Strengthening the City Through Advocacy 2018

What was said

Contents

Event partners and stallholders

Foreword

Rather than that have its work guided by a steering group, Advonet has developed the **Leeds Advocacy Network (LAN)**. The LAN will enable a broad range of partners to help direct Advonet's work, as well as jointly exploring how advocacy approaches can help tackle community challenges.

This event formally launched the LAN with presentations from **Cllr Rebecca Charlwood**, Leeds City Council Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults and **Fiona Martin** of Leeds City Council. Both speakers illustrated how advocacy in its broadest sense was strategically in tune with the city's approach to being person-centred, promoting choice and empowerment.

The event used stalls and workshops to celebrate the diverse range of advocacy activity in Leeds delivered by a range of organisations, and to challenge ourselves to think what more advocacy could offer people facing disadvantage in the city.

Stand-out conclusions from the event included:

- The network could help members combine to have a louder voice when it comes to changes that affect rights and entitlements such as the rollout of Universal Credit and amendments to the Mental Capacity Act. Ways we can work together to campaign and influence were outlined

- The differences between advocacy and advice can mean that people can find it more difficult to get the help they need from the right area. Ideas and actions for both better clarity and integration between both kinds of support were put forward

- There have been barriers of engagement for some groups with particular needs (e.g. those of the Gypsy & Traveller Community). Examples of current work and further ideas were discussed to increase partnership working and engagement with these communities

- Advocacy could play a bigger prevention role for older people if better promoted at an earlier stage, in hospitals/GPs etc. to prevent escalation of needs later. Barriers of access and possible solutions were explored

- Advocacy has a critical role in helping people to feel able to assert their own rights and put forward their needs and wishes. Examples of good practice and further ideas to increase self-advocacy training and resources were explored, involving people with lived experience and from a wider range of backgrounds

1: Campaigning Advocacy

Co-led by **Alzheimer's Society**

This workshop's aim

How we use evidence to constructively challenge when needed ,with a focus on the example of the proposed changes to the Mental Capacity Act.

Notes

The details of the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill currently going through Parliament were explained. Participants were particularly shocked by the fact that in many cases, care homes would be completing Liberty Protection Safeguards; when the equivalent Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) currently is undertaken by independent assessors.

It was agreed that this could be a first campaign for the Leeds Advocacy Network. It would provide us with an opportunity to cut our teeth, and develop a campaign mobilisation model that we can then reflect on and learn from.

- Produce an accessible primer - maybe use CHANGE's primer
- Put the word out and identify potential partners who have concerns about the Amendment
- Put together an email group of concerned individuals and organisations
- Establish a timetable of the path of the legislation to royal assent (but be ready to carry on campaigning on the issues, even if the bill becomes a law)
- Come up with angles that would communicate to particular audiences - people/their carers with particular conditions, social workers, people in BME communities - so we could leave materials that would help concerned individuals understand how the changes would affect them; info from a carer of someone with dementia's perspective, for example, could be left
- Write text for emails that people could send and couple with the emails addresses of the Members of the House of Lords and House of Commons committees- circulate widely – have 20 texts with different angles, plus dummy letters to groups like Amnesty International
- Raise it with relevant local forums: the Dementia Forum, the Safeguarding Board, the LIN etc. Just to spread awareness
- Ask national players like Age UK and Alzheimer's Society and see how we can link with them
- Advonet to lead the campaign – have a dedicated page on its website for the campaign
- Write up the campaign and bring learnings to Strengthening the City Through Advocacy 2019

2: Advocacy and Capacity Building

Co-led by **Chapeltown Citizens Advice** and **Leeds Citizens Advice**

This workshop's aim

Explore how advocacy can help respond to and address new challenges with a partnership approach. We used the example of the introduction of Universal Credit locally.

Notes

Importance of being clear about the differences in CAB/advocacy roles, as we are both receiving referrals that may more appropriate for the other. CAB provides specialist advice and often helps with concrete issues such as completing a specific form; advocacy supports the client to be as fully involved as possible. We also want to highlight gaps/issues. Joint training was suggested as well as clarity at other forums and link workers across both organisations.

We discussed jointly produced more accessible information in different formats to suit needs.

A joint volunteering " buddy" role was discussed to work more preventatively.

Exploring creative ways we can share knowledge/resources between the two agencies wider than phone/email e.g. Snapchat.

Exploring how we can work together to share information with consent to ease process for clients.

Universal Credit: We discussed expected difficulties and how we can work together to address.

Jointly gathering information on impact and agreeing route to pass on.

