



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

I am happy to report another successful year. Whatever challenges we have had as an organisation we have met those challenges with determination and hard work to ensure that we succeed for another year. 2018 marked the start of our 25th year and we have much to celebrate in terms of our longevity and success over an amazing 25 years in Sandwell. We should feel proud of ourselves for our sustainability, but more than that for all the people in Sandwell we have helped and supported at times in their lives when they needed us most. Local residents have been able to depend on us to deliver the advocacy they needed and have been able to feel supported and secure in the knowledge that we put their interests first.

We have a small but very dedicated team of employees who are loyal to us and our vision of serving the local community and through their dedication have upheld our considerable reputation with other organisations, small and large, and the wider Sandwell community. They have ensured that the interests of those we support are central to everything they do. We appreciate their hard work and dedication.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dave Bradshaw, our Project Co-ordinator, for effectively managing the project, ensuring that we are successful and for continuing to successfully secure funding to enable the continuance of Sandwell Advocacy each year. Dave and the team have raised our profile in Sandwell and have been involved in many activities to ensure our appeal is widened, attracting greater funding to the organisation.

I would like to thank Helen Charles and Juanita Williams for their successful work on our Young Carers Project. They have continued to build the reputation of this project and through the teams efforts we have continued to receive funding. Thank you to Helen and Juanita for their work on the Adult Advocacy Support Service, providing valued advocacy to older people residing in a variety of care settings locally.

Whilst SCOPA, a project dedicated to supporting older people affected by cancer, has been scaled down considerably because of limited funding, the team are still supporting people in this situation. Thank you to the team for continuing this vital work in addition to all the other projects. I would also like to thank the social work students



who make a contribution to our work whilst gaining valuable work experience with us.

We are working as part of the Living Memory project, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund. This project works across the area to celebrate different aspects of everyday life that have been captured through people's own photographs. This project has really grown and is an amazing celebration of Black Country people through historical visual media. Thank you to the Geoff Broadway and everyone involved for making the project such a success.

“ We have a small but very dedicated team of employees who are loyal to us and our vision ”

On behalf of Sandwell Advocacy I would like to thank all the

Volunteers, including my fellow Trustees, who work alongside our staff, for all the hard work that they do, working with partners or raising funds and for giving their commitment to us and the people we support. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you!

A big thank 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.

Thank you everyone 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.



I am really pleased to report that the 2017/2018 period has been very successful for us as an organisation, in terms of funding for new initiatives along with many positive outcomes for those we have supported. The start to 2018 saw us enter our 25th year of providing advocacy support throughout Sandwell; I believe that this is a remarkable achievement and something worth celebrating. We remain the only local community based, grass-roots specialist independent advocacy provider in Sandwell and we plan on being around for as long as marginalised, excluded and/or isolated people need support to speak up and safeguard their views, rights and wishes.

The content of this Annual 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.

The Advocacy Project for Young Carers 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. Helen Charles took up a Senior Independent Advocacy post on this project and was ably supported by Juanita Williams as a second Independent Advocate on the team. Alongside the more traditional one-to-one person-centred advocacy support provided for young carers, we were fortunate to attract funding from various sources which enabled us to organise activities for young carers throughout this period. These activities included: equine therapy sessions at Warrens Hall Stables, User-Engagement Forums, Healthy Eating Workshops and First Aid training. All of these activities have been well received, very successful and all evaluation feedback has been extremely positive. These activities have added an additional dimension to the provision of this service and have positively influenced the advocacy process. The activities have not only enabled advocates to build positive relationships with the young carers that they are supporting, but they also provide an important peer

support element. It is very much felt that these activities are now much more than complementary to the advocacy process, indeed they are an integral part of it. It is immensely satisfying to see young carers grow in confidence and develop new skills and experiences, as a result of accessing these different activities.

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 and Juanita Williams delivered this project, assisted by a team of well trained and extremely committed volunteers.

Our Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) project continued throughout this period, but operated at a considerably scaled back model as a result of limited funding. We were successful in attracting some grant funding for this work and trustees committed some organisation reserves to continue supporting the work. This project has operated as primarily a volunteer based Peer Advocacy model with a team of trained volunteer Peer Advocates being supported to provide much needed advocacy support for older people affected by cancer. We also entered into an arrangement with Citizens Advice Dudley to host Paul Lucas (Macmillan funded CAB Case Worker) for a weekly surgery at our office every Tuesday.

