), and a reform of the Human Rights Act (HRA) with a Bill of Rights. In addition to remaining informed on the impact these changes have on our work; we also actively provide leadership through participation in the Leaders in Advocacy national network. We also co-signed with our sector colleagues the recent letter to the Prime Minister in May 2022, outlining in detail the detrimental effects on the important role of advocacy and the removal of independent scrutiny of public services that would follow the potential repeal of the HRA.

Another highlight in 2021 was our bi-annual Breaking Barriers Conference, bringing together industry professionals, expert speakers and everyone who is working hard to grow the work and awareness within the advocacy sector. I was fortunate to be able to attend this and I was so proud to see many members of our fantastic team in action, promoting the impact of our work and leading by example on ways to collaborate to grow, develop and respond to the rapidly changing environment, and secure the future of the sector.

Our plans for 2022-2023 will focus on securing this stable future for our charity in this rapidly changing environment in both the work that we do, further developing our early intervention, prevention, self advocacy, training services and community engagement. This will strengthen the resilience and diversity of our revenue streams, alongside structuring the internal skills and infrastructure to respond to and support the growth and change that will emerge from the current external environment.

As we celebrate a second year in the Mind Charity Workplace Wellbeing Index 2021/22, ranked number two in the gold standard employer's category, I would like to give my sincerest thanks to every member of the Advocacy Focus team who consistently deliver outstanding work to the many people in so much need of our services in our struggling communities.

Thank you also to my fellow trustees and our wide network of partners for the many ways in which you have helped us deliver significant impact. Collaboration is key to our success, so if you don't currently work with us and can share an opportunity to grow our impact then please do get in touch!

I continue to be inspired by the work of Advocacy Focus and I am confident that you will be too when you read this report our team have created for you.

Diane Burridge, Chair of Trustees, Advocacy Focus





A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Justine Forster, Chief Executive Officer, Advocacy Focus

This year was focused on coming out of 'survival mode' as an organisation and coming back stronger post Covid-19. No mean feat when the pandemic continued to impact on all aspects of the health and social care sector, people accessing our services and of course our team of keyworkers. As restrictions eased, our team, although glad to be back in their communities and holding more face to face meetings, were met with access challenges into care homes and hospitals, as the vaccination status debate for healthcare workers continued. The team however rose to the challenge and over the last 12 months have fully embraced a more flexible and autonomous way of working, either remotely or via a hybrid model.

Normalising conversations and supporting our team to turn up as the best version of themselves continued to reap dividends for our charity, even with a modest wellbeing budget.

The advocacy sector was bracing itself for an amendment to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005, via the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) to replace the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). Therefore a key focus over the next year will be to further prepare for this expansion of the advocacy role and the numbers required to deliver quality services on the ground. We are also preparing for changes as a result of the Government's white paper on reforming the Mental Health Act which will further impact on our ever changing sector. Dedicated specialist roles, training and development will be a key focus of our work during 2022, to ensure that our team are fully appraised of the Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) role and can offer a seamless service during the transition from DoLS to LPS.

Although we didn't see the 'grand resignation' that many organisations reported, we did have some movement of personnel and the recruitment environment became significantly more challenging. During 2022 we will have to come up with more creative ways of recruiting into the third sector and the niche role of advocacy. We have strong links with universities and local health and social care cohorts and work collaboratively with the local business community to share best practice in terms of engagement, recruitment and retention. We will continue to promote our ongoing commitment to our organisational and team's wellbeing, which will hopefully pitch us as an employer of choice and attract new talent. For the second year running we achieved Gold Award status in national charity Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index and placed second overall nationally. Normalising conversations and supporting our team to turn up as the best version of themselves continued to reap dividends for our charity, even with a modest wellbeing budget.

Funding opportunities continued to be challenging. The procurement process become even more competitive and with an expectation to provide measurable social value and early payment clawbacks, many advocacy contracts run at a potential loss. This will be one of our biggest challenges during 2022 as we focus on sustainability for our charity and how we respond to a process that focuses more on the bid writing and the financial envelope, than it does on impact on the ground and the outcomes achieved for people accessing our services. I fear that many grassroots charities will not survive these procurement challenges, when advocacy services have never been more important for the independent checks and balances in health and social care.

Our team however, continued to demonstrate best practice and tirelessly worked towards achieving the best possible outcomes for the people they served and were a credit to their profession. Caseloads remained high, and due to unprecedented demand, we had small waiting lists in place, however, this encouraged us to review and scrutinise our practice, to ensure ease of access and a timely response. As a result, the quality of our service helped us to secure several new funding tranches at the end of the financial year, with a focus on preventative services to support people that were disproportionately disadvantaged by the pandemic, thus helping people before they reach crisis point. The next year won't be without its challenges, but the team are focused and committed to it being another successful year for Advocacy Focus and our communities.





SERVICE DELIVERY

2021-2022 has been a remarkable year for Advocacy Focus, our staff team and volunteers have been committed to supporting people to have their voices heard and to be central to any decision-making processes. This hasn't been without its challenges due to the impact of Covid-19 and the difficulties people have faced in accessing health and social care services. The demand on our services across the North has significantly increased as people faced crisis during times of uncertainty and became disconnected and isolated from their family, friends, and their wider community.

6,381

people supported

2,750

people supported through
community & self advocacy
provision

98%

people understood their
rights and entitlements

We have supported 6381 people with complex advocacy needs across all our contracts. The way we delivered our services had to change, in light of Covid-19, which created a space for Advocacy Focus to work even more innovatively in meeting the needs of the people we support. A key focus this year has been on post-covid recovery and helping people reintegrate and engage with their community, whilst focusing on empowerment and the development of community and self advocacy services. We have supported 2750 people via our community and self advocacy provision to enable them to become their own best advocates.

