

The Advonet Group

Providing Independent Advocacy

2024-25 Impact Report



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Foreword

Peter Gruen, Chair

As Chair of Trustees, I am pleased to introduce the 2024/25 Impact Report for Advonet. This has been a year of significant activity and steady progress, delivered against a backdrop of continued pressure on public services and increasing demand for advocacy across our region.

Throughout this period, Advonet has remained focused on its core purpose: ensuring that people are heard, respected and supported to exercise their rights.

The Board has been particularly encouraged by the organisation's commitment to strengthening its values and culture. The refreshed values adopted this year provide a clear framework for how we work and the standards we set for ourselves.

I am proud to see these values reflected in the professionalism and compassion demonstrated by our staff and volunteers.

This year also marked an important moment of transition for Advonet, with the appointment of Angela Ellis as Chief Executive. Angela has brought fresh energy and direction to the organisation, building on the strong foundation established by her predecessor, Philip Bramson.

On behalf of the Board, I extend our thanks to Philip for his many years of dedicated service, and our full support to Angela as she leads Advonet into the next phase of its development.

Advonet continues to play a vital role in the city, across West Yorkshire and beyond. The work described in this report demonstrates not only the breadth of our services, but the difference they make every day to individuals and communities.

I would like to thank our staff team, volunteers, partners and fellow trustees for their ongoing commitment and hard work.

Review of the Year

Angela Ellis, Chief Executive



2024/25 was a significant year for Advonet. As demand for advocacy and inclusion support continued to rise across Leeds and West Yorkshire, our teams worked hard to make sure people were still able to have a voice and get the support they needed in increasingly complex systems.

It was also a year of change internally, with a transition in leadership and a renewed focus on the culture we want to build. We refreshed our organisational values and began embedding them across our work.

What has stood out to me is how naturally these values already show up in our day-to-day practice — in the kindness staff show the people we support, the openness and accountability in how we work with partners, and the commitment to making services more inclusive.

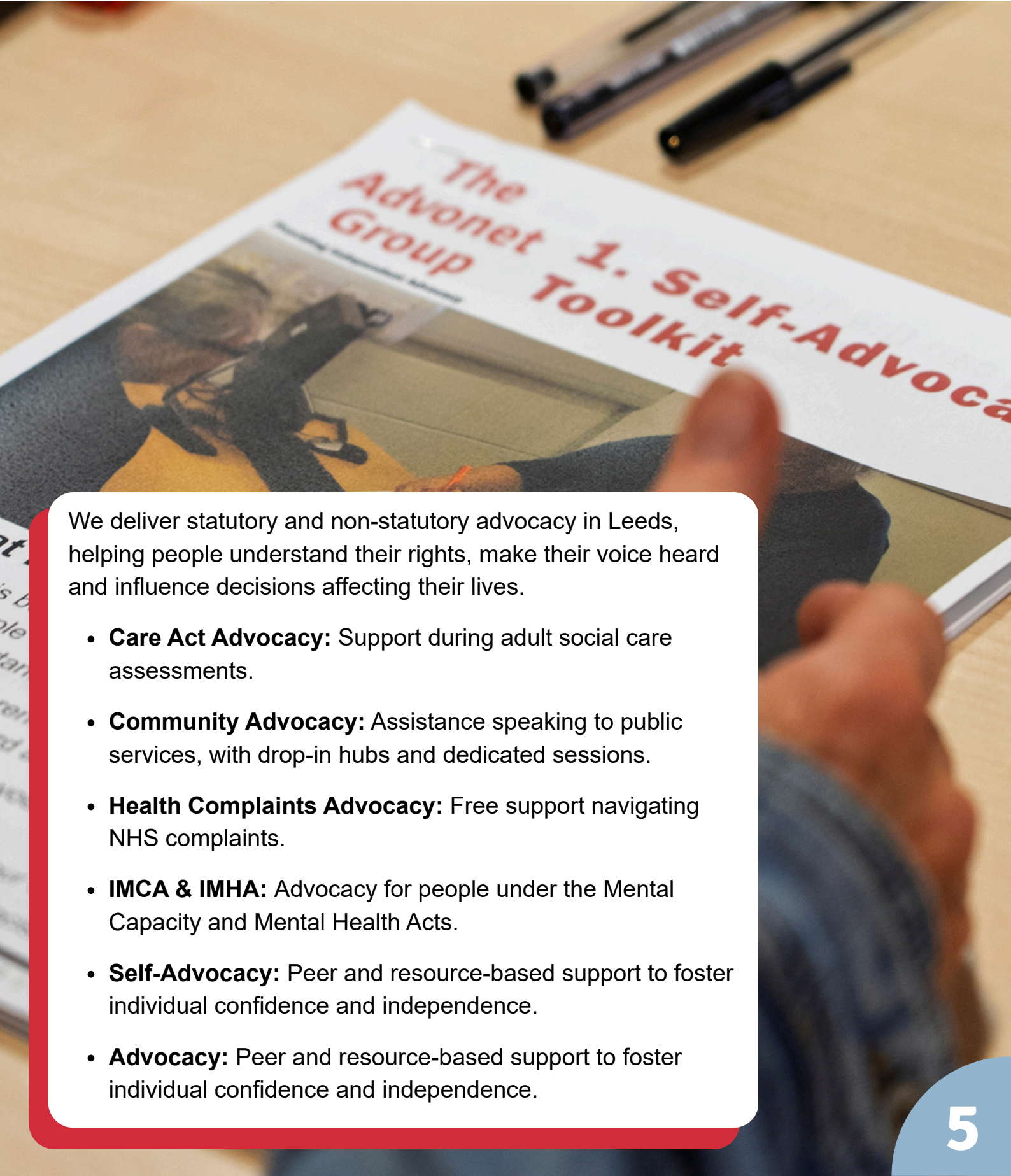
Across the organisation, our services continued to reach people through statutory and community advocacy, learning disability inclusion via Asking You, and specialist peer led support through Autism AIM.