We organised another fundraising Coffee Morning event on 29/9/17 where we had pleasure in welcoming the Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Ahmadul Haque MBE who kindly attended and supported this event.

We were delighted to learn, in October of this year, that an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund had been successful. We welcomed Geoff Broadway to the team to co-ordinate the activities of the Living Memory Project, which would be working across the area to celebrate different aspects of everyday life that have been captured through people's own photographs. The project will be recording local people's life stories and memories connected to their photography collections, making a series of new films, professionally archiving over 1000 favourite photographs, creating a new touring exhibition and much more besides.

I would like to formally thank and acknowledge the fantastic work of all of our volunteers. Our volunteers are extremely dedicated and work towards making a meaningful difference to people's lives. It has rightly been said many times that we would not be able to function in the way that we do without the commitment of our volunteers, who donate their valuable time, skills and experiences. We once again held our annual Volunteers' Week event on 6/6/17, providing us with an opportunity to formally recognise and reward the valuable work of all of our volunteers. All those in attendance had an enjoyable day.

This year saw an increased period of activity in terms of fundraising, with a hugely



productive relationship being developed with Michael Huggins and Steve Davies who nominated our charity in their capacity as Community Champions of Mondelez International (otherwise known as Cadbury's based in Bourneville). They embarked on a gruelling but hugely successful sponsored cycle ride from Land's End to John O'Groats. Along with supporting a grant application to the Cadbury Foundation towards the work of our SCOPA project, a considerable amount of funds have been raised from these endeavours and we are extremely grateful for the continued support of Michael and Steve specifically and Mondelez generally.

Our Annual General Meeting was held in November of this year and all in attendance were entertained with accounts of Michael Huggins' cycle ride from Land's End to John O'Groats as well as hearing from Geoff Broadway about his plans for the Living Memory Project. We also took this opportunity to stage the first showing of our Young Carers Project film, which is a powerful account from young carers themselves into the impact that advocacy support has had on their lives. This film has had many screenings since and has been exceptionally well received by all who have seen it - the film remains available to view on our website.

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 following:

- Alfred Haines Charitable Trust
- Greggs Foundation
- The Cadbury Foundation
- WHSmith Trust Community Grants
- Big Lottery Awards for All
- The Tipton and Coseley Building Society Charitable Foundation
- The Tipton Civic Society (Tree of Light Appeal)
- SCVO Community Partnership Grant Programme
 - Monmore Green Stadium (Christmas Charity Giveaway)
 - 'UsGirls' Black Country Micro Grant

Full financial details are available in our published accounts available on request.

We look forward to a year celebrating the success and achievements of Sandwell Advocacy as part of our 25th anniversary. I am also really excited about some new initiatives that are on the horizon over the coming year and beyond.



The commitment and dedication of all involved with Sandwell Advocacy is a constant source of inspiration for me. We all 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. Where people are encouraged and supported to live as independently as they possibly can with dignity and respect AND an equal stake in society. These are the same values and principles that should intrinsically underpin the concept of advocacy and this is a vision that Sandwell Advocacy will continue to embrace as we go forward.

Dave Bradshaw
Project Co-ordinator.

Advocacy Project for Young Carers



This project is now approaching the end of its seventh year and once again it has been a challenging and rewarding year supporting children, young people and their families.

Our Independent Young Carers Advocates have been providing support to some of the most vulnerable, isolated and marginalised individuals in Sandwell. We are committed to ensuring that those we support are kept at the heart of the decision making process, that their voices are heard, and their needs and wishes are taken into account by those making decisions about their lives.

During the last twelve months we have supported young carers in a variety of meetings including school meetings, Team Around the Family, Child in Need and Child Protection meetings as well as Looked after Children reviews. Where required we have spoken on behalf of young carers in multi-disciplinary team meetings to ensure their rights are upheld. The one-to-one relationship between the advocate and young carer is one that is built on trust, without this trust many of the positive outcomes could not have been achieved. We have also ensured that families have been able to access longer term support offered by our volunteer Citizen Advocates.

Advocates delivered a presentation to 109 staff at Wodensborough Academy at one of their staff meetings. The head teacher who had recently been in a meeting with one of the young carers advocates spoke very highly of the support that was offered to one of their pupils and encouraged other staff to access our service where required.