During these unprecedented times, we secured two new contracts within Lancashire, South Cumbria, and Trafford to enable us to target the widespread unmet need within our service areas. We have made significant impact within our communities with the support of our partners, but this is only the tip of the iceberg, our plans for 2022-2023 will have a real drive towards early intervention, prevention, and strengthening individuals, groups, and communities. Advocacy Focus is a person-led organisation that responds to our community's needs, which has led to the shaping of our plans for the forthcoming year. But first, let's take you through 2021-2022 to show you what impact our support has had in our communities.



“

“A big thank you to my advocate for all the help, without her I very much doubt I would have received the outcome that I did. For this my family and myself are very grateful.”

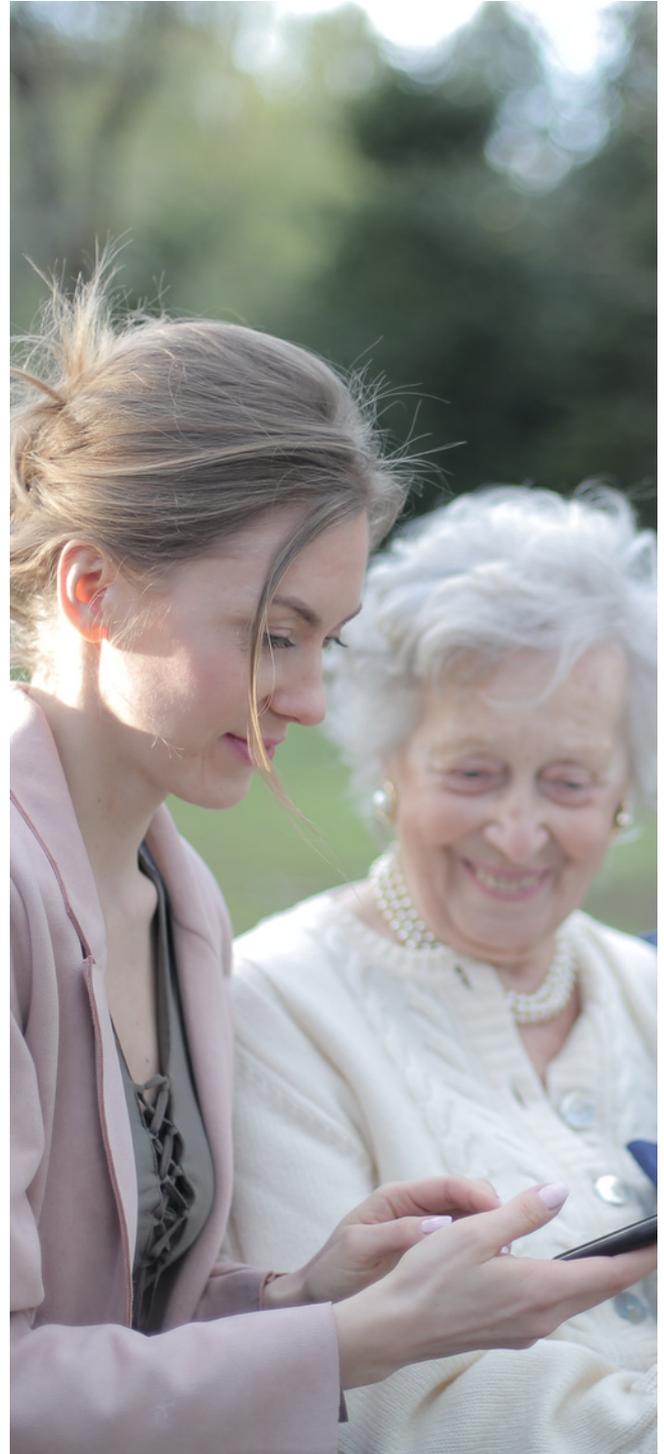
ADVOCACY SERVICES

We offer a full range of advocacy services across Lancashire and Trafford including:

- Independent Care Act Advocacy
- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy
- Independent Mental Health Advocacy
- Independent Health and Social Care Complaints Advocacy
- Support under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and Relevant Person's Representative
- Community Advocacy
- Peer Network Self Advocacy Group

Our team are multi-skilled, allowing them to provide holistic support across the differing strands of advocacy, ensuring that the person using our service is able to experience consistency, familiarity and advocacy expertise from one advocate. Our advocates work in a person-led way, ensuring that the person using our service is treated equitably and is front and centre of the work we do. Where possible we ensure that members of our community are able to experience culturally appropriate advocacy. This means that our advocates can meet the needs of people's particular religious, cultural or language requirements to help them more effectively advocate the person's views, wishes, beliefs and values.

Throughout this year, and for future years, we will continue to raise and promote the importance of advocacy and the impact advocacy can have on a person's life.



5,336

supported across Lancashire & Trafford



NEW SERVICES LAUNCHED IN 2021-2022

We have launched our extended offer to Trafford and now provide community advocacy and a self advocacy peer network group to residents who require support who would ordinarily not be able to access statutory advocacy services. Holding both statutory and non-statutory advocacy contracts within Lancashire and Trafford offers the people using our service a more holistic and streamlined service in terms of obtaining the support they require. We have found this particularly useful when individuals have contacted us and asked for support to request a social care assessment. Our Advocacy Coordinators can support that individual to request the assessment and then follow the process through to ensure that the individual is informed of their rights in relation to advocacy support under the Care Act.

One of our new services enables us to provide advocacy support to informal inpatients with autism across Lancashire and South Cumbria, as well as ongoing engagement with detained patients with autism across the same area. The overall scope of the project aims to address the gap in legislation and support potentially vulnerable people who are inpatients to have their views heard and be more involved in their care and treatment. Part of this work involved providing information to NHS England around the views of autistic inpatients in relation to advocacy and their care and treatment in hospital. Following from this we were able to produce recommendations aiming to lead to improved quality of life, treatment and care for autistic inpatients and inform strategic development.