Working preventatively to give clients information, with possible support of the volunteer role.

Signposting to relevant debt /budgeting support at an early stage.

Actions

- CAB/advocacy to plan joint training/info sessions
- Named link worker in place between the two agencies
- Explore future closer joint working, particularly around referrals
- Start to explore accessible information and how this is shared
- Agree how to collate and escalate information on UC issues and possibility of a shared role if needed - learn from other areas that have introduced earlier and plan six-month review
- Explore shared volunteering roles

3: Using Self-Advocacy Tools
Co-led by CHANGE
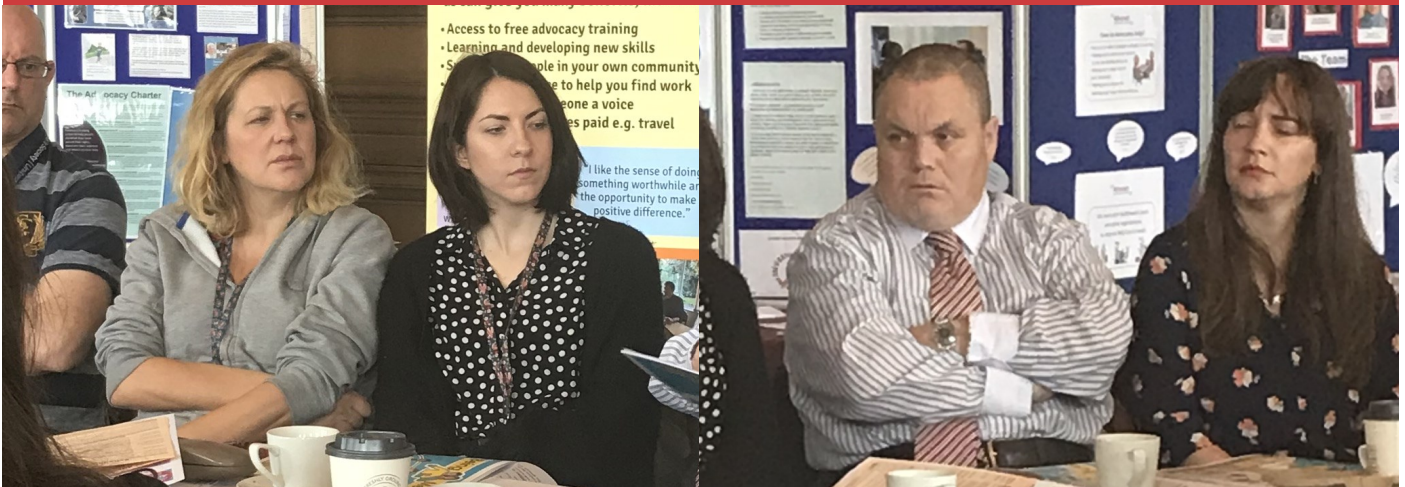
This workshop's aim

To discuss the use/benefits of self-advocacy tools with specific groups. We used examples of tools from Advonet's Leeds Autism AIM project and CHANGE and how these could be adapted and used more widely in future.

Notes

We discussed the importance of empowering people to have a voice in a way that suits them. Easy Read is good as a prompt for advocacy, as it is clear. Self-advocacy tools can help to start a conversation, something that some groups e.g. autistic people can struggle with.

Personalisation was a recurring theme in this discussion. The importance of skilled listening to each individual person and asking what they need was stressed throughout. It was recognised that everyone is different, especially where communication needs and issues are concerned.

We asked how we could work together with people we support to produce self-advocacy tools. The answers were listening to what people need and responding to them as individuals. Enabling personalisation, as with Leeds Autism AIM's autism alert cards, is another way of doing so.

We discussed the importance of linking these with shorter self-advocacy training/resources - having them is one thing but having confidence to use them is another.

Challenging each area as we come across it was another key theme. The group spoke about things that people struggle with e.g. letters from the hospital, encouraging people to go on a course to develop their own tools and look at existing resources for examples, such as training courses and personalised self-advocacy tools.

What we can all do is challenge when someone is not being listened to. Personalised self-advocacy tools that accurately reflect what the individual wants to say can play a major part in that. Another thing to challenge is lack of equality when producing accessible information – Easy Read doesn't work for every group.

A big focus from the discussion group was to create a new self-advocacy toolkit. CHANGE have some toolkits for specific uses already, whilst Advonet's Leeds Autism AIM project are creating tools specific to the needs of autistic people without a learning disability. It was suggested to produce a central point of self-advocacy resources that can be more widely accessed and shared.

