

**partners
in
advocacy**



BUSINESS STRATEGY

2018 - 2021 · JUNE 2018

FOREWORD

Partners in Advocacy has a proud history. Over time, it has helped thousands of vulnerable people to have their voices heard and their rights upheld.

We cannot afford to stand still. Like many other voluntary organisations in the charitable sector we face new and growing challenges. Income streams are less plentiful than in the past are hard to secure. The need for independent advocacy to support vulnerable people remains as strong as ever.

The needs of those who we currently support, and those who we may support in the future, are evolving and changing. Also, new legislation can often extend the rights of certain groups. Our advocates must have the skills needed to respond to these new demands.

We will tackle these challenges by taking actions which ensure that we become a more financially resilient organisation with skilled and motivated staff delivering high quality advocacy services to our advocacy partners.

The business strategy begins a new chapter in our story. It sets out our future vision and how we intend to realise it. It demonstrates that we have taken clear decisions on our priorities over the next three years. It is based on a thorough analysis of our operating environment, the opportunities available to us and the risks we need to manage. The strategy is deliberately stretching but deliverable.

We need everyone who works in and with Partners in Advocacy to take part in this journey and help deliver the vision. We look forward to working with you.

Linda Bailey
Chief Executive Officer

Rob Molan
Chair – Board of Trustees

WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM

Partners in Advocacy was established in 1998 as part of Barnardo's. It is one of the oldest independent advocacy providers in Scotland. It currently offers a range of independent advocacy services from our offices in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Our advocacy workers have always been free from any control and/or direction of other service providers or funders and are able to act freely with or on behalf of our advocacy partners. This independence of mind and professional practice helps to avoid or mitigate against conflicts of interest which might be more difficult for a family member or worker to avoid, especially when the advocacy partner has a different point of view from those who care or provide health and social care for them. In this way, we have stood alongside people who are in danger of being pushed to the margins of society.

Matt was 7 years old and has autism. His condition affected his behaviour in the classroom and he was suspended from school for violence. Matt did not understand what he had done wrong and one of our advocacy workers started to work with him. After they got to know each other, Matt explained that he wanted to go back to school but not his previous school. The advocacy worker established what type of class he would like and what his worries were. This enabled the advocacy worker make the local authority aware of his wishes. Matt was offered two different schools and his advocacy worker supported him as he made his choice and as he settled into the school which he preferred.

We have supported individuals, and groups of vulnerable advocacy partners with a broad range of needs, including:

- Adults with physical and learning disabilities
- Older people including those living with dementia
- Adults with autism
- Children and young people with additional support needs
- Children and young people with mental health issues

Whatever the life circumstances of our advocacy partners, they have been treated non-judgementally and as individuals with their personal wishes and needs respected.

In supporting such vulnerable people, we have enabled them to gain more control over their lives, challenged discrimination, and facilitated inclusion.

In 2016-17, we supported nearly 900 advocacy partners. The feedback received from these advocacy partners, their social workers, teachers, solicitors, families and other important stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive.

WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM

We work hard to constantly improve our professional standards. For example, our children and young peoples' advocacy workers from all of our offices regularly come together to share good practice, discuss developments in the field of children's rights and to reflect on good outcomes or take part in reflective practice sessions where difficult advocacy dilemmas which may have been encountered are discussed in confidence with their peers.

Jill was 17 years old and had been an inpatient in a psychiatric ward for several months. When she was about to be discharged, an advocacy worker helped her to put her views about her care and treatment into an Advance Statement. Later, she was re-admitted to hospital and her requests for talking therapies and regular exercise were not acknowledged. At the Mental Health Tribunal, the advocacy worker drew attention to the wishes expressed in her Advance Statement. The Tribunal agreed these wishes should be granted and they were put into her care plan.

Our achievements are not limited to supporting the issues that are raised by the individuals we support. We also strive where necessary to bring about change to secure improvements in the quality of formal service provision or proceedings which impact on our advocacy partners. For example, our advocacy workers were capturing the views of children referred to the Additional Support Needs Tribunals (ASNTS -now called the First Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Health and Education Chamber) and passing them to their solicitors who then used these views at their discretion. After a meeting with representatives of PiA, the President of the ASNTS issued a guidance note prepared with our input which established that children's views should be independently communicated and by following this guidance it would support them to have their voices truly heard in Tribunal proceedings.

LOOKING FORWARD

While we can rightfully be proud of our history, we cannot afford to be complacent.

Financial viability is key. Many of our costs will rise in the years ahead. We will need to be smart about securing funds which at least match those increases and managing those resources well.

Many of our funders are facing financial pressures and are reducing the funds they allocate to us, while expecting no reduction in the services procured. So we need to demonstrate that we can deliver more from each pound.

Some funding providers want evidence that their grants will not duplicate existing funding streams and also deliver advocacy services that are either developmental work or closely aligned with national policy and legislative requirements. So we need to be innovative in the bids which we make to these bodies.

But we cannot afford to focus solely on maintaining established funding streams in the geographical areas in which we operate and/or from funders who we have a long relationship with.