As a result of regular User Engagement Forums and consultations, it transpired that some of the young people we support required a little more support to break down barriers and begin a trusting relationship with their advocates due to a range of issues they had previously faced. We took the findings from these consultations and applied to Awards for All and The Greggs Foundation to fund more therapeutic approaches to working with young carers. Some of this funding

enabled us to facilitate group work at Warrens Hall Riding Stables where they were able to spend quality time with the horses, grooming, and stable management and learning how to ride. This has proved very beneficial to them as they show a natural empathy with the horses building a relationship between animal and the young person. This has also supported our work as the young people feel they are in a calm therapeutic environment which led to them becoming more open and talking about some of the issues they need support with.

Many of the young people we support care for family members with long term health conditions. Another common theme emerging from our User Engagement Forums was therefore an interest in learning about first aid. Thanks to a Big Lottery 'Awards for All' grant we were able to provide First Aid training through First Response. Feedback from this session from those who attended highlighted the concerns many had around medical emergencies; many commented that as a result of the workshops that they feel better equipped and more confident to provide First Aid treatment should it be required.

With consent from parents and the young carers some of these sessions have been documented on camera and they have all been able to build their own memory books, capturing more happy times for them to reflect on. They can also add to these memories as time progresses. One young carer who has accessed our support demonstrated a natural ability with horses and riding, as a result he has now become a volunteer at the stables, this is helping him to have an outlet for his emotions and develop his skills and experiences.

In December 2017, supported by Nash's Coaches, we organised a trip for young carers and their families to Warrens Hall Stables for a Santa Hunt. Parents and the young carers came together for seasonal Christmas celebrations, and some of the parents have built friendships and remain in contact with one another via social media as a result of this initiative.

An advocate's role is to ensure that people's voices are heard and we are keen to facilitate opportunities for this to happen. We invited a Learning and Development Officer from Sandwell Council to play the 'Vision 2030' game with a group of children and young people we support. This enabled them to consider and talk about their hopes and aspirations with regard to living in Sandwell in the year 2030. Concerns were raised about homelessness, poverty and the increasing need for food banks. Following on from this a number of those involved told us that their families rely on food banks and that they didn't always know how to make healthy meals with the tins and packet food which were often provided. We took this on board and went on a visit to The Well Food Bank in Tipton who showed us around their store room and outlined how they operate to support vulnerable families locally. We have since made further funding applications with a view to looking at this in more depth.



During this year we worked with Geoff Broadway, a professional film maker, to produce a film involving children and families which looked at the difference having an advocate has made for them. Filming took place at various venues around the borough and we hope it demonstrates the variety of ways in which our service can support young carers and their families. At the launch of The Sandwell Early Help Partnership we were invited as guest speakers to show our film and speak to an audience of over 80 organisations from Sandwell about our service, the film has been well received both here and amongst other groups and venues around the borough.

During Young Carers week we set up stall in the foyer of Sandwell College, promoting our advocacy service to their students. Many young people continue their caring role throughout their life so this seemed like an ideal opportunity to let them know about what we do and to promote the support we are able to provide.

It has become something of a tradition for us to host one of our User Engagement events during October half term in order for us to combine some Halloween fun with more consultative exercises. This year we had gruesome face painting, cake decorating, a photo booth as well as a particularly spooky 'haunted' room with scary characters hanging from the ceiling and ghoulish images projected on to the walls. We finished off by searching along the canal for hidden (plastic) bones in order to make a skeleton.

We continue to work in partnership with Coventry University who are undertaking a research study looking at independent advocacy with young carers and their families. We are looking forward to the findings.



It is so rewarding to see how children and young people who access this service develop their confidence and skills. Central to all of our advocacy interventions is the concept of independence and empowerment, our approach always aims to enable people to build their confidence and skills so that they feel more able to articulate their views and wishes more effectively and ultimately be able to speak up for themselves.



We have lots of ideas and plans looking ahead for the coming year with lots of exciting initiatives in the pipeline. We will continue to work in a person-centred way with those we support using innovative approaches to ensure that the range of support we provide is meaningfully tailored to the needs of the individual.

Helen Charles – Independent Advocate

Juanita Williams – Independent Advocate



Quotes from Young Carers:

"You make a difference when you are in the meetings. It's like they have to listen to you. You get their attention".

