



**Sandwell Advocacy**

SUPPORTING PEOPLE THROUGHOUT SANDWELL WHO FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SAY AND GET WHAT THEY NEED

**ANNUAL REPORT**

2016 / 2017

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# A Message from the Chair

Welcome to Sandwell Advocacy 2016/2017 Annual Report. In the face of a difficult national economic climate we have to seek and secure funds to ensure our sustainability, looking for ever more creative and dynamic methods to ensure that we continue to deliver the very best level of service for those we support (our partners) who depend on us to champion their rights. We have also worked hard to inspire confidence in those that fund us as well as raising money and donations on our behalf for what I believe is an amazing charity, a charity that has survived and thrived for more than two decades now. I am proud of the work that we do in our local community and the way in which we have continued to deliver first class advocacy and maintain our integrity as an organisation, where it is people that matter most.

Sandwell Advocacy is comprised of a small dedicated team and their loyalty to us as an organisation is the very reason we have held our place in the community, delivering support to those that need it, and maintaining our considerable reputation. We ask a lot of them, especially in times of uncertainty, and their commitment to us as an organisation has been unfailing.

The partners that use our service are at the heart of everything we do and this is reflected in the manner in which the team carry out their duties and responsibilities on behalf of Sandwell Advocacy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dave Bradshaw, our Project Co-ordinator, for effectively managing the project, ensuring our sustainability and looking for ever more creative ways to make us successful each year. This year is no different, Dave and the rest of the team have maintained our reputation in Sandwell through the various projects and are opening this up to widen our appeal through their fund raising activities.



I would like to thank Jodie McCaughan and Helen Charles for their successful work on our Young Carers Project. They have continued to build the reputation of the Young Carers Project. Thank you to Helen Charles for her work on the Adult Advocacy Support Service, providing valued advocacy to older people residing in care homes locally. Jodie has now gone on to pastures new and we wish her well. However, I am pleased to say that we have welcomed Jodie to the Management Committee where I know she will be able to bring much experience and knowledge to the team.

SCOPA, which is a project dedicated to supporting older people affected by cancer, sadly moved into its final year of funding during this period. Paddy Elmore and Juanita Williams have developed this project far beyond our original expectations. They have worked hard to bring this service to the attention of local partners, hospitals, GP's and those people experiencing cancer. Because the funding for this project has come to an end we sadly had to say goodbye to Paddy in his role as Professional Advocate and Juanita as Volunteer Co-ordinator. I am pleased to inform you that Paddy is maintaining his involvement with Sandwell Advocacy and is exploring possibilities for us to continue our future involvement with some form of model for medical advocacy. Juanita has joined Helen in working with the Young Carers Project and the Adult Advocacy Support Service as well as maintaining the remaining SCOPA volunteers in their SCOPA activities.

I would like to thank the social work students who make a contribution to our work whilst gaining valuable work experience with us.

A big thank you must go to all our funders and all those organisations and individuals who have raised money to support us and those who have made very generous donations to Sandwell Advocacy.

I would also like to thank all those individuals that volunteer their time and energy to the various projects and fundraising activities, including my fellow trustees. Thank you all for what you do for Sandwell Advocacy and the wider community in Sandwell.

**Lesley Donnelly**

*Chair of Sandwell Advocacy*



# Reflections of the Project Co-ordinator

What another busy and challenging year this has been for everyone involved with Sandwell Advocacy in what was my 14th year at the helm. The content of this report includes a summary of activities from staff in all operational areas and highlights some of the many successes we have achieved during the year. Please take some time to give these your attention as everyone involved with Sandwell Advocacy has worked extremely hard during the past year to maintain the highest standards and quality of advocacy provision.

For me advocacy is about passion and commitment. It is about being passionate about ensuring people are listened to and have a voice, that people's rights are taken into account and that prejudice and discrimination are challenged. It is about having a commitment and understanding of these core principles in order that marginalised, isolated and excluded individuals are able to take more control over their lives and play a fuller part in society.

The Young Carers Advocacy Project continued throughout this period thanks to a contract from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) allowing us to provide much needed support for children, young people and their families. SMBC reviewed their commissioning intentions during this period and as a result of this process Sandwell Advocacy were involved in a consultation around the re-design of services for young carers.

It was with great sadness that our long-standing Young Carers Advocate, Jodie McCaughan, moved on to pastures new during this year. However we continued to rely on the extensive experience and skills of Helen Charles to carry the project forward. Fortunately Jodie decided to remain with the organisation by becoming a member of our management trustees.