2,750

people supported through
community & self advocacy
provision

93%

rated their support as
excellent

100%

professionals said the advocate
demonstrated an equitable, fair
and inclusive approach

Our advocates have supported Gail Petty and Kate Mercer with a review they were conducting around advocacy with people with autism and a learning disability in restricted settings. The review aims to gain a better understanding of the delivery of independent advocacy to people with a learning disability and autistic people who are inpatients in mental health, learning disability or autism specialist hospitals. It aims to explore and understand the issues impacting on the provision of high-quality independent advocacy to people who are inpatients. Our team of advocates participated in a group session discussing their experiences and providing their opinions and ideas for improvement.

Leanne Hignett (Service Delivery Director) contributes to the Leaders in Advocacy Network. The Leaders in Advocacy Network is a collaboration between several advocacy providers across the country who make for an influential voice for the advocacy sector, striving for positive change for the people using advocacy and public services.



5 KEY HEADLINES

1. The detention criteria under sections 2 and 3 are tightened to require 'serious harm' to the patient and others, and consideration must be given to the nature, degree and likelihood of the harm and how soon it will happen.
2. A new therapeutic benefit test is added to section 3 detentions.
3. Learning disability and autism is excluded (without a co-existing mental health disorder) from section 3 detentions.
4. The nominated person replaces the nearest relative role, with new powers to be consulted before patients are transferred or placed on a Community Treatment Order (CTO).
5. Rights to an Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA) for informal patients.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Discussions continue about the reform of the Mental Health Act and we are involved in all possible meetings around this, to shape the way access to advocacy will look and ensure that the voices of people in our community are heard.

Our Mental Health Act Development Worker has attended policy workshops and panel discussions around the reform, aiming to influence the legislation to ensure the people using our service will benefit from it.

LIBERTY PROTECTION SAFEGUARDS

Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) has been on the agenda for several years. We were anticipating the publication of the consultation documents, including the draft Code of Practice (which at this point was due to be published in Spring 2021), to give us further information around the extensive changes that will be introduced by the Liberty Protection Safeguards. An impact assessment was also published in January 2021.

We dedicated time to digesting this, familiarising ourselves with the estimates around advocacy - estimates around caseloads, training, the number of new advocates required and costs. We started to think about whether we felt these estimates were accurate in line with the information we already had and planned to review this when the consultation documents were published. As a result of these key changes happening within the sector, we recruited an LPS lead who will guide us in developing the way we will provide advocacy, as well as playing a key role in consultations with the Department of Health and Social Care to influence and shape the way the Code of Practice will look.

SUCCESS STORY

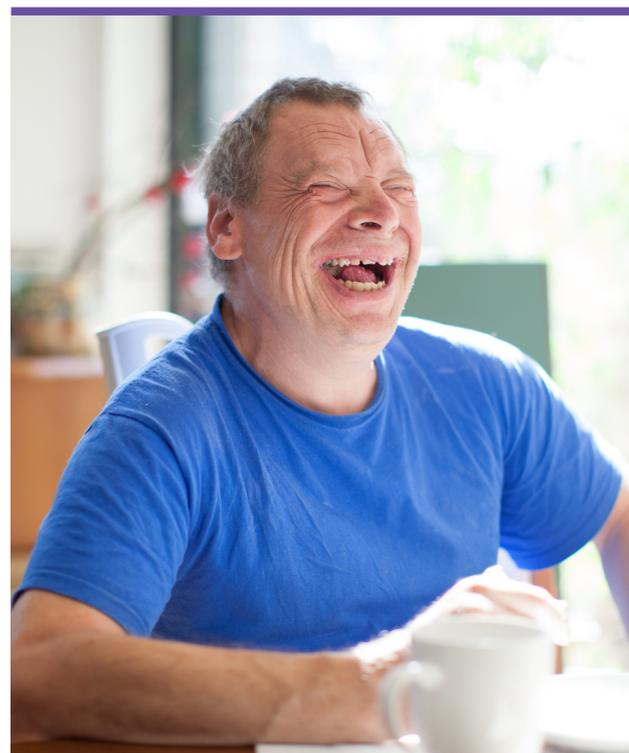
What was the person's situation before working with Advocacy Focus?

David* lives alone with 24-hour support from a team of staff, who help David with his support needs arising from his learning disability. David had reported dental pain to staff and, following examination by the specialist dentistry team, the dentist tried to remove a tooth under local anaesthetic. David presented as too anxious to undergo this procedure and, due to the painful tooth and concerns about the overall health of his teeth (periodontitis and many loose teeth), David was referred to a senior dental officer to consider further treatment. Treatment options proposed included the removal of loose teeth under general anaesthetic, with the possibility of full dental clearance. David was assessed as lacking capacity to make this decision himself and a referral was made for an IMCA, as per the duties of the Mental Capacity Act.

David's care plan states that he is unable to read or understand paperwork, even if it is read to him. David can communicate verbally, however he has significant difficulty with both receptive and expressive language. David also tends to rely on learned phrases and will often agree to the first or last choice put to him.

What did advocacy do to help the person?

David's Independent Advocate visited him three times at home to gather his views on the different treatment options and explain the procedures that were being considered. David's difficulty with expressive language was apparent when his Independent Advocate discussed the proposed treatment with him, and they were unable to establish clear views from the conversation. David's Independent Advocate brought a selection of items to engage David in conversation, including manual and electric toothbrushes. David became animated when they showed him the electric toothbrush and went on to speak about his teeth. David's Independent Advocate showed him an egg timer designed for counting 2 minutes to support good dental hygiene and also showed him their watch and pictures of clocks. By doing so, it became apparent that David was unable to tell the time. David told his Independent Advocate in short simple sentences that he was no longer experiencing pain, and that he would be happy to have more support from staff to brush his teeth effectively for the recommended 2 minute period.