"I liked meeting other people, they were kind and friendly. I thought that none of them would talk to us and they all have (user engagement forum). You help us and our mom; you help us to understand things"

"I get helped a lot by Sandwell Advocacy. They have helped me with all my problems they relieve me of my stress. They are brilliant, they give me confidence, and they always have a smile on their faces despite everything that is thrown at them. I honestly can't thank them enough"

"Sandwell Advocacy has helped me escape the house and make new friends and can talk to them about anything"



Quotes from Parents of Young Carers:

"I am so glad that I picked up that telephone and rang Sandwell Advocacy all those months ago, I remember the day vividly everything had been building and building and I didn't know which way to turn, who to talk to or how to make anything better for me and my family. I remember ringing and just blurting everything out! One of the hardest things for me to do as I had tried so hard to be strong and to cope and thought I was failing. The support not only I but my children have received has been amazing! From the days out horse riding to the support in school and the chats at the end or often the beginning of a very stressful day. Thank you".

"Everybody said you need an advocate and now we have one I feel it's all going to change"



Quotes from Professionals:

Family Support Worker:

"I knew who to call as soon as this family came to me, and I knew that you would take it on and help them. Good to know you are still here"

School Safeguarding Officer:

"I told the young carer all about you and how lovely you are and that he would be able to talk to you. He can't wait to meet you and I know that it will help him having someone to talk to"

Young Carers Case Study Katy (Age 16)

Katy was referred into the service by a family worker from her local Children's Centre along with her younger brother David. The family were being supported by Children's Social Care services as there had been a history of domestic abuse. The perpetrator was no longer in the family home but still had a continuing major negative impact on the wellbeing of the family.

Both young carers supported their nephew Billy, who resided with them. Billy had a range of medical conditions and their mother was suffering from anxiety and depression. Katy also suffered from anxiety due to bullying she had suffered at school, and witnessing domestic abuse throughout her childhood. The whole family had very little trust in professionals.

There were a number of issues that had led to the family being subject to a Children's Services Child in Need Plan, these included: David's school attendance and performance, Billy's complex care needs and emotional issues of both Katy and her mother. Several meetings had taken place in the school with contradictory information being provided to the social worker. This was challenged by the advocate and amendments made to the plan which enabled the social worker to examine the information being provided by the schools more closely and led to the family being de-escalated to Early Help support.

It was very important from the onset that the family were given the time and space to speak openly and honestly about the issues they were facing. Whilst the advocate provided one-to-one person centred support for Katy, it was crucial to the advocacy process that our approach involved a holistic family orientated approach and that the emotional well-being of the family was taken into account. Support was provided during various meetings with other professionals to ensure that Katy's views, needs and wishes were considered by those making decisions about her life. The advocacy practitioner worked in an empowering way to enable her to feel that she was placed at the heart of the decision-making process.

Looking at the holistic needs of the family the advocate provided information on services for talking and listening therapy, workshops, self-help programmes and universal support services for the mother to ensure that she was aware of the support available and how she could access them. Katy did not possess any formal qualifications, the advocate examined her options with her, including looking into apprenticeships and support offered through other agencies such as connexions.

During the advocacy intervention Katy became pregnant. The advocate supported her to access her hospital appointments with her mother as a supportive network. However it transpired that Katy had also suffered domestic abuse. The police were notified but Katy found the whole situation completely overwhelming and absconded from home. A missing persons report was made.

Some days passed until Katy contacted her mother to ask the advocate to contact her. Katy believed that she and her unborn child were in danger, the advocate contacted Children's Services and a package of support was provided allowing Katy to return home safely. Further support was put in place for Katy and her

mother to attend a training programme for them to better understand the complex issues around cycles of abuse. Katy was also supported to access support from the Sandwell Teenage Pregnancy Support Team.

Katy was further supported to understand the importance of safeguarding herself and her child and eventually she reached a point where there was no further requirement for continued intervention from Children's Services. The advocate concluded the advocacy partnership and Katy and her daughter are doing really well.

Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals



Young carers comments: "You came in to my life when I trusted no one; I did not want to talk to you. Then I watched how you worked with my family and I was able to believe that you could be trusted. I am happy and contented with life at the moment and I did not feel I would ever get to feel this way".

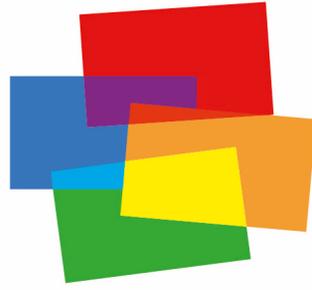
Mother's comments: "I don't know what we would have done without your help. I just can't imagine what would have happened to us".

Social Workers comments: "The advocate and I had a meeting with a few professionals. Unfortunately it was clear that the professionals were colluding with each other and one had even fabricated information believed to be in an attempt to encourage Children's Services to take on the case.