Despite the wider pressures facing the health and care system, our staff and volunteers responded with creativity, flexibility and determination. Their efforts meant people were heard, understood and supported at moments that mattered.

This year laid important foundations for the future, and I'm proud of what has been achieved.

Services & Projects Overview

Advocacy Services



We deliver statutory and non-statutory advocacy in Leeds, helping people understand their rights, make their voice heard and influence decisions affecting their lives.

- **Care Act Advocacy:** Support during adult social care assessments.
- **Community Advocacy:** Assistance speaking to public services, with drop-in hubs and dedicated sessions.
- **Health Complaints Advocacy:** Free support navigating NHS complaints.
- **IMCA & IMHA:** Advocacy for people under the Mental Capacity and Mental Health Acts.
- **Self-Advocacy:** Peer and resource-based support to foster individual confidence and independence.
- **Advocacy:** Peer and resource-based support to foster individual confidence and independence.

Services & Projects Overview

CHANGE

TRAINING



CHANGE offer training courses in the following areas:

- BETTER COMMUNICATION AND THE ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION STANDARD
- HOW TO MAKE EASY READ INFORMATION
- WORKING BETTER WITH PARENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
- CREATING ACCESSIBLE WORKSPACES
- RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION
- HATE CRIME AWARENESS



ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION




CHANGE create bespoke easy read

An enterprise of Advonet delivering Easy Read resources, training and awareness tools to promote the rights of people with learning disabilities.

- Produces accessible publications, image banks, and Easy Read materials.
- Offers training on disability awareness.
- Engages in inclusive rights projects.

Services & Projects Overview

Asking You



Supporting Empowerment:
Using Self-Advocacy Tools
with People with Learning
Disabilities

Advonet's learning disability service, supporting adults with learning disabilities in Leeds to have their voices heard and live active, connected lives.