4: Advocacy in Marginalised Groups

Co-led by Leeds GATE

This workshop's aim

To look at how we reach communities in Leeds who have historically faced barriers when it comes to accessing advocacy support. We looked at a case study from Leeds GATE and their work with people in the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Notes

Discussed Leeds GATE members' issues particularly around accommodation, education and social inclusion.

Some groups' particular needs had been overlooked by advocacy providers previously, leading to lack of engagement.

It was suggested that better partnership working was needed, with smaller organisations co-working and combining resources.

Importance of "building bridges" between marginalised communities and services and issues with trust/relationships and willingness to challenge.

Supporting communities to generate their own advocacy and set their own agenda was seen as vital and ways to share resources discussed.

Information in accessible formats for particular groups.

Signposting and sharing information.

Ensuring barriers for particular groups passed on and exploring systemic changes longer term.

Supporting to acknowledge changes made/progress was seen as important.

Importance of empowering the community and supporting to challenge when needed.

Actions

- Shared training sessions to build skills and knowledge
- Challenging ourselves and collating/acting on both positive and negative feedback
- Shared use of language skills
- Increased access to signposting and information sharing
- Link worker to take some of these actions forward

5: Self-Advocacy Training and Groups

Co-led by Age UK Leeds

This workshop's aim

To discuss the potential and barriers of self/peer advocacy courses/groups for different communities in Leeds, with a focus on older people in the city.

Barriers

- Funding – even smaller groups and short courses need resources
- Finding appropriate venues and managing transport/access barriers
- Managing changing caring responsibilities for older adults
- Changing demands of health issues
- Lack of engagement – understanding the benefits of self-advocacy
- Maintaining commitment/trust – seeing actions result
- Diverse needs of older people – ages/cultures

To address:

- Effective co-production - valuing and learning from lived experience in developing courses
- Acknowledging varied needs and adapting for different groups effectively
- Increased awareness of accessibility issues when planning courses
- Flexibility embedded to suit changing needs (health/caring responsibilities etc.)
- Building awareness of what advocacy is and isn't and benefits of self/peer advocacy
- Building groups of people with common issues e.g. older people in care homes
- Sustainability - working in partnership to maintain groups as they establish
- Introducing training to active groups based on their specific needs
- Explore opportunities where they need their voice the most e.g. GP/hospitals; council offices
- Linking advocacy to equal opportunities and complaints procedures
- Exploring model of younger older volunteers supporting frailer, older people
- Develop advocacy leads in different communities, following on from self-advocacy group work
- Embed effective signposting/follow-up routes
- Measure change effectively and feedback on progress in addressing issues

6: Practical Advocacy-Based Solutions

Co-led by **LCC Migrant Access Project** and **Exemplar Health Care**

This workshop's aim

To explore the benefits of bespoke advocacy services, tailored to the needs of the clients in a particular setting, using case studies from Bilingual advocates attached to GP surgeries and specifically funded advocacy in care homes.

Notes

Discussed how bespoke advocacy suited to the needs of particular communities can help to improve services and make positive changes to people's lives, but increased awareness of benefits needed within services and communities.

Bilingual advocacy in GP surgeries aimed at particular groups helps to reduce barriers of access to increase engagement of targeted communities in their health care.

Increase in-house advocacy provision within services. This enables service users to better raise concerns and have their voices heard, and can lead to service improvements e.g. the model currently being used by Advonet and Exemplar Health Care at their Ravensdale Care Home.

Increased training and awareness raising needed within communities and other services who want to learn more about advocacy or adopt an advocacy-based approach.

Training for staff/managers in understanding advocacy and embedding use into their organisations to continue when direct advocacy support ends.

Hospitals and responding to changing health needs – increased training for health professionals needed.

Increased use of technology tools to reach more people.

Actions

- Link named advocate to targeted areas as contacts to follow up and to increase awareness
- To increase links/awareness raising with health professionals
- To promote the benefits of bespoke advocacy to services and communities with publicity of feedback from evaluations
- Bilingual links to English language courses etc.