I was very impressed with the way the advocate handled this situation. She professionally made all parties aware that their actions were uncalled for and unacceptable. She advocated well for her clients and challenged the oppressive practice that was apparent during the meeting.

It has been a while since I have seen a professional who has been confident enough to challenge another professional when they have not acted appropriately. I have seen too many times that professionals are very willing to challenge a parent but unable to challenge poor professional practice".





LIVING MEMORY

Photography and Life Stories from across the Black Country

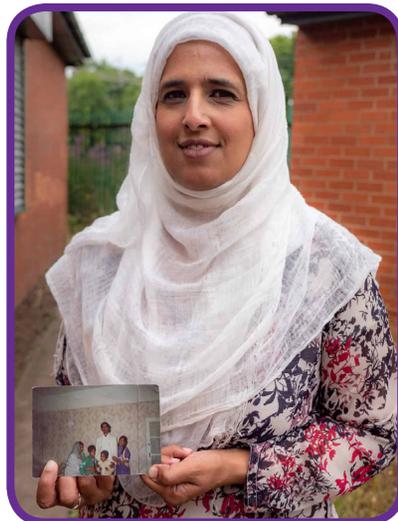
Below – ‘The family collection of Marianne Monro from Smethwick, one of the many troves of photography collections that have been shared as part of the project’



The Living Memory project launched in January 2018 at Sandwell Archives, Smethwick. To make the project happen we raised over £80,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a further £30,000 in match funding from SMBC, The Black Country Living Museum, GMLF and the Garfield Weston Foundation.

We are working across the Black Country to record everyday life stories around personal photographs and collections from a wide range of contributors. We are capturing and celebrating the richness of everyday life as told through people's own stories and the photos that they keep. The photographs kept in family albums and shoeboxes and the stories they want to tell give us an important insight in how people see and make senses of their lives. We think these everyday stories are part of our cultural heritage that we want to preserve, share and treasure.

The project will run until early 2020 and will result in a large exhibition of collected photographs and stories, a dvd of specially produced films, and a major project book. The Living Memory website is already up and running



and here you can read some of the stories we have recorded so far and find out what is happening across the project now www.livingmemory.live

Since the project launched we have been working hard with individuals and communities recording stories, delivering talks and presentations, hosting a range of volunteer training sessions, sharing events and presenting pop-up exhibitions.

We have found that people readily understand the importance of this project and at times we are overwhelmed by the requests of those who want to contribute and share their own life story. There is a real need in our culture for us to create spaces where people can record and share important parts of their lives as well as learn about the lives of others.

We and many of our readers have been moved by richness of the many stories and the personal photographs that have been shared with us so far. To name but a few, we have stories that speak about the challenges and changes for working lives, stories about growing up in closed communities with arranged marriages, stories of migration, world travel and of feeling at home, stories about falling in love, surviving against the odds, and dealing with the difficulties and disappointments that come as part of everyday life.

Left – ‘A portrait of Emaan sharing her life story about growing up in both Pakistan and Dudley’

A Couple of highlights of the year:



Above – 'Pupils from St Michael's School in Rowley Regis show off their new exhibition Seven that they made as part of the Living Memory project'

Below – 'Ruth Collins talking about her life with some of her photographs'



To make such an ambitious project manageable we are working in particular areas for a set period of time and then organising local sharing events and pop-up exhibitions.

Our first major project show-back event was the very successful take-over at Haden Hill House Museum at Cradley Heath. We presented an ambitious 4-part exhibition supported by a series of talks, sharing events and story collecting sessions. Our centre-piece was a major exhibition of photographs from the previously unseen archive of Ron Moss. We also shared new work that we made with pupils and the local community around of St Micheal's School in Rowley Regis, new work from students at Sandwell College, and a sample of the stories and photographs that people had contributed to the project during our first 6 months. Over 1,500 people came to see the exhibition, some travelling from far and wide to see the work and participate in the events we hosted.

Looking ahead we have a full schedule in place throughout 2018 and 2019. To give you a quick glimpse - we are going to be busy working with the Tipton Muslim Community Centre collecting stories and photographs from the Asian communities of the wider area; developing a new project with the Polish community in Wolverhampton; collaborating with Amersands Projects to engage with socially isolated elders in Oldbury; and developing our next exhibition and mini-publication about our work with Big Local over at Grace Mary and Lion farm estates. You can keep up to date with all that we are up to by joining the mailing list at www.livingmemory.live, and also see updates on our regularly updated blog.