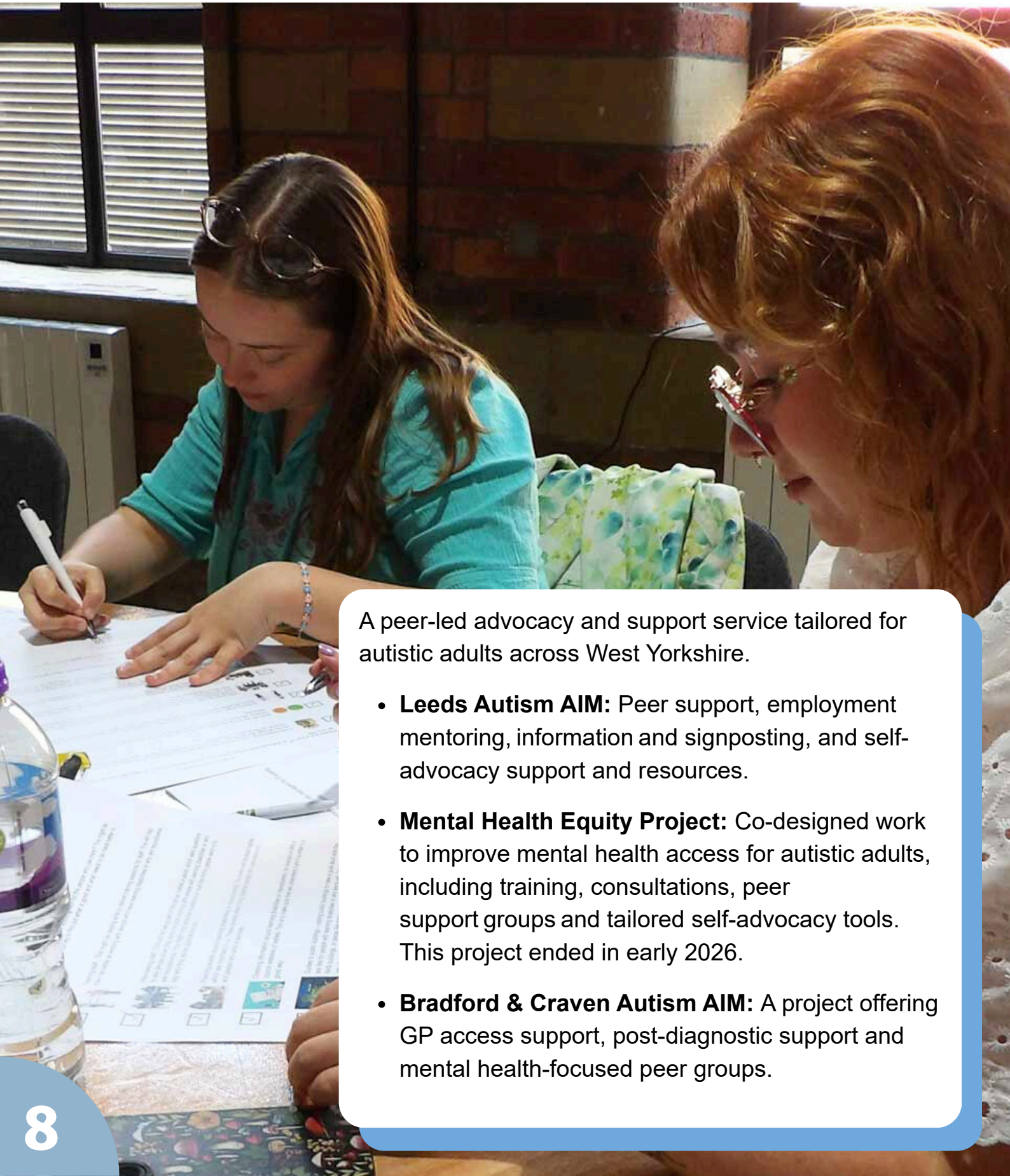
The service leads projects, advocacy, day opportunities, community activities and events, all shaped and co-produced by people with learning disabilities.

Asking You creates safe and inclusive spaces where people can build confidence, develop skills, form friendships, and influence the services that affect their lives.

Our aim is to ensure that people with learning disabilities are visible, valued and included across the city.

Services & Projects Overview

Autism AIM



A peer-led advocacy and support service tailored for autistic adults across West Yorkshire.

- **Leeds Autism AIM:** Peer support, employment mentoring, information and signposting, and self-advocacy support and resources.
- **Mental Health Equity Project:** Co-designed work to improve mental health access for autistic adults, including training, consultations, peer support groups and tailored self-advocacy tools. This project ended in early 2026.
- **Bradford & Craven Autism AIM:** A project offering GP access support, post-diagnostic support and mental health-focused peer groups.



How it All Fits Together

One team, one dream!

Advonet's approach combines rights-based advocacy with peer-led inclusion, accessible communication, and coproduction with lived experience groups.



Together, these services empower people across diverse communities to access their rights, have their voices heard, and shape the services designed to support them.

A Year in Numbers

Stats for 2024-25



3,900

People supported
across all services

1,320

Attendances at social
opps e.g. Club nights,
Autism Hubs



Thousands of hours of advocacy
delivered, helping people
navigate complex systems and
uphold their rights

400

People engaging in
forums & self-advocacy
groups e.g. People's
Parliament

5,198

Downloads of self-
advocacy resources
and guides online



A Year in Numbers

Stats for 2024-25

40%

...of our workforce identifies as disabled, including autistic and learning-disabled colleagues

600

Hours contributed by our volunteers, including Learning Disability Citizen Advocates and Autism Peer Support Vols

200+

Third sector staff we gave specialist training to

17

Partner organisations worked with to improve accessibility for autistic people

The Financial Benefit of Advocacy



A major study by Social Finance and the Henry Smith Charity (2022–2025) found that for every £1 invested in independent advocacy, £12 of financial benefits were generated:



£7 of savings for the NHS

For example: Reduced hospital admissions and emergency interventions

£5 savings for local authorities

For example: Reduced reliance on costly social care services



Feedback From the People We Support

We routinely capture case studies and invite feedback from clients. In 2025/25 we plan to further enhance our approaches, ensuring it is much easier for our colleagues and clients to tell us what they think.

