

Advocacy Action

Developing Advocacy in Wakefield District

Coordinator's Report

8 June 2005

The four weeks since my last report seem to have passed very quickly - I seem to have been caught up in lots of little things and haven't addressed some of the bigger issues so effectively. This is partly the inevitable result of my change in employment - I still haven't managed to get a P45, problems with phones, etc.

Action Plan

The Action Plan that was discussed in outline at the last meeting was completed and submitted to the Council. I haven't had any response yet, and I don't know who the contact person is in the Council at the moment.

I have distributed this to Steering Group members, and the Steering Group will play a key role in some areas. In particular objectives 7, further consultation on Good Practice Standards and production of final draft, 8, Code of Practice for advocates and Good Practice Guide for Making Referrals to Advocates, and 6, organise workshops to design a logo.

Business Plan, Budget and Funding

A lot more work needs to be done on the budget. I had a meeting with Roger Milthorpe from Cloverleaf on 16 May, who kindly offered me the services of his accountant for a short time, but the earliest we could meet was yesterday, 7 June. He has provided me with a useful template for developing the budget and working with the accounts in the future, but he asked me some difficult questions and showed there is a lot more work to do.

He also pointed out that however detailed our business plan is, most of the funder's attention will be focussed on the budget and accounts. I have not felt able to submit funding applications yet as a consequence of the unfinished budget, even though I breathed a sigh of relief on 11 May when I completed the first final version of the business plan.

It is a bit worrying that no proper applications have yet been submitted, as according to the Council's six month continuation funding criteria, we should have instantly submitted the bids in order to allow the six months that is usually required for processing them.

Standards, Policies and Procedures

I have been sorting through all the old papers around the standards and preparing for the next work to be done on these. I have also been working on some policies, especially looking at adult and child protection policies, as these need to be

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submitted with some funding applications. This is quite stimulating and rewarding work, which I know will benefit all local advocacy groups once it is complete.

I obtained an electronic folder full of 44 policies and related documents from ASIST (Advocacy Services in Staffordshire), one of the bigger and better established advocacy projects in the UK. These will be very useful to Advocacy Action and to other people we support in the future, as we can adapt them relatively easily.

Supporting Local Advocacy Projects

The underlying thrust of Advocacy Action is to provide practical support for local advocacy projects. This needs developing as well as the business plan, and I must admit it's tempting to focus on this work rather than the stresses of the business planning/fundraising side of things. As a result I have managed to do quite a few things here.

Most of my work has been with Rasa Advocacy Project. I have helped them:

- provided a volunteer induction session
- produce a Volunteer Agreement
- developed a draft Confidentiality Policy
- type up Management Committee Meeting notes

I have also worked with other projects:

- worked on a User Involvement Policy for Cloverleaf
- Worked on the Lift Up constitution

IT and Office Issues

As soon as the new funding contract for Urban Space was confirmed I set about organising an internet connection. I am now connected via a Zen Internet service, which I am going to share with Cloverleaf and Your Voice. This is a huge productivity boost, and relieves me of the stresses I've been having over the last 8 months with no email or internet in my office.

Sharing this connection is also a good example of practical group working that Advocacy Action can get involved with - and hopefully we will be sharing a photocopier too soon.

I have done a little work on the website: note that we will be seeking your contributions in the coming months (e.g. logos, contact info, copy checking).

Other things

I attended the National Advocacy Network Management Committee Meeting at the offices of ASIST in Stoke on 23 May (and got that policy pack).

A proposal has been agreed in principle by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to develop a code of practice for the management of children's complaints across the District. At this stage the proposal includes a

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suggestion that any child wishing to make a complaint about any service should be entitled to the support of an advocate. I have been asked to support the working group to develop the draft proposal.

I attended a meeting of Wakefield Self Help Depression Group in Horbury, and I will be returning with information about the Crisis Team, and how self advocacy techniques might help people who have been referred to them.

Henry Fisher
8 June 2005