

Advocacy Developments – Engaging the People and Organisations of Wakefield District



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Introduction

Some research last year showed that there wasn't enough independent advocacy work being done in Wakefield District.

As a result a Steering Group has been formed by the current advocacy providers (Age Concern, Barnardo's, Carers Wakefield District, DIAL, Mencap, Rasa Advocacy Project, and the Richmond Fellowship), together with representatives from Social Services and the Health Trusts, to see how more advocacy work can be encouraged and developed.

It is vital for the success of this project that all the important stakeholders in the future of advocacy in Wakefield District are properly involved in planning for the future.

These stakeholders include:

- people who live in Wakefield District,
- particularly users of local services,
- members of community groups,
- frontline staff in service organisations, and
- policy- and decision-makers.

This paper aims to set out the tasks involved in this work, and develop an action plan to carry the work out.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is about making sure people's voices are heard.

Advocacy is a process which:

- extends **choices**;
- improves access to **services**;
- ensures people are treated **justly**;
- **supports** them through problems and conflicts;
- **empowers** people to help themselves;
- encourages **social development**;
- helps services to develop to **prevent** recurrence of problems.

There are different ways of doing advocacy, but it is usually based on a partnership between a person whose voice isn't being heard, and someone who is committed to their empowerment.

Anyone can be an advocate - you don't need any special qualifications, just loyalty to the person who wants to make their voice heard, and determination to succeed.

You will find out more about the principles and practice of advocacy when you come to a workshop.

Challenges

1. Getting to as many people as possible means:
 - morning, afternoon, evening and weekend sessions
 - going repeatedly to the same place at different times
 - going to every town and village in the District, and to a variety of venues within each area
 - accessing a variety of different statutory organisations, including Social Services, Housing, Education and Health based staff
 - attending events, with stalls, workshops or presentations
 - getting stories in local publications
 - getting help from other people (volunteers, community development workers, etc.) to deliver and/or support these sessions
2. Making sure people have their say means:
 - providing proper and varied opportunities to think and speak
 - providing adequate support to ensure everyone can be involved
 - ensuring (and reassuring) that people's words will be listened to
 - making sure people have enough time, space and respect to speak
 - giving proper feedback, as well as opportunities for meeting other groups and comparing views
 - encouraging people to act on their ideas
3. Developing a workable action plan from all this talking means:
 - getting key ideas to take forward from each session

- getting agreement from people about key principles as we move on
- getting commitment from people to take action in the future
- not raising peoples expectations that we will do things before we can properly commit to them

This is probably not a comprehensive list of challenges. It is included here as a starting point for organising this work, and may be amended as progress is made.

How shall we respond to these challenges?

While initial discussions have already been held between the advocacy network co-ordinator and a range of interested people across the district, much more focused and co-ordinated work needs to be done in this area.

The months of July and August will be used to prepare for this work. A three month period, from 1st September to 30th November has been set aside for the task of engaging with communities and organisations (although this work will be an important and ongoing element of the network's role).

This will culminate in a **stakeholder event** at the end of November to gather all the feedback together and develop an agreed outline for a strategy paper to be written over the next month. This will then be circulated and further developed into a business plan to be presented at a **conference in February** where hopefully everyone will be able to agree on the actions we want to take forward together.

Workshops

About 5 sessions a week will be organised over 12 weeks (Sep-Nov) - about 60 sessions. These should cover every town and village in the district, and as many people as possible.

There will be a mixture of the following sessions:

- 2hr Intro to Advocacy and the Network
- 2-3hr Advocacy & You
- 2-3hr Filling the Gaps in Advocacy
- ½ Day Advocacy Workshop

Every session will involve participatory exercises. Art and theatre based advocacy workshops can also be considered.

I can also do shorter presentations for team meetings, and I can bring information and put up a stall at your event.