Geoff Broadway – Living Memory Project Co-ordinator.



Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) Project



The start of this financial year (1st April 2017) marked the completion of a major source of funding for this work which had delivered a very successful and much needed advocacy project for older people affected by cancer since May 2014. There were some difficult decisions to be made as to the way forward but the trustees of Sandwell Advocacy were optimistic that some funds could be secured from other sources and fundraising activities. It was agreed that it would be wiser to operate a scaled down service rather than close then start all over again if additional funds were to become available.

We were fortunate to receive some donations which enabled us to continue work with seven volunteers supporting a total of 26 cases. Board members, family and friends took part in a Muddy Run in Sandwell Valley and Mrs Cath Mansell continued to raise money for us by making and selling craft items at local fetes throughout the year. In September we hosted a coffee morning at Sandwell Irish Community Association in Langley Lodge. We also had a very supportive and dedicated team of fundraisers, headed up by Michael and Steve at Cadbury's Mondelez who have raised thousands of pounds for five charities, including Sandwell Advocacy, through various challenges including a massive bike ride from Land's End to John O'Groats. Their sheer effort and hard work has ensured that we can continue to support older people affected by cancer.

We said goodbye to Paddy as our Independent Cancer Advocate but fortunately he continued to support his advocacy partners and the project as a volunteer. His involvement with the project has meant we have not lost his years of knowledge and experience in advocacy.

Every Tuesday one of our offices is occupied by Paul Lucas, a Macmillan Cancer Support Benefits Advice Caseworker. We have been able to work effectively with Paul in getting financial support and advice to most of the advocacy partners we work with.





We continue to support people to navigate the local health, social and voluntary care agencies ensuring everyone has fair access to care, comfort and wellbeing throughout their cancer journey and beyond. We have seen a rise in the number of cases where people have passed away without having any funeral arrangements in place; this has resulted in volunteers being involved long after the passing of their advocacy partners.

We have continued our involvement with the Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy in Sandwell and have been able to share our knowledge and experiences to shape the future for Sandwell residents with life limiting illnesses. We work closely with other public and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that work is not duplicated and we make good use of the existing services still available in the area.

Juanita Williams – Volunteer Co-ordinator.



Adult Advocacy Support Service



Sandwell Advocacy is now in its 5th year of providing independent advocacy to people who reside in a variety of care settings around the borough of Sandwell. This service is commissioned by Sandwell MBC as part of their monitoring of standards of care.

We ensure that there is independent advocacy provision for people of different ages and backgrounds who have care needs and reside in a Nursing or Residential Care home, Extra Care settings and for those who attend Day Care provision.

To provide an inclusive service Sandwell Advocacy invites residents, service users and/or relatives to complete monitoring questionnaires. The questionnaires focus on the choices a person has with regard to their care and support and looks at a holistic approach to health and wellbeing.

Advocates are supported by a dedicated team of volunteers to provide assistance to those who need it enabling people to have a voice and share their opinions on the care that they receive. Positive and negative information from those taking part provides valuable feedback to Sandwell MBC Contracts and Monitoring Team to improve the level of care and support available. Service users choose who they want their information to be shared with and can remain anonymous.

Under the Care Act 2014 we provide Care Act Advocacy for service users who are subject to safeguarding alerts and

procedures. We offer support to people when a safeguarding alert has been raised where the individual may have difficulty understanding or being fully involved in the process and does not have an appropriate person to support them.

There are often occasions, as part of our standard planned visit, when issues relating to individual service users are identified. This can be day to day concerns ranging from standards of care through to safeguarding concerns being raised. Our advocates and volunteers have the skills and experiences to ensure that in all cases individuals are appropriately supported. This will include using the following approaches:

- Working within a safeguarding agenda to ensure individuals are safe and free from harm and abuse
- Providing Care Act Advocacy where safeguarding has been raised and there is no other appropriate person to support the individual.
- Providing information and signposting to other sources of support where relevant and appropriate.
- Making referrals for service users to other services where relevant and appropriate.
- Providing a model of advocacy to promote independence and empowering people to speak up for themselves and encourage service users to self-advocate wherever possible
- Following up issues on behalf of the resident/family to ensure that these are resolved to their satisfaction.

Helen Charles - Advocacy Support Officer.

Sandwell Advocacy Financial Summary 2017/2018

Our income for the year totalled:	£129,683
Expenditure for the year was:	£123,637
Fund Balances at 31/3/18 were:	£89,664

Full details are available in our published accounts



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