We entered into a research and evaluation phase of this project during the latter part of this period with researchers from Coventry University commencing a piece of work looking at the role of advocacy in supporting young carers, this work was expected to continue well into and throughout the forthcoming financial year.

The Adult Advocacy Support Service contract with SMBC also continued throughout this year which meant we continued to provide support for individuals in nursing/residential care, Extra Care Scheme's and Day Centre settings. Helen Charles took the lead on



delivering this project and was assisted by a team of well trained and extremely committed volunteers. We also welcomed Tracey Cassidy on a temporary basis who took care of the administrative duties between September 2016 and March 2017.

Our Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) project, funded by The Big Lottery and Macmillan under the auspices of the Older People's Advocacy Alliance continued throughout this year. Paddy Elmore (Independent Cancer Advocate) and Juanita Williams (Volunteer Co-ordinator) moved the project forward into what was possibly the final year under current funding arrangements. Referrals continued to increase, new volunteers were recruited and a number of very successful Peer Advocacy partnerships were established matching volunteers with those we supported. We continued to receive the invaluable support of local health professionals as part of our Local Cancer Champions Board.

As SCOPA was part of a national initiative our staff, volunteers and partners were involved in a number of evaluation exercises which fed into reports that clearly demonstrated the benefits that this work makes to both our beneficiaries and volunteers. Our volunteers and advocacy partners also featured in publications produced by the Older People's Advocacy Alliance: 'Facing Cancer Together – demonstrating the power of Independent Advocacy' and 'Time: Our Gift to You – why cancer advocacy volunteers support their peers'. We once again organised another Macmillan 'World's Biggest Coffee Morning' event on 30/9/16. I had pleasure in welcoming the Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Julie Webb who kindly attended and supported this event.

We have continued to involve volunteers across all operational areas as well as other activities such as fundraising, marketing, admin, raising awareness and strategic developments. Volunteers have always been a cornerstone of Sandwell Advocacy without which we truly could not function as an organisation. Our volunteers provided many hours of activity throughout this period, we really do recognise and appreciate the time, skills and experience that our volunteers bring to Sandwell Advocacy. This appreciation was marked as part of our National Volunteers Week event held on 2/6/16 where we had a wonderful evening of food, good company and the now legendary and keenly contested Sandwell Advocacy Quiz.

Steve Leighton continued to manage our finances throughout this period and we benefitted immensely from much needed modernisation and streamlining of our financial systems.

Our strategic objectives are ably managed and supported by members of our management committee. Our management committee are a small but dedicated team who give their time and expertise freely to support and guide our work. They are a valuable asset to the organisation and an essential source of support for me. Our management trustee's provide the strategic vision and expertise to drive the organisation forward. They are an important part of our team and play a vital role in planning and developing our operational activities as well as ensuring that the organisation functions effectively.

We were happy to welcome Amie Dudley during this period; Amie joined us as part of her student social work placement from Coventry University between September and December 2016. It is always heartening to see students on placement with us grow and develop as part of their varied placement activities. We wished her well on her journey to becoming a qualified social worker.



We gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution provided by the above mentioned bodies, without which our valuable work could not be delivered or sustained. Other grants and donations were most gratefully received from the Tipton and Coseley Building Society Charitable Trust, Alfred Haines Charitable Trust, the Tipton Civic Society (Tree of Light Appeal) and AICO Ltd.

We are grateful also for the donations made by individuals and the fundraising efforts of our staff, volunteers and supporters. Kind donations were also received from individuals either directly or as part of our fundraising efforts. These contributions make a huge difference to the lives of those we support. Full financial details are available in our published accounts, available on request.

It is a real privilege for me to be involved with Sandwell Advocacy and I am extremely proud of the successes and achievements of the last year. I know that everyone involved with our organisation at all levels share a vision where the injustice of discrimination and inequality are challenged and where people who seldom have a voice are empowered to have a say, choice and control over what happens in their lives. This is a vision that underpins everything we do and one that we will carry forward into the forthcoming year and beyond. As ever, Sandwell Advocacy remains committed to this value.

**Dave Bradshaw**  
Project Co-ordinator.



# Young Carers Advocacy Project

This project is now approaching the end of its sixth year in what has been another hard but rewarding and positive year supporting children, young people and their families.