From building rapport with David, the Independent Advocate discovered that he likes superheroes and they made a visual resource using superhero characters to show the difference between a full dental clearance and removal of one or two teeth. David engaged with this visual resource, changing his body language by sitting forward, reaching out to take the picture from the Independent Advocate and looking at the paper and smiling. David indicated very consistently that he preferred the look of the characters without the full dental clearance. During another visit the Independent Advocate sourced a number of photographs of people with varying amounts of teeth, ranging from a full set of teeth, to people who have had a full dental clearance. David also engaged with these visual resources, and again consistently indicated that he preferred the look of pictures where a full dental clearance had not been completed.

David's Independent Advocate discovered from his care file that David has a busy lifestyle, which includes meals out and the social aspect of dining with friends when at his day centre activities. David appeared to be a "foodie", with meals such as baked salmon and asparagus recorded in his file. David and his Independent Advocate looked through his fridge where he indicated to them what his favourite foods were. Using the food in his fridge as objects of reference, David was able to respond in simple terms of "happy" or "sad" when asked about how he would feel if he had difficulty chewing items such as pizza.

What was the outcome?

At the best interest meeting David's Independent Advocate was able to put forward that David did not appear to like the appearance of people with no teeth, based on his responses to the visual resources used.

After the Independent Advocate had brought the toothbrushes to a visit with David, support staff reported that they had bought an electric toothbrush for David, as he appeared to be so interested in it. Staff stated that David had been happy to use this and was accepting of staff support with this.

David had his teeth examined by the decision maker just before the best interest meeting took place. The decision maker noted that despite some teeth being loose, they were very clean, indicating that he was consistently accepting support with cleaning them. Based on David's views on people with missing teeth, and the fact that he has not consistently expressed pain, the decision was made not to go ahead with any treatment under general anaesthetic, including a partial or full clearance of teeth. The decision maker also noted the key role that food plays in David's life and his enjoyment of a wide variety of foods, which could be limited by a full dental clearance.

The decision maker has arranged for David to have more frequent check ups with the dental officer in order to build a relationship with them, which may boost his confidence to have treatment under local anaesthetic if needed in future.



Why was advocacy support so effective?

Getting to know David and his interests meant that his Independent Advocate was able to create communication tools that interested and engaged David. Through using these tools, David was able to express opinions on the possible outcomes of treatment options, despite his difficulty with expressive language. The decision maker took these into account when weighing the treatment options and decided that treatment under general anaesthetic was not proportionate, which appeared in line with David's views and wishes.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ADVOCACY

We are a preventative and specialist service that prides itself on having purely delivered advocacy services for over 20 years.

All our advocates adopt a person-led and strengths-based approach, to enable the people we work with to achieve their outcomes and create lasting and sustainable change.

We are passionate about supporting children and young people to have a say in the things that matter to them. Our advocates will champion the rights of young people and ensure that their voices are heard, valued and at the centre of any decisions that affect their lives.

We provide services to children and young people in Rochdale, St Helens, Trafford, and Bradford

Our services:

- Children's Rights Helpline
- Advocacy service for Children in Need
- Advocacy service for Child Protection
- Advocacy for children in care
- Advocacy for Care Leavers
- Independent Visitor service
- Missing from home/return to care interviews



615

young people supported

203

meetings attended with young people

1,712

referrals made for return to care interviews

143

average missing episodes per month

72 hours

all interviews attempted within this timeframe

Through 2021-2022 we worked tirelessly to tackle and prevent child exploitation, improve young people's access to mental health services and wellbeing support, and provided a safety net for children facing loneliness, isolation, and crisis situations. We continued with initiatives set up in the previous financial year, including our Pen-demic Pals project, community book shares and befriending service. The pandemic saw Advocacy Focus become more creative in the way in which we communicated with people, reverting to 'old school' methods such as letter writing. This was received well, especially amongst the young people we supported.

Times continued to be unprecedented due to Covid-19, and we needed to continually adapt and change our service delivery in line with the ever-changing world. We have worked with 615 young people, exceeding our expected reach, and helped achieve the outcomes in their lives that mattered the most.

We received 1712 return to care interview referrals and all requests were attempted within the statutory 72-hour timeframe. We are dedicated and committed to making a real difference in young people's lives. We aim to keep young people safe and get young people the help and support they need to reduce them going missing again in the future. We are often the first point of contact for young people when they are experiencing difficulties or facing a crisis. A key part of our role is explaining the dangers of risk-taking behaviours and explaining how a young person can keep themselves safe. We give practical tips and support on what to do if a young person finds themselves in danger. We have been using the 'Signs of Safety' model with young people, and have clear processes in place around sharing a young person's information with the local authority and other key partners. Our commitment to young people has led to many positive outcomes and has supported the young person's transition into adulthood.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FEEDBACK



“

"I was nervous about you coming to see me before I met you, but when you came to see me, you made me feel better because you listened to me, and I felt like I could relate to you. You seem like a normal person and not a scary professional. I liked speaking with you and hope I get to see you again. Thank you so much for your help because you got me the outcome I wanted."

“

"She fought for me and helped me get what I was entitled to and my very own flat. I loved working with my advocate and I would definitely recommend Advocacy Focus."



“

"I would like to say she has been a fantastic advocate and a great support for the young person, I really don't want her to go. One of the best, and an excellent service. You have definitely helped to get his views heard both in meetings and through the calls. We wouldn't have got through it without you."



SUCCESS STORY

What was the person's situation before working with Advocacy Focus?

Jay* is 12 years old and identifies as non-binary and was referred to Advocacy Focus ahead of their Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) for support in ensuring their voice was heard throughout the process. Jay expressed that they were quite anxious about speaking to professionals without Mum present and this was deemed to be a barrier to intervention. Jay was not attending school and was becoming increasingly isolated, spending much of their time at home and playing games online.

What did advocacy do to help the person?