Leeds Advocacy Plan 2019-23 feedback
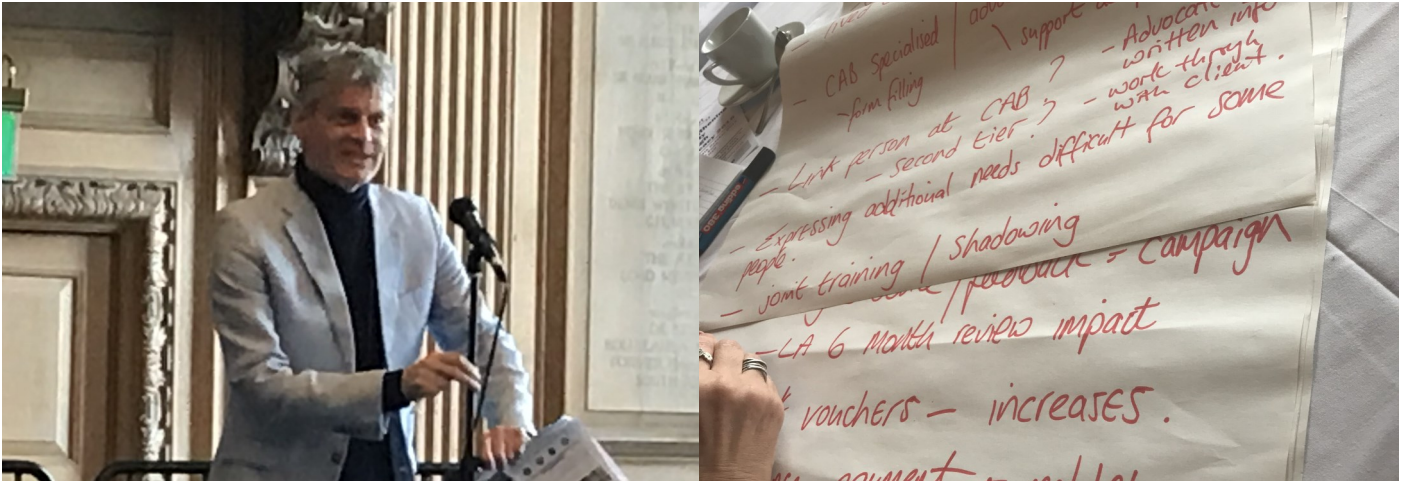
After the discussion groups took place, we asked attendees' thoughts on what should go into the Leeds Advocacy Plan for 2019-23. We had six themes; here is what they wrote under each one.

1 - How we support advocacy approaches away from services

- Develop advocacy skills/understanding in local communities

- Work with local communities in local communities

- Empower those local communities to deliver sustainable advocacy independently, if that's what they want/need

2 - Filling advocacy-shaped gaps

- Create new volunteer roles, possibly in partnership

- What about advocacy "troubleshooting" guides e.g. producing docs about common issues people come to you about for advocacy, so people can self-advocate, or take steps while they wait for advocacy support. Important that any info is accessible too!

- Listening to what communities want and allowing them to adopt a flexible definition of what advocacy is in order to meet their needs - and how it is delivered

3 - Promoting an advocacy approach in all kinds of services across the city

- Create better understanding of each other's role/specialism

- More joint training/sharing good practice

4 - Collective voice and constructive challenge

- More use of social media platforms linked with other partners

- Sharing/collating evidence to support raising issues/campaign

- Challenge together where we have led to change/had an impact

5 - Making advocacy more accessible to all

- Focus on providing advocacy at an earlier stage, in hospitals/GPs etc. prior to them needing a care home. Allowing the support to move with them, when needed

- Ask services to organise drop-in sessions for groups

- Accessible Information Standard to be rolled out to non-NHS/Social Care organisations

- Advocacy delivered through 'marginalised' community groups and organisations

- Advonet's role should include supporting those organisations to become sustainable to ensure sustainable advocacy

- Have audio info available for people who can't read

6 - Truly person-centred advocacy citywide

- Develop advocacy skills/understanding in local communities

- Work with local communities in local communities

- Organisations should encourage individuals to communicate their needs

What happens next?

We will use the feedback, notes and suggestions from the event to follow up through the new **Leeds Advocacy Network** and feed into an overall plan for advocacy for Leeds.

The **Leeds Advocacy Plan for 2019-2023** will be shaped by organisations who provide formal and informal advocacy within Leeds to work towards a greater voice for all Leeds residents.

We will facilitate the Leeds Advocacy Network to develop and grow, increasing the reach of advocacy and addressing barriers.

Advonet will support its initial development with a focus on mutually learning and evolving the network among members to share skills and knowledge and increase access to advocacy in all its forms throughout Leeds.

We will be facilitating increased shared training, consultation and skills sharing with named leads connected to priority areas.

Leeds Advocacy Network members will receive regular updates and newsletters, access to shared events/training and an increased library of shared resources.

Many thanks to all those who took part in facilitating or contributing to the event. We look forward to building on this work with all the organisations that took part and with future members to enable the people of Leeds to better speak up and be heard.