During the last twelve months our work has involved supporting young carers through crisis situations including hospital stays, Child in Need meetings, Child Protection meetings and Looked After Child reviews. We ensure that they are kept at the heart of the decision making process, that their voices are heard, and their needs are taken into account. This process is developed and sustained by the trusting relationship that is built between the advocate, the young carer and (where appropriate) their wider family.

**“ You always help us and listen and give us time to speak and you are the best. ”**

Young carers and their families have also been supported by their advocates to engage with Adult and Children's Social Care, Early Help Teams, housing support, police and health services to name but a few. Families have also benefited from longer term support offered by Sandwell Advocacy's volunteer Citizen Advocates.

Whilst our main focus has been to support young carers on a one to one basis, they have also taken part in our Young Carers Forums helping to shape the work we do and looking at wider issues such as health and well-being services for young people. Consultations

have been carried out as part of our ongoing evaluations of the service looking at what is working well and what the young carers feel would improve their lives. Further consultations have been held with young carers who have expressed an interest in taking part in research being conducted with Coventry University around young carers experiences of the advocacy process. This has included conducting interviews using a range of means and media. Young carers were very keen to take part and will have an involvement with how the media is used/produced. Interviews with our advocates and professionals have begun and we look forward to the research findings.

Young carers were integrally involved with co-producing their user engagement Halloween Forum that gave an opportunity for volunteers and young carers to get together. Young carers took part in the planning, designing invitations, inventing games to be played and decorating the venue. The young carers thoroughly enjoyed the day and it gave them an opportunity to offer and receive peer support, discuss issues around confidence and self-esteem as well as sharing experiences and issues.

**“ She let me express my feelings, talk about home, which helped a lot. Would have taken longer to get where I wanted to without Sandwell Advocacy. I am going out more now. ”**



**“ Their support alongside my family has boosted my confidence, ego, behaviour and emotions positively. I am very happy and delighted with the work they have done. I love the fact that they get right to the point and sort problems out without me having to wait too long, and their support is amazing. I wouldn't change a thing. They are amazing and I couldn't be more pleased with the work they have done ”**

Young carers have been supported to get involved as volunteers, undertaking Sandwell Advocacy's Citizen Advocacy training. This has led to a number of young carers taking a more active and meaningful role within our operational activities.

All of these additional opportunities to get involved with our various activities has enabled many of the young carers that we have supported to build on and develop their confidence, skills and self-esteem which has enabled some young carers to progress further into education and or training.

A very successful presentation was delivered during a Pastoral Leaders Course held at ACE Academy aimed at raising awareness of hidden young carers and issues faced by young carers and families we work with. Very positive feedback was received from staff in attendance and this not only improved referrals into the project from them directly but they were also able to encourage other professionals to use the service.

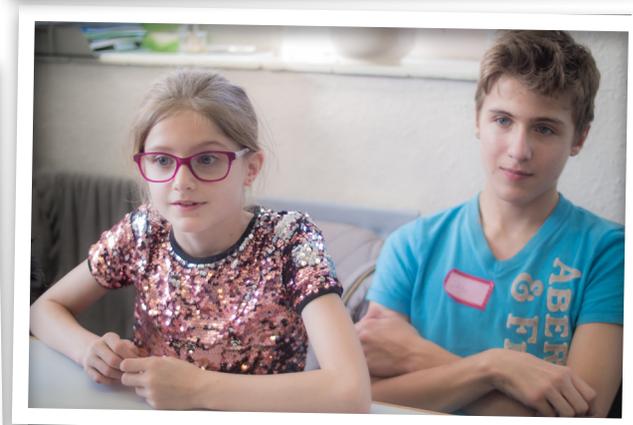
It is heartening to see that many providers around children's and families services actively encourage and welcome the involvement of advocacy as a way of identifying options, promoting rights, identifying and exploring choices and promoting informed decision making. We will continue to raise awareness of the work we do and work collaboratively with other services in the best interests of those we all support.

**Helen Charles** – Independent Advocate

**Jodie McCaughan** – Independent Advocate

“She advocated well for her clients and challenged the oppressive practice that was apparent during this meeting. I have worked with her before and she is very much a fair person. Her actions empowered the parent and gave her an extra voice”.  
- Social Worker from Sandwell Children's Services

“It's absolutely amazing the job you do, you are fantastic. I don't know what he would have done without you. We could do with 100 more like you to help young people”. - Safeguarding Nurse



“She has helped me with lots of stuff like to help me with my dad passing on, to take away all my stress and anxiety. So if you were to ask her to help another child she would be great. She helps me with lots and lots whenever I needed her she was always there for me. She will help lots of children in the future”.

