

Annual Report

2018/2019



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Sandwell Advocacy provides independent advocacy throughout Sandwell promoting rights, voice and empowerment.



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Welcome! 2018/2019 has been another successful year for Sandwell Advocacy.

We continued to celebrate our 25th Anniversary throughout this year with activities, which began with an amazing evening of celebration where we welcomed special guests and enjoyed delicious refreshments at Tipton Library in December 2018.

I want to say how proud I am of Sandwell Advocacy, I am proud of the resilience of an organisation that has survived and thrived through what has at times been difficult, but we have always been able to sustain our organisation with a combination of dedication, hard work and innovative ideas and action.

This level of sustainability over the years is because we have an amazing, hardworking staff team and it is their dedication and hard work that has ensured our success and durability. It's through their vision and high standards that we hold a good reputation in Sandwell. I am always impressed by the innovative thinking of the team and how they deliver this amazing service to so many vulnerable people in Sandwell. This team is ably led by Dave Bradshaw, our Project Co-ordinator. Dave manages the organisation on a day to day basis and ensures that our resources are utilised in the best possible fashion and is a vital link between the trustees and the rest of the team. Thank you, Dave.

Thank you to Helen Charles and Juanita Williams for their continued valuable work on our Advocacy Project for Young Carers, providing a whole range of activities, including User Engagement Forums, and much needed support for young people and their families. As part of this work the young people themselves have been instrumental in rebranding our logo and leaflets. They look amazing!

Thank you once again to Helen and Juanita for continuing to deliver the Adult Advocacy Support Service providing support and making a difference for individuals residing in Nursing/Residential Care, Extra Care Scheme's and Day Centre settings.

Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) project has continued on a much smaller scale. Thank you to all the Peer Advocates who continue this valuable work of providing much needed support to older people with cancer.

Thank you to Geoff Broadway of The Living Memory Project, a project that celebrates everyday life in Sandwell, captured through people's own photographs. This project has been a real success and has included an exhibition, book and DVD.

As a result of new funding, our Voices and Choices Project started in early 2019. This project provides support to older people around care and accommodation issues and I would like to say welcome and thank you to Linsey

Robinson as Project Officer.

We have started the process through our staff and volunteer workshops to look at our long term strategic plan as an organisation, which will also include the development of a new business plan. This is a very important on-going necessary process designed to give us focus and a direction that will ensure our sustainability for many years to come. I want us to continue to serve the people of Sandwell when they need us most and we can only do this through sustained growth and development.

I want to say a well-deserved thank you to all our funders without whom we couldn't exist. Special thanks must go to all those who have generously given their time to raise money to support us.

Thank you to all our amazing volunteers, including trustees, who we could not operate without and give their time generously to the people of Sandwell who look to us for support and a voice.

Lesley Donnelly
Chair of Sandwell Advocacy



Above – 'Fundraising at Cadbury World'

SANDWELL ADVOCACY CELEBRATING 25 YEARS



Reflections of the Project Co-ordinator

I am pleased to report that the 2018/2019 period has been another successful year for us as an organisation. We continued to provide the levels of service of the previous year but have also added new projects and services to our offer. This year saw us continue to celebrate our 25th year of providing advocacy support throughout Sandwell, there have been some challenging times over these years but I believe we are in the strongest position we have ever been in which is testament to our resilience, flexibility and innovative thinking.

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 associated with Sandwell Advocacy has worked extremely hard during the past year to maintain the highest standards and quality of advocacy provision.

As already mentioned, we are proud that this year marked our 25th anniversary. We had a wonderful celebration at Tipton Library in December 2018 which was organised by a dedicated working group comprised of trustees, staff and volunteers. The event was a wonderful evening of entertainment, guest speakers and food and was attended by nearly 100 people and opened by the Deputy Mayor of Sandwell. We also took the opportunity to premiere our excellent latest film featuring professionals, service users and staff talking about their experiences of Sandwell Advocacy. I would like to thank all those involved in this event and those who attended, I hope you all enjoyed it as much as I did! We asked that all those in attendance donate food items and toiletries to the Black Country Foodbank and managed to collect a large number of items for a very worthy cause.

It was confirmed at the beginning of this year that we had once again successfully tendered for the contract to deliver our Advocacy Project for Young Carers. We are grateful to Sandwell Children's Trust / Sandwell Metropolitan Council (SMBC) for funding this much needed support for children, young people and their families. Helen Charles and Juanita Williams continued their valuable work on this project providing both one to one person-centred advocacy support as well as a range of activities for young people. These activities included: equine therapy sessions at Warrens Hall Stables, community journalism/social media and a fruit picking trip.

Our young carers User-Engagement Forums continued to be a popular mechanism for involving children and young people in the co-design and co-production of our service and activities. A major piece of work during this period involved members of the Forum working on re-branding our marketing materials. Thanks to funding from Creative Black Country 'Creative Communities Fund' we were able to run a number of workshops and training sessions in design and photography. As a result, we now have a new Advocacy Project for Young Carers logo and range of leaflets that have all been designed and produced by our team of young carers.

We were delighted to learn towards the end of this period that SMBC/Sandwell Children's Trust intended to exercise their right to extend this contract for a further 12 months securing this contract until March 2020.