The advocate met with Jay ahead of the ICPC at their home. Jay said that they wanted to know more about the process of the ICPC and so the advocate spent time explaining the process and the format of these meetings. On the day of the conference, the advocate met with Jay early so that they could attend together and helped Jay to prepare for the conference. Jay shared their views and wishes prior to the conference meeting, as they did not feel they would be able to express themselves fully in a pressurised situation, and so the advocate was able to share these with the conference on Jay's behalf. Notes were taken during the conference so that Jay was able to look over them and discuss together afterwards.

Jay said that they would like to attend core group meetings separately from Mum, to allow them space to independently share how they are feeling and discuss anything they feel needs to happen. The advocate was able to help facilitate this, by meeting with Jay so that they could join the core group meetings together. Jay was supported to attend every core group meeting since, and meetings with Jay occur regularly to discuss their views and wishes. Over time Jay expressed a wish to have more involvement in voicing their own wishes and views during meetings, but explained that they did not feel confident enough. The advocate spent time supporting Jay to make notes of exactly what they wanted to say during meetings and spent time helping them to practice voicing their views and wishes prior to the meeting. Jay and the advocate made an agreement that if Jay felt overwhelmed and wanted them to take over voicing their views and wishes at any time during the meetings, Jay could click their fingers, and this would signal that they wanted their advocate to take over.

Prior to Jay's review conference, the advocate met with them to prepare their wishes and feelings. Jay also worked in partnership to write the conference report to ensure that their views and wishes were put forward in Jay's exact words.



Jay had also said that they were spending all their time at home and playing games online because there was very little for young people their age to do. Jay explained that they feel isolated because they belong to the LGBTQ+ community, but there are no services or groups for people who are younger, therefore they do not have any peers that they feel like they can relate to. Jay explained that they did not know anyone else around their age who identifies as non-binary, and they don't speak to anyone around their age from the LGBTQ+ community. Jay expressed that this is the reason they feel so isolated, and they wanted to connect with people of a similar age from the LGBTQ+ community. Support was given for Jay to contact their local LGBTQ+ service and speak to them about setting up a group for young people.

What was the outcome?

Jay built up the confidence to share their views and wishes and instruct their advocate in what they would like them to support with. Jay's Mum has also noted how Jay has expressed trust in their advocate, stating, "Jay says they trust you will do what you say you will do."

Jay expressed that they are feeling more positive about the future, and they are hoping to reengage in education now.

Jay's confidence has grown. They have worked with their local LGBTQ+ organisation to set up a group for young people, which not only will help other young people in the community, it will also allow Jay to make friendships with people they can identify with and reduce feelings of isolation.

Why was advocacy support so effective?

Jay has expressed that they feel involved in the child protection process and that with the support of advocacy, they feel that their voice has had a significant impact on the child protection plan. Jay has explained that they feel, for the first time, that professionals are listening to them and have shown that their views and wishes are valued. They feel that having the support of an Independent Advocate to support them to prepare and articulate their views and wishes has played a huge part in this.





114

people supported via
our spot purchase
advocacy service by our
specialist team who
operate across the
North of England

SPOT PURCHASE ADVOCACY

Spot purchase advocacy has supported people in times of great need, where people have fallen through the gaps in services, due to a variety of contractual and need related reasons. Advocacy Focus believes advocacy should be available to anyone who needs it, and this is why we deliver the bespoke services that we do. We provide the following advocacy support services:

- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy
- Paid Relevant Person's Representative (RPR)
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Independent Mental Health Advocacy
- Care Act Advocacy
- Community Advocacy
- Health and Social Care Complaints Advocacy
- Children's Advocacy
- Support for parents through Child Protection proceedings
- Missing from Home – Return to Care Interviews
- Rule 1.2 Representative
- Litigation Friend

If you want to find out more about our spot purchase services, head over to our website:
[Spot Purchase Us - Advocacy Focus](#)

SUCCESS STORY

What was the person's situation before working with Advocacy Focus?

Simon* lives in a supported living placement in Manchester and there is a CoPDoL (Court of Protection Deprivation of Liberty) in place to authorise the deprivation of liberty. Simon needs a 1.2 Representative to support him through the CoPDoL application and authorisation period. This role is not covered by any statutory advocacy contract and so the local authority was struggling to find anyone to support Simon. The local authority approached Advocacy Focus to act as the 1.2 Representative on a spot purchase basis.

What did advocacy do to help the person?

The Independent Advocate met with Simon numerous times and informed him of the reason for the CoPDoL and what would happen during the application. Simon was happy with the restrictions at first but, once the CoPDoL was authorised, said that he would like to challenge the capacity assessment as he felt that he should be able to make his own decisions about his residence and care. Simon also felt that he was being overly restricted and that he would like to have more time without staff.

What was the outcome?

An independent mental capacity assessment was completed at the request of the judge. The Independent Advocate requested an oral hearing in court on behalf of Simon, to ensure that he could speak with the judge and have his rights upheld. A full day's contested hearing was required, and Simon's counsel were provided with the opportunity to cross examine the independent assessor.

The judge ruled that Simon did indeed lack capacity to make these decisions, but Simon felt satisfied that his rights had been upheld and that he had his day in court.

Simon was however able to negotiate a plan to gradually increase his unsupported time, and now spends the majority of his days without any supervision from staff.





Why was advocacy support so effective?

Without the support of the Independent Advocate, Simon would not have been aware of his rights and would not have been able to access the court to challenge the deprivation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It's been a successful year for our community work, continuing our involvement with existing groups, meeting new groups and spreading awareness of advocacy services, and most importantly self advocacy in Lancashire and beyond. Throughout the year we've had 950 community engagement contacts with groups and individuals.

We've attended different information hubs throughout the year. Our role is to raise awareness and offer information to people as and when they need it. These hubs offer a chance for anyone who is facing a dementia diagnosis, or who is a carer for someone with dementia, to meet with services all in one place. At the hub we can meet multiple people at any one time, offering on the spot information related to advocacy in health and social care services. This also includes attending events around disability awareness. These events have meant that throughout the year we have supported people with immediate information on 295 occasions.