“It's perfect and the people working with me are great and respectful. You say what you are going to do and do it. You have been the only one that has actually helped me and I have had a lot of different people involved with me and my children.”  
- Parent of Young Carer



# Young Carers Case Study.

Hannah was referred into the service by her School's Assistant Head of House. She was identified as being in need of support due to struggling at school and was not able to engage with her peers. Hannah was helping to support her mother who suffered absences leading to short term memory loss and mental health issues.

Her advocate was able to support Hannah in Early Help and Child in Need meetings and supported the family to engage with Adult and Children's Social Care services when relationships broke down. Hannah's advocate was able to speak on her behalf when she did not want to attend the meetings and provided feedback ensuring she understood the process and information given. The advocate contacted Adult Social Care to request an assessment of need. An assessment was undertaken and adaptations made to make the home more suitable for her needs.

Due to our intervention the families housing issues improved and made safer for all. The safeguarding risks have been reduced as a direct impact of advocacy intervention with Hannah and her family. Hannah accessed support from well-being services and was able to discuss issues with her advocate knowing that she could trust and support her through the difficult times.

Hannah told us that she felt that it had been invaluable being able to express her feelings with regards to caring for her parent. During a crisis point the advocate was able to support them with housing and benefit issues as well as supplying food vouchers. As a direct result of advocacy intervention the mother took more

control of her life by accessing her GP and Mental Health practitioners. Hannah is now enjoying more of her time being a young person, her caring role has reduced and her emotional well-being, self-esteem, independence and social skills improved. She is now more able to talk about issues before they become a crisis and seek support.

**Young carers comment: "Don't know how to say it but you have done loads for me, you have done loads for my mom and dad. You have been there when I have needed you, and talked me through everything. I can trust you, thank you for everything and all you have done"**

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.**



# Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) Project

Over a particularly challenging and sometimes frustrating year SCOPA has continued to provide vital and pioneering cancer advocacy interventions on behalf of our partners (clients) within the borough of Sandwell. During the past 12 months, and in direct response to partner need, SCOPA has become increasingly involved with the delivery of the "Cancer Survivorship" model at both operational and strategic levels, working in partnership with clinical and community providers in both primary and secondary care. We have continued to nurture our positive and ongoing relationships with the Cancer Nurse Specialist (CNS) teams in Sandwell and together we have worked collaboratively to develop approaches and strategies that will enable us to best deliver on the Cancer Survivorship programme. The term "cancer survivor" commonly refers to someone who has a history of cancer or those who are living with and beyond cancer. Living life with a history of cancer is a unique experience for each of our advocacy partners, yet a common thread is true for most, is that life is different after cancer.

## Some common reactions from our partners to having cancer have been:

- A greater appreciation of life.
- A greater self-acceptance.
- An increased anxiety about health including mental wellbeing.
- Fears relating to an inability to cope following the end of treatment.

Advocacy has and continues to play a uniquely key role in supporting our partners in addressing these issues and we believe that that our interventions form the cornerstone of the various survivorship pathways.

## The Three Phases of Survivorship

- 1.** Acute survivorship begins at diagnosis and goes through to the end of initial cancer treatment. Cancer treatment is the focus. Our advocates have played an important role in supporting partners at treatment appointments providing reassurance for both patient and, when applicable, for their family member or friend in co-attendance.
- 2.** Extended survivorship begins at the end of initial cancer treatment and goes through the months after. The effects of cancer and treatment are the focus. Once again our advocates have been proactive in enabling the partner to navigate this sometimes particularly stressful period in providing a "Watching Brief" - remaining vigilant on the partner's behalf to any signs or symptoms that could indicate potential issues in relation to treatment side-effects be they physical or psychological.
- 3.** Permanent survivorship is the period when years have passed since cancer treatment ended and recurrence seems less likely. Long term effects of cancer and treatment are the focus. During the past year many of our advocates have been made aware that this period, often overlooked or bypassed by clinical providers, is where people have felt abandoned by health services. Fear of disease recurrence has been a constant fear experienced by our partners and this, accompanied by familial pressures to "Be well", can have damaging psychological consequences for both the partner and their broader networks of family and/or friend support.