Where there is a growing demand for independent advocacy we are well placed to respond to these opportunities.

Two examples of that growth are evidenced by recent legislation:

- Following the passing of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2003, everyone with a mental health disorder has a right to access independent advocacy and local authorities and NHS boards are obliged to ensure that such services are in place.
- After the passage of the Education (Additional Support For Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) all children and young people with additional support needs should have the opportunity to make their views known about decisions which affect them, to express their opinions, and have their opinions taken seriously. So access to free 1-1 advocacy services must be provided for children or young people attending the First Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Health and Education Chamber).

Further demand for independent advocacy for other groups of other vulnerable people can be anticipated.

To secure funding and ensure our viability, we will need to continue to employ skilled and motivated advocacy workers and demonstrate to stakeholders that we are making a real difference to the advocacy partners which we support.

To realise our ambitions we needed to refresh our mission and our vision; and be clear what our strategic goals are for the future and what actions are required to deliver them.

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Our three year strategy delivers a fresh mission and vision for Partners in Advocacy.

Our Mission

To provide quality independent advocacy to vulnerable people to help them make informed choices and have their rights upheld.

Our Vision

To be the leading provider of independent advocacy services in Scotland, helping vulnerable people to improve their lives.

Our Values

Our new strategy will be guided by enduring values which reflect the principles which guide the work of Partners in Advocacy.

These values apply to everyone involved in our work, including trustees, staff, volunteers and our advocacy partners.

Equality: we listen to what the person tells us and help them make their own decisions. We offer free, confidential and non-judgemental support.

Empathy: we treat people with respect and listen to them with empathy. Our work is directed to what people need.

Empowerment: we empower people to get the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to make their own decisions and take control of their lives.

Excellence: we aspire to excellence by always working hard to improve what we do and respond to challenges positively.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Having critically examined the challenges which lie ahead, the environment in which we operate, our strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and risks ahead, we have framed our strategic goals and supporting actions for the next three years.

1. Improve outcomes for our advocacy partners

- Develop and promote new ways of seeking feedback from advocacy partners and interested parties, and act upon it
- Develop innovative practices and contribute to the advocacy community of learning opportunities
- Ensure that our advocacy services are person centred and meet the specific needs of each group of advocacy partners according to their needs
- Be an influential member of the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

2. Empower our staff to deliver a high quality service

- Recruit, retain and invest in staff who share our values
- Increase the number of trained volunteers
- Provide first class training and development for all staff
- Promote and provide Reflective Practice as the key tool to support continuous learning
- Seek our staffs' views on how to enhance our services

3. Build for the future

- Develop an audit programme which monitors the impact of our services and reflect the findings in our services
- Promote awareness of the benefits of independent advocacy as delivered by Partners in Advocacy.
- Invest in relationship management with existing and potential commissioning bodies
- Capitalise on new opportunities to provide independent advocacy services where there is demand for these
- Look for viable opportunities to extend the geographical coverage of our services
- Pursue new targeted funding opportunities and donations from third parties
- Find ways to further reduce our costs so that we continue to be a competitive service provider

These goals are interdependent and together would provide a more financially resilient organisation with skilled and motivated staff delivering a high quality advocacy to our advocacy partners. They will provide the foundation for our annual business plan which will set out specific, time bound actions to progress delivery of the strategy.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

By 2021 we will have implemented the actions in this strategy and in so doing will be:

- The provider of choice for independent advocacy: known for providing a service which funders can rely upon and look to deliver their obligations and policy objectives
- Serving wider and more diverse groups of advocacy partners
- Evidencing an enhanced reputation for helping vulnerable people make important decisions about their lives
- A financially resilient organisation, managing growth well and our finances effectively and efficiently
- The employer and provider of choice in the independent advocacy sector

WHO ARE OUR TRUSTEES?

Rob Molan - Chair - former senior civil servant with experience of volunteering within the not for profit sector.

Kathy Moore - Treasurer - Deputy Director of Professional Services in the School of Engineering, University of Edinburgh. Responsible for the management of finance, research support

Michael Puckett - Vice Chair - a business strategist

David Cobb - a legal Advocate with a specialism in Mental Health legislation

Janet Jones - a retired school teacher with education and policy making skills and experience

Neil Woodward - (Honorary Life President) Neil has previously used the services of PiA. A graduate of Warwick University, with an MBA from the Open University who also has Quality and Project Management Qualifications

Katie Pearson - a trainee solicitor with HR knowledge & expertise

David McGuire - a solicitor who is a GDPR specialist

Stuart Asher - a financial, mediation and arbitration expert

MONITORING, REVIEWING PROGRESS AND EVALUATION

Draw and build on the original entries below as appropriate...

How and when we'll monitor progress

Who'll help us evaluate the work?

What ongoing work will be continued into 2019-2020?

Who'll do this and when

How we will assess our performance – what tools we'll use

Who will we ask – advocacy partners / professionals

When will this be done – ongoing and specific stages, etc.

Who'll do this

The Board will regularly review progress against annual business plans to ensure that progress is being made in delivering the strategy and that the 2021 vision will be realised.