We have attended professional meetings and community group meetings. Awareness sessions tend to be one off meetings, but these often lead to developing other engagement activities, such as supporting groups and drop in events. Awareness sessions have enabled us to meet and spread awareness with 538 people.

Supporting local groups, self advocacy groups and other community groups enables us to be part of the community, offer support from a statutory advocacy perspective, and promote self advocacy. We have developed resources, tools, and supported people in their journey to find their voice. Throughout the year we have promoted self advocacy with 314 people.



950

community engagement contacts

295

people supported with immediate information at hub events

538

people now have raised awareness of advocacy

314

people supported with self advocacy



**Volunteers
provided 748
hours of support
to Advocacy Focus
and the people we
work with**

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

2021-2022 saw the employment of our new Volunteer Community Engagement Coordinator, to support the growing volunteer team. Due to Covid-19, our volunteer services took a huge hit when the nation was subject to restrictions which saw the disruption of some of our key volunteer services. Volunteers are vital to the delivery of all our services, they provide us with additional capacity, as well as bringing a diverse range of experience, skills, and knowledge to Advocacy Focus. Without their support we could not work with as many people as we do, or offer the same level of preventative assistance. Within 2021-2022 our volunteers provided 748 hours of support to Advocacy Focus and the people we work with.

Many volunteers join Advocacy Focus to broaden their social networks, gain meaningful experiences, and give back to others in the community who may need additional support. Our volunteer team have also found that the experience they gain working with us, increases their chances of employment within Advocacy Focus, or in external health and social care organisations.

Advocacy Focus has a robust training and mentoring programme which supports our volunteers to undertake their various roles to the highest standard. We are committed to all our volunteers and have a significant reward and recognition programme to acknowledge the added value that volunteers bring to our organisation. We hold the 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation, and will do so for the next three years, which ensures we continue to support volunteers to the best of our ability and provide an outstanding volunteer experience.

STUDENT PLACEMENTS

We work with universities to place social work students within our advocacy services, to provide a hands-on front-line experience to students whilst adding value to our delivery.

We place 6 students per year across our advocacy contracts.

The placements range from 30 days up to 120 days per student; some of our final year student placements have led to employment within Advocacy Focus. We have supported work experience students from high schools to give them a taster of what it's like to work in the third sector, as well as offering numerous apprenticeship opportunities.



OUTCOME MEASURES FEEDBACK



“

“She came to support me with the doctor which was really what I needed because I felt so on my own, so that was really good.”

“

“She was kind and understanding, she helped me articulate the complaints letter so well.”



“

“A big thank-you for getting us this far. Without all your hard work and tenacity, none of this would have happened. Now she has a chance for a brighter and much happier life.”



“

“I recently had contact with Advocacy Focus in regard to the RPR position for a relative who is subject to DoLS. This person was appointed to my relative’s case and contacted me to discuss. I found this lady to be such a wonderful person to speak to, very attentive and made me feel so much more at ease about the whole situation. I can’t thank her enough. The whole experience was great from start to finish. Nothing was too much trouble, any questions I had were answered in depth and helped me and my family a great deal. Highly recommended!”





Since April 2021
our team have
logged over **200**
external training
sessions

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Alongside our comprehensive in-house training schedule, our team attended a number of seminars and legal workshops to keep our knowledge base current and to further develop relationships with key partners in the health and social care sector and the legal profession. Training for us is not just advocacy related, although, that is the core of our services. Our scope is wider than that as we have a big commitment to support the health and wellbeing of our team, and offer a wide range of accessible training and development sessions in things such as resilience, time management, and handling stress. Most of our staff are also Mental Health First Aid trained, ensuring there is always someone available to support our staff's mental health.

All of these additional courses help our team to understand the importance of self-care and to consider what their colleagues may be going through in regard to their physical or mental health. Such is our commitment to training and upholding our organisational value of 'Learning', we were winners of a prestigious Red Rose Award for In-House Training and the North-West Charity Award for Skills, Education and Training. We recognise at Advocacy Focus that our staff are our most valuable resource, and this is further evidenced by our Gold Award in the Mind's Wellbeing Index, which recognise our organisation as having done sector-leading and impactful work to support the wellbeing of our teams.



100% of our delegates stated that our mental health sessions will help them take better care of their own, and their colleagues', mental wellbeing.



"It made me reflect on my own mental health and how enlightening it can be to give yourself time to do so."



- 100% of the people who attended our Breaking Barriers conference rated our speakers as 'excellent'.
- 100% of the people who attended our Breaking Barriers conference rated our resources as 'good or better'.
- 96% of the people who attended our Breaking Barriers conference rated our workshops as 'good or better'.

“The content and quality of speakers was exceptional and some of the legal perspectives on old and new legislation were mind blowing. I really enjoyed the Maximising Participation workshop with Ian (Community Engagement Advocate) and James from React. Listening to the people from React share their experiences first hand was brilliant.”

Chair of the Board

“Amazing speakers, of such a high quality. Fascinating topics from capacity to consent to sex workers, through to Justine's call to arms for collaboration in the sector (so many nodding heads). Leanne's 'back stronger' presentation showed the resilience of the organisation with all of the last few years challenges.”

Social Work Professional

BREAKING BARRIERS

Once again, we held our remarkable Breaking Barriers conference, showcasing the impact and importance advocacy has. We had groundbreaking talks and workshops from leading industry professionals, expert key speakers and more. We discussed the latest trends, case law, and legislation changes affecting the health and social care industry, and much more. Additionally, we took a look into how the pandemic has affected advocacy, and what the future holds for the sectors.



MARKETING STATISTICS

120,000

annual website visits



36,000

people visiting our website after searching 'what is advocacy'

2nd

the place we ranked in the Mind Wellbeing charity index in 2021

advocacy focus

Call Us: 0300 323 0965

Search



Donate

Contact Us

Accessibility

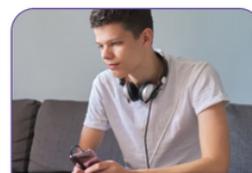
Home About Us Get Help Our Services What's New? Partners Training Help Us



Helping Lauren

Lauren* self-referred to advocacy in 2019. Lauren contacted the advocacy service due to the mistreatment of her partner David. David...

Read More



Helping Tim

Tim* was a 20-year-old male who was living at home with his mother and younger brother. Tim had a diagnosis...

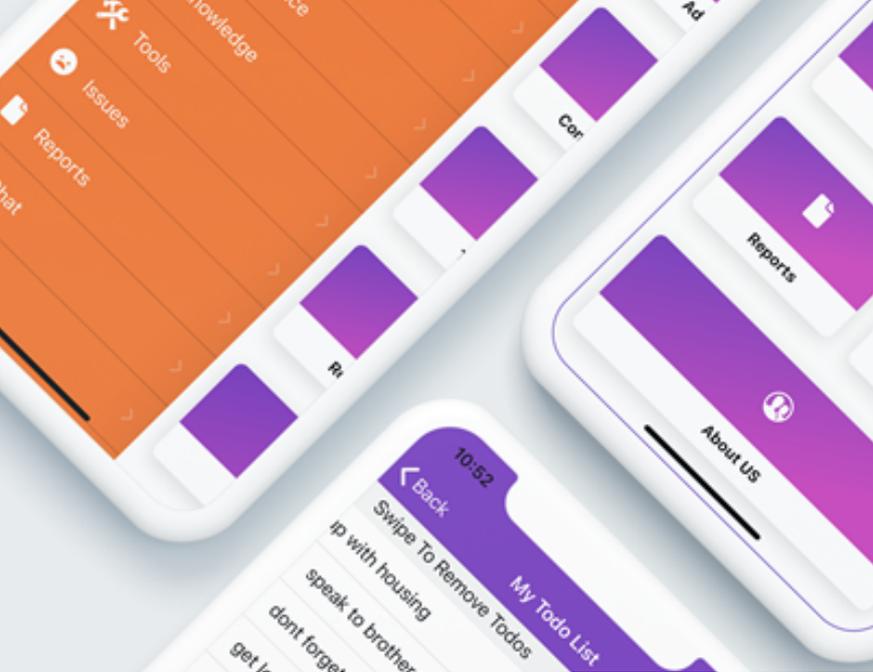
Read More



Helping Kim

Kim* was admitted to hospital under a Section 2 of the Mental Health Act and was referred into our service...

Read More



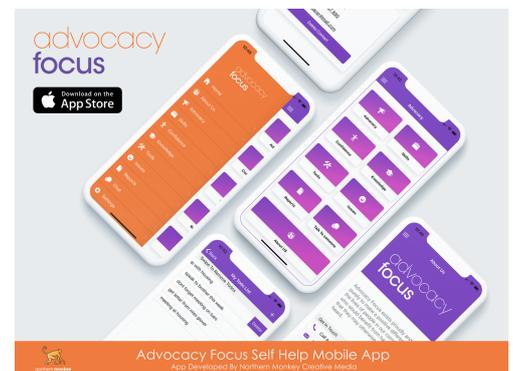
DOWNLOAD NOW

 Google Play

 App Store

MY FOCUS- SELF ADVOCACY APP

There was never a better year, than in the midst of a pandemic, to launch a new digital tool to help our communities overcome the challenges they faced. This year, we launched our very own app, based on the principles from our Self Advocacy Toolkit. Our new app helps people to be their own best advocate, as well as allowing people to reflect on their current issues, make notes, build confidence, learn new skills, and track and measure progress. My Focus can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play. Simply search 'Advocacy Focus' in the app store search bar.



ACCREDITATIONS

Quality Performance Mark (QPM) in Advocacy

Advocacy Focus has held the highly acclaimed QPM accreditation since 2009, and our most recent glowing review and assessment will see us retain this accreditation until 2023. The QPM accreditation assesses the entirety of our organisation's advocacy delivery, and our effectiveness and efficiency in meeting and exceeding the QPM standards and the nationally recognised Advocacy Charter.



Investors in Volunteers

Advocacy Focus received their accreditation in October 2020 and will retain this accreditation until October 2023, which ensures we continue to support volunteers to the best of our ability and provide an outstanding volunteer experience.



“

“After talking on the phone to my advocate I was left feeling confident I was doing the right thing and went about it the right way. One of the most productive outcomes I've engaged in over a couple of years of turmoil. The lady is a credit to your organisation, and she made it seem effortless. I'm truly grateful for her interaction with me. I not only addressed the GP complaint but went away with valuable insight as how to cope with my illness much more efficiently. That will remain with me for the rest of my days.”





- Winner of Workforce Development Award, Hyndburn Business Awards 2021
- Highly Commended for Not-for-Profit Organisation Award, Hyndburn Business Awards 2021
- Finalist for Community Business of the Year, BIBAs Awards 2021
- Finalist for Disability Inclusion and Inclusive Recruitment Award, NWEEG Awards
- Finalist for Health & Wellbeing Award, NWEEG Awards
- Finalist for Resilience Award, Red Rose Awards 2021
- Finalist for Not-for-Profit Organisation Award, Red Rose Awards 2021
- Finalist for Health & Wellbeing Award, Red Rose Awards 2021

AWARDS





We participated in national charity Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index for the second year running, and secured Gold Award once more whilst coming second overall nationally. Advocacy Focus also signed the 'Charter for Employers Positive about Mental Health' and became a Mindful Employer, which clearly stated how our organisation would further commit to supporting the mental wellbeing of our team. During 2022 we intend to build on our cultural and organisational strength in this area by participating in the Workplace Wellbeing Index for a third year, and increasing our wellbeing budget to include some dedicated internal wellbeing resources.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

This was another year when we focused on ensuring that our team had optimal support in relation to their mental wellness and resilience, as Covid-19 measures continued to impact professionally and personally. Whole team Wellbeing Huddles continued online and when restrictions eased, we invited our whole staff team to attend a face to face event where the focus was purely on coming back stronger, post pandemic, and regrouping as a team. As an organisation with an inclusive and supportive culture we trained our team in resilience and topics, such as PTSD, so that our team had the tools and strategies in place to look after themselves, their colleagues, and people accessing our service.



OPERATIONS

Covid-19

Although the ongoing pandemic impacted on our team's already stretched capacity, and legislation changes resulted in constant reviews and implementation in an ever changing local and national environment, it did allow us to embed our hybrid and remote ways of working as a team. This in turn offered far more flexibility to people accessing our services and a better way of working for our keyworker team. The much debated vaccination status for keyworkers at government level dominated much of the conversation, and we had to capture information about vaccinations, allow time off for our team to receive them, and on occasion, recover from them. We also had to monitor and review take up, as many care homes and key establishments that we worked with refused entry to our team unless they had proof that they had been vaccinated, or had an exemption certificate. However, the decision to legalise this approach was dropped by the government before we had to formalise this contractually and potentially lose team members. Challenging times for our team, which necessitated open and transparent communications, and a robust interpretation of restrictions that were impacting on the health and social care sector and the ability to carry out a crucial advocacy role.

Key members of our team worked with our local authority colleagues to ensure that processes and protocols were robust, understandable, and in the best interests of the people we supported, during a second challenging year for our sector. Our offices remained open for the duration of the pandemic for health and wellbeing support for our colleagues, some of whom struggled to work from home or access remote venues as restrictions eased. This worked well and enabled us to carry out organisational and individual temperature checks with our team, many of whom experienced personal losses or succumbed to the virus themselves. At the time of writing, our organisation continues to adhere to national guidance and best practice in relation to infection control, and has reviewed and strengthened a number of our policies on the back of the impact of the pandemic.



OPERATIONS

IT

Over the last 12 months we have further embedded our digital development as a charity and worked across various platforms to offer people accessing our services choice and control as to how we work with them to achieve the outcomes they are hoping for. With the support of our external IT provider, Serium, for all our cloud based software support, we had no downtime during this reporting period and embraced web based technology such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and a system, called Improve for all of our training needs, which negated the need to train in a physical space and could be accessed online and at a time that suited our team. Our referral and triage team handled all incoming calls and referrals via a Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephony system which allowed them to make calls over the internet via their laptops, which meant they could work in the office or remotely without any detrimental impact on people or professionals accessing our service. This was incredibly beneficial when members of the referral team were too unwell to attend the office, but were still well enough to work, which they did from their homes, without risk of cross contamination to the wider team. We intend to move our whole team to a VOIP system during 2022-23 to offer a more responsive and cost effective service, which will streamline the kit required by our team to carry out their roles effectively, and save costs in the mid to long term.

Premises

We continued to benefit from cost savings, as we had downsized our premises portfolio to a smaller office in Leyland and a shared space in Trafford the year before. Both have worked well and enabled our team to have a base of operations for essential tasks and peer support. This year we have decommissioned kit that was rendered redundant when we downsized, and we have consciously recycled some kit with our carbon footprint in mind and sold some equipment, where possible, to clawback some outlay costs. Plans for 2022-23 in relation to our head office are to repurpose our space so that we have hot desking space and room for training and peer support meetings. Our head office will also have a Wellbeing Room for our team and reinforce our commitment to workplace wellness.



OPERATIONS

Marketing/Website

As pandemic restrictions eased we focused on our self advocacy provision in a bid to come 'back stronger' post Covid-19. Our starting point as a charity is self advocacy and we are committed to enabling people, where possible, to be their own best advocate. We do this via a range of resources, such as our mobile phone app, our downloadable materials on our website via a 'healthy self' series of booklets, and this year we invested in a credibility video, involving people that access our services, to drive home the importance of self advocacy. This in turn will help reduce the reliance on crisis intervention and the impact on stretched statutory services, and give people back control over their own health and social care decisions.

Our plans over the next year are to review and update our website and strengthen resources available via this platform so that people accessing our services, our team, and members of the public have the content they need to navigate their way through health and social care processes. Our digital plans will be to capitalise on our social content, so that we are providing both universal and targeted information and further demystifying advocacy and the wider sector. A big focus will also be on promoting our mental health and wellbeing expertise in the form of training packages, that will benefit both individuals and organisational development and generate much needed income for our charity in what are proving challenging financial times.



SERVICE DELIVERY OBJECTIVES

- Continue to deliver and develop high quality advocacy and advocacy related activities across our current service areas and seek new opportunities in the North of England.
- Further develop our preventative advocacy programme with a focus on self advocacy, early intervention and prevention; to help strengthen individuals, groups, and communities.
- Enhance our people engagement and wellness approach at individual and organisational level.
- Increase and develop our training offer to generate further charity revenue for the organisation's preventative community work.
- Develop our marketing strategy to improve understanding of self advocacy and advocacy, to ensure timely access to our resources and services.
- Focus on a new post-covid volunteer programme to revolutionise our volunteer services, and provide more for our communities via advocacy related activities.
- Prepare the organisation for a significant period of change, due to legislative changes affecting the health and social care sector.





COMPANY INFORMATION

Charity Name:

Advocacy Focus

Charity Registration Number:

1086151

Company Registration Number:

04135225

Head Office:

First Floor,
The Old Tannery
Eastgate,
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 6PW

Trustees:

Diane Burridge (Chair)
Dean Rodgers (Treasurer)
Anne Phillips
Chris Lintern
Darcey Parr
Denise Bond
Emma Yates
Linda Stewart
Will Shepherd
Zabeda Maqsood

Bankers:

Lloyds Bank

Auditor:

Mayes Accountants
22-28 Willow Street
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 1LP

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Justine Forster
CEO



Leanne Hignett
Service Delivery Director



John Hutchison
Operations Director