## Surviving cancer: What our partners have experienced:

At the end of active treatment, our partner's safety net of regular, frequent contact with the health care team ends. These are some of the experiences our partners have disclosed to us in our casework engagements.

- Relief that treatment is over.
- Uncertainty about the future.
- Loss of usual support.
- Increased levels of anxiety.
- Fear of recurrence, that the cancer will come back after treatment.
- Guilt about surviving, having lost friends and loved ones to cancer.
- Physical, psychological, sexual or fertility problem.
- Relationship struggles/conflicts.
- Discrimination at work.
- A social network that now feels inadequate to the changed needs/perspectives of the partner.
- Changed relationships - some families become overprotective or exhaust their ability to be supportive. Some friends have become closer whilst in some cases they have distanced themselves from the partner.

Advocates have supported partners in enabling them to recognise that an entire family changes from the cancer experience in ways they may not have been aware of. We have provided the time and space for partners to work through these changes encouraging them to maintain, as much as is possible, open and honest communication with those within their immediate and broader networks.

### Paddy Elmore

*Independent Cancer Advocate.*



# SCOPA Volunteer Peer Advocates



This period saw us approach the end of the Big Lottery three year funding cycle for the SCOPA project. During the life of this project we provided support for 94 older people affected by cancer and a total of 32 peer advocacy partnerships provided by our team of volunteers.

Throughout the life of the project we have recruited volunteers from various sources such as newspaper adverts, cancer events and the Sandwell Volunteer Bureau. The Macmillan Cancer Support website has proven to be popular with potential recruits but the whole recruitment process has shown that for various reasons only a small percentage of people actually go on to become Advocates after their initial recruitment and training stage. There are various reasons for this including recurrence of illness and personal care of family and friends taking priority. Whatever the reason, we are left with a committed and very active, caring and knowledgeable group of SCOPA volunteers who can be called on not just for advocacy but for any of the many additional roles within the organisation.

One of our volunteers became a member of our Local Cancer Champions Board, attending local and national meetings. Another joined the management board of Sandwell Advocacy and several others helped out with events such as coffee mornings and Cancer Well-being Fayres. Two volunteers carried out a rigorous quality assurance assessment of our project; their attention to detail meant that no stone was

left unturned and evidence was gathered and scrutinised. Another volunteer carried out a telephone survey with partners to investigate their views on their experiences of their advocacy partnership. Two volunteers joined the Adult Advocacy Support Service and worked very closely with Sandwell Advocacy staff visiting day centres, residential homes and Extra Care Homes in Sandwell, completing questionnaires with residents about their experiences of care within the borough. Throughout the SCOPA project volunteers willingly took part in evaluations, completing surveys and interviews either face to face, over the telephone or on questionnaires. Their insight into how the service was run proved invaluable for the evaluation process and subsequent applications for future funding bids.

As has been said on many previous occasions the volunteers that have worked on this project are very unique individuals. They come with their own personal cancer journeys, many have supported older people affected by cancer and all have a warm and approachable manner which enables them to swiftly build trusting relationships with their partners to ensure they are provided with a voice to enable them to make choices, regain control and help them to make decisions about their lives.

The volunteers on this project have shaped the way it has grown and developed, taking challenges in their stride and working closely with staff to ensure we offer a bespoke service for the varied and diverse community we support across the



borough of Sandwell. We have worked in partnership with Sandwell, City and the Queen Elizabeth NHS hospitals, building strong relationships with health professionals who are able to trust and safely make referrals to us, knowing the level of support will be entirely appropriate for the individuals they are caring for. Despite the lack of continuation funding moving beyond this financial year Sandwell Advocacy trustee's made the decision to continue with provision of this work, all be it at a scaled back version of its original incarnation. We moved forward into the forthcoming financial year with a commitment to providing a peer advocacy model, with the continued support of our volunteers, and were committed to sourcing continuation funding in whatever guise that might be. We believe that the volunteer model that has been developed can be used to advocate for people with other long term health conditions and hope that all the hard work and commitment will continue to be recognised and acknowledged in the future.