Further work with our young carers User-Engagement Forum led to a successful application to the People's Postcode Lottery for our Caring Cooks Project commencing in October 2018. Members of this group told us that they wanted to know about healthy eating options, growing organic food and preparing healthier recipes from staple foodbank ingredients. As a result, they worked in co-production with Sandwell Advocacy staff to develop and produce the project specification.

The aims of this project included:

1. Healthy eating and food preparation to create healthy food from ingredients commonly supplied by local foodbanks.
2. Food hygiene accreditation.
3. Understanding how local foodbanks work and how this project can engage with them.
4. Understanding how locally grown organic healthy food can be produced that is affordable and accessible.
5. Growing organic healthy food.
6. Producing a series of films, blogs and Vlogs that highlight the experiences, journey and outcomes of young people taking part.
7. Producing a digital toolkit showcasing the achievements of this project and how other groups and organisations can replicate our project activities on a wider scale.

This is an exciting and innovative piece of work that has already achieved some amazing outcomes which have significantly improved the skills and experiences of all those who are taking part.

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. Some funding was secured to continue this work primarily a volunteer-based Peer Advocacy model with a team of trained volunteer Peer Advocates providing much needed advocacy support for older people affected by cancer.

Our partnership arrangement with Citizens Advice Dudley to host Paul Lucas (Macmillan funded CAB Case Worker) for a weekly surgery at our office every Tuesday continued throughout this period and continues to meet growing demand.

Geoff Broadway continued to co-ordinate the activities of the Living Memory Project, working across the area to celebrate different aspects of everyday life that have been captured through people's own photographs. The project has been hugely



successful 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.

We learnt towards the end of 2018 that our application to Children in Need to support children and young people with poor mental health and behavioural issues; and to the Lloyds Bank Foundation to support older people around care and accommodation issues had both been successful. Both would fund projects for three years and work began towards the latter part of this period on setting up our Voices and Choices Project to support older people and our Sandwell Advocacy Voice and Empowerment (SAVE) Project to support children and young people.

We held another of our strategic 'Development Days' in May 2018 taking forward the work already completed in 2017. This was a full day of workshops held at Sandwell Valley Conference Centre for staff, trustees, volunteers and our users to look again at our vision for Sandwell Advocacy. An Action Plan was produced containing four key priority areas of development including:

1. Operational Activities
2. Volunteering and Trustees
3. Marketing
4. Business Planning

This Action Plan formed the basis of strategic discussions for our trustees at their management meetings throughout this period which has led to the following outcomes:

- Agreement of a new Mission Statement
- Introduction of new Sandwell Advocacy logo and branding
- Production of new Trustee Induction Pack
- Review of our fundraising strategy
- Commencing work on production of our Business Plan

Sandwell Advocacy would not be able to function in the way that we do without the fantastic dedication and support of our team of volunteers who bring with them a wealth of skills and experience. I would like to formally thank and acknowledge the fantastic work of all our volunteers for making a meaningful difference to people's lives.

We continued our partnership throughout this period 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). During May 2018 they were supported by a team of volunteers made up of their leadership team and trustees of the Cadbury Charitable Foundation to complete their second phase of redecorating our offices. There were other fundraising activities

which have generated a considerable amount of funds. We are extremely grateful for the continued support of Michael and Steve specifically and Mondelez generally in what is a cherished partnership.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution provided by a number of bodies and individuals throughout 2018/2019, without which our valuable work could not be delivered or sustained. Funding, grants and donations were most gratefully received from the following:

- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sandwell Children's Trust
- People's Postcode Lottery
- SCVO Community Partnership Grant Programme
- Alfred Haines Charitable Trust
- The Cadbury Foundation
- The Tipton and Coseley Building Society Charitable Foundation
- The Tipton Civic Society (Tree of Light Appeal)
- Creative Black Country
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- GM2LF Big Local Fund
- The Black Country Living Museum
- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- The Asda Foundation
- Asda 'Green Token' Scheme
- Steam Plant Engineering Ltd
- Darren Whitehouse

Whilst this has been a busy and demanding year, it has also been an extremely rewarding one. I am very proud and privileged to be associated with an organisation that has worked for many years to provide independent advocacy to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised people of Sandwell are supported to make choices, secure their rights, represent their wishes and are placed at the heart of the decision making process. I have always passionately believed that when people have a voice, when they feel that they are being listened to, and when they are able to make informed decisions that they are truly more socially included, treated more equally and are ultimately more empowered to have a greater say and control over what happens in their lives. These are the values that underpin the concept of advocacy and this is a vision that Sandwell Advocacy will continue to embrace.

Dave Bradshaw
Project Co-ordinator.



Above – 'Dave Bradshaw with Cadbury's Community Champions'

Advocacy Project for Young Carers



The project is now approaching the end of its eighth year and continues to provide many challenges and successes. There has been an increase in the number of young carers who support siblings who have a range of physical, learning and mental health difficulties. We have also seen an increase with parents presenting with poor mental health.

Independent Young Carers Advocates continue to support 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 considered by those making decisions about their lives.

Over the last twelve months