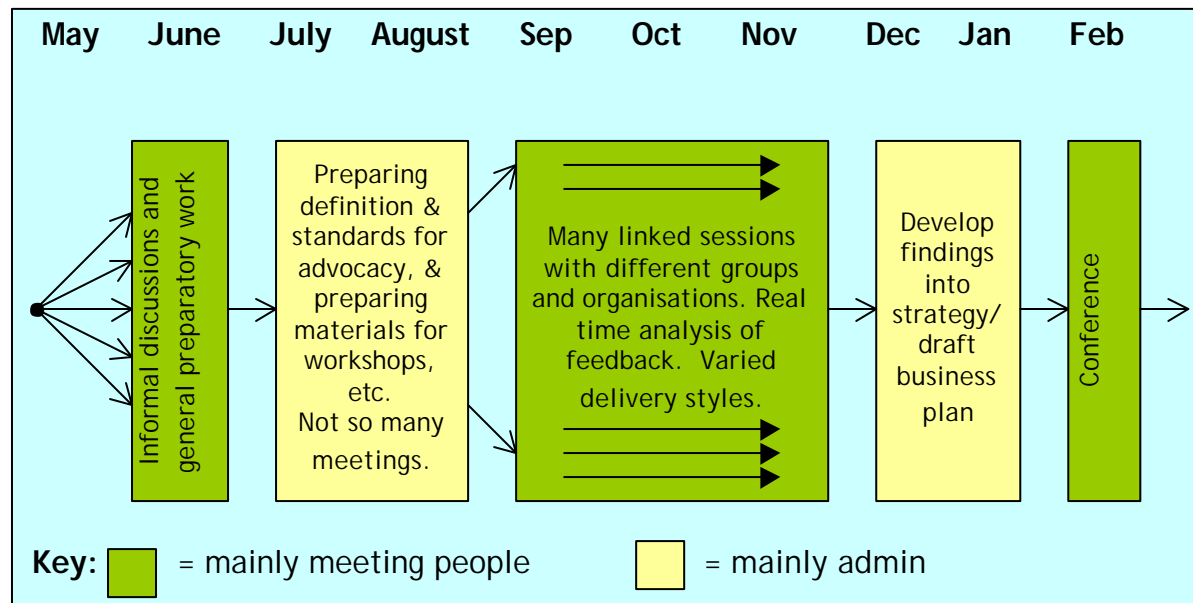
Volunteers

This process is all about participation, and it would be good if you would like to volunteer in any way.

Examples of ways you could help:

- advertise workshops in your area
- help facilitate workshops
- write up notes
- suggest practical exercises and/or resources to help make workshops more inclusive
- learn more about advocacy, and feed into developments in the future

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Who needs to be consulted about advocacy developments?

As well as targeting local people who are not necessarily members of established groups, the following groups have been identified as a potential starting point for making contacts and arranging sessions.

Voluntary organisations and user groups who could provide advocacy or who have a stake in advocacy for other reasons:

- Age Concern (Wakefield) Service User Action Forum	- Home-Start - Hemsworth & South Elmsall	- Special Abilities
- Airedale Family Centre	- Home-Start - Wakefield	- Sure Start
- Alzheimer's Society	- Horbury Carers Group - Kettlethorpe Aged Welfare Committee	- TACT (Tackling Abuse Trauma for Women)
- Arthritis Care - Pontefract & District	- MENCAP- Hemsworth	- The Springs Life Resource Centre
- Arthritis Care - Wakefield	- Mental Health Matters	- Turning Point
- BEGIN (Learning and Living with HIV)	- New Era	- UK Muslim Welfare Association
- Castleford & District Cancer Self Help Group	- Normanton Old People's Welfare Committee	- VINE (Vision Is Not Essential)
- CODE Works	- Northgate & St. John's Aged Welfare Committee	- Wakefield & District Dyslexia Association
- Community Development Network	- Nostell Miners Welfare/Crofton Community Centre	- Wakefield & District Multiple Sclerosis Association
- Crofton Mothers Club	- NSF Carers Group	- Wakefield Asian Community Forum
- Down's Syndrome Support Group	- Open House	- Wakefield Asian Welfare Association (WAWA)
- Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	- The Pioneer Project	- Wakefield District Young Carers
- Eastmoor Community Project	- Pontefract Cerebral Palsy Group	- Wakefield Society for Deaf People
- Equal Abilities	- Sandal Agbrigg Pre 5 Centre	- Wakefield Society for the Blind
- Ferrybridge Community Centre	- SCOPE	- Wakefield Support Group for Autism
	- Second Chance	
	- SENSE	

- Ferrybridge Tenants & Residents Association	- Service User Forum	- Wakefield Tenants and Residents Federation
- GASPED	- Shaftesbury Society	- West Yorkshire ADHD Support Group
- Help the Aged	- SIGNPOST	- YORKSHIRE MESMAC
- Hemsworth Parenting Project	- Single Parent Family Support Group	- Young People's Empowerment Project
- Home-Start - Castleford, Pontefract & District	- Smawthorpe & Glasshoughton Community Centre	
	- Speakability - Volunteer Co-ordinator	

Advocacy providers

- Age Concern	- DIAL Wakefield	- Richmond Fellowship
- Barnardo's Children's Advocacy Service	- Equal Abilities (?)	- Urban Space
- Carers Wakefield & District	- Mencap	- Voice of the Child in Care (?)
	- Rasa Advocacy Project	

Statutory organisations

- Community Mental Health Teams	- The Health Trusts: WWPCT, EWPCT, SWYMHT, Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Acute Trust (and the PALS services associated with these)	- Wakefield MDC (and specific departments within WMDC, e.g. Social Services and Health, Social Care Direct)
- Drug Action Team		- Wakefield District Housing, as it develops
- Youth Offending Teams		
- Parts of the Court Service and CAFCASS		

We will develop a more comprehensive list through discussions with VAWD, other departments in WMDC, the Health Trusts, and through informal feedback from individuals, groups and organisations responding to this document.