**Juanita Williams**  
Volunteer Coordinator.



# Marie's Story

I am 65 years old and I have retired. I joined SCOPA in 2016. I worked for 22 years in Sandwell Social Services department. Prior to that I was a registered childminder looking after 3 children alongside my own 5 children. I gained qualifications in Advanced Care Management and NVQ4 in care management. I really enjoyed my job but I wanted to spend quality time with my family. We moved out of the area for a while to start a new life in the country. Unfortunately family illnesses meant I was daily returning to the Midlands to care for my family members. My son in law, mother and sister all sadly passed away from cancer. I have seen the emotional impact it has on families. I still care for my parents and elderly neighbours, including my ex-mother in law. Although I retired early at 55, I felt something was missing – I had a lot to give to people going through cancer, this drove me to volunteer. I saw the advert in the local paper and knew this was what I wanted to do.

As management in a care setting I worked with many people, clients and staff and I have always found time to listen to people when they need it. My colleagues and friends say I am a bubbly person. I love life and spend lots of time with family and friends, especially going away with my husband in our caravan and travelling farther afield to new and exciting places. I am a very active, hands on grandmother and I am committed to supporting my daughter and her children following the death of her husband. Although retired, I couldn't possibly stop working. Being a cancer advocate gives me the best of both worlds, I get to support people but I don't have the pressures of being a manager.



My first advocacy partnership didn't really go very far. The lady I was supporting was struggling financially but I soon discovered she was receiving all the benefits she was entitled to and had already received a Macmillan grant. She asked me if I could help her find somewhere she could go on holiday for free. I scoured the internet and made numerous phone calls to contacts of mine but I was unable to find her anything. When we had exhausted all avenues my partner suggested we end the partnership. Whilst I couldn't really do anything for her, I know I tried my best to help get all the support that was available.

I now have a new partnership with a couple in their fifties. The husband has cancer and his wife is having difficulty coming to terms with it. She herself has many of her own difficulties to overcome including arthritis and mental health issues. She is struggling physically to care for him and worries constantly about what the future holds for them both. With my knowledge of the care system I feel confident I can help them to get all the support they need.

They tell me they both look forward to my weekly visit. I have supported them with filling out benefits forms but most of all I am a listening ear and offer reassurance to them both.

I speak openly about advocacy and the SCOPA project to former colleagues who like myself have retired and would benefit from volunteering. I get so much back, it's not so much about me as it's a very rewarding role and I get as much back as I put in. It's a two way street and it fills a small void in my life knowing I am helping someone who is going through a difficult journey.



# Adult Advocacy Support Service

This service has been delivered by Sandwell Advocacy since 2013, it is commissioned by Sandwell MBC as part of their monitoring of people's nursing, residential and day care provision in the Borough. We have provided an independent advocacy service for people who reside in a variety of settings and advocates have conducted visits to nursing and residential Care Homes, Day Care and Extra Care settings.

Prior to our announced visits to care providers we supply information which explains the purpose of our visits and also invites residents, relatives and service users to complete questionnaires. The questionnaires focus on the quality of the care provided, the care residents/users receive and provides an opportunity for them to feedback on any issues of importance.

Our independent advocates are supported by a team of trained volunteers enabling users of care services to have a voice, give opinions and share positive and sometimes negative experiences of their care. The residents we speak with also have an opportunity to suggest improvements that they feel will enhance their levels and standards of care.

From April 2015 this project has been able to offer support as part of Care Act Advocacy for individuals subject to safeguarding alerts and processes, where they are deemed to have substantial difficulty in being fully involved in the process and do not have an appropriate person to support them.

Our standard visits can often identify issues relating to individual service users ranging from day to day concerns about standards of care through to significant safeguarding concerns. Our advocates have the experience and skills to respond to all issues that arise to ensure that individuals are appropriately supported, this approach can include:

- Providing information and signposting service users/family to other sources of support where appropriate and relevant.
- A model of advocacy is provided to promote independence and empowers people to speak up for themselves and encourages service users to self-advocate wherever possible
- Follow up issues on behalf of the resident/family to ensure that they are resolved to their satisfaction.
- Work within a safeguarding agenda to ensure individuals are safe and free from harm and abuse
- Provide one-to-one advocacy service where safeguarding has been raised and there is no other appropriate person to support the individual.

**Helen Charles**  
Advocacy Support Officer

## Sandwell Advocacy Financial Summary 2016/17

Our income for the year totalled:	<b>£157,936.00</b>
Expenditure for the year was:	<b>£131,445.00</b>
Fund Balances at 31/3/16 were:	<b>£83,618.00</b>
Full details are available in our published accounts.	



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