“I think it’s important for people with a learning disability to be able to speak up for themselves.”

People’s Parliament Member



“I am really enjoying the training. Everything is helpful and accessible.”

Travel with Confidence attendee

“It was really lovely to get support and be heard... you gave me a space to explore my options.”

Autism AIM client



"I feel really relaxed - I usually get so nervous about phone calls but it makes such a difference knowing you've got it [autism] too. Thank you for putting me at ease."

Autism AIM client

“I really appreciate your email and all the detailed account; it very pleasant to read and to get a good picture of who {client} really is as a person. Thanks for the great support you provided.”

Professional



“I wanted to thank you for all the support today. It means a lot to me”

Professional



“When asked who he wanted to be his RPR, the client said, ‘You’ve been independent. You didn’t just go along with what the Social Worker was saying’.”

Professional

Case Study: Advocacy on Aisha's Terms

Aisha* lives in a care home under a DoLS order and experiences autism and PDA. Traditional advocacy approaches could increase anxiety, so our advocate adapted communication, learned her interests and created bespoke, gentle engagement strategies such as a Lilo & Stitch-themed resource.

By reducing barriers, Aisha was able to express her wishes and participate more comfortably in decisions about her life.

*Name changed for privacy.

Case Study: Post-Diagnostic Peer Support – Support from Someone Who Gets It

Mark*, an autistic adult with ME/CFS, felt isolated after diagnosis. Through three sessions with an autistic peer mentor, he learned practical strategies to understand burnout and manage emotions.

By the final session, Mark felt ready to begin volunteering, rebuilding both his confidence and routine.

*Name changed for privacy.





Our Values

What Advonet believes in

At Advonet, our values are more than words on a page – they shape how we work, how we support people, and how we treat each other. Over the past year, we've refreshed and embedded our values across everything we do: from job descriptions and appraisals to team meetings and the spaces we work in.

Our values reflect what matters most to our staff and the communities we serve. They guide us in delivering services and projects that are inclusive, empowering, and accountable.



We are Kind: We treat ourselves and clients with patience, compassion and respect, understanding that every journey is unique.



We are Inclusive: We remove barriers to make sure everyone, regardless of background or access need, feels included.



We are Accountable: We do what we say we will with both clients and our colleagues. When we can't, we're open and honest, and work hard to find other solutions.



We celebrate Diversity: We embrace difference in all forms, striving for a workforce that reflects the people we represent and the communities we work with.



We are Empowering: We fight people's corner, ensuring their voices are at the forefront in decisions being made about them.

Diversity and Inclusion

Proud of our diverse staff team



In 2024/25, Advonet continued to be proud of its diversity - both in our workforce and the communities we serve.

Our team brings together people from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, alongside many colleagues with lived experience of disability, neurodivergence and mental health conditions.

This diversity strengthens our offer to those who access our services, ensuring they are informed by lived experience, and culturally competent.



Diversity in Leeds and Advonet

39%

of our staff identified as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic

40%

of our team had lived experience of disability or neurodivergence

Throughout the year, we worked with communities and partner organisations across Leeds and West Yorkshire that reflect the city's rich cultural mix. Our services reached people of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, including those facing multiple barriers to having their voices heard.

Over the coming year, we will continue strengthening how we understand and reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

As part of our organisational strategy, we are also prioritising becoming more data driven. This includes improving how we measure impact and track outcomes, so we can better demonstrate the difference our services make and ensure we are reaching the people who need us most.

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Looking Ahead to 25/26

Our plans for the next 12 months



In 2025/26, Advonet will continue strengthening its data-driven practice, improving outcome measurement and understanding who we support.

We remain committed to engaging diverse community partners. In June 2025, our Empowerment Through Self-Advocacy event welcomed around 60 attendees, with speakers from Leeds Refugee Forum, TransLeeds, MEMEC and Lippy People, sharing powerful examples of community-led advocacy supported through our Advocacy Development Fund grants.

We will continue learning from this work and sharing insights across Leeds, while embedding our refreshed values into all areas of practice.



Contact Us

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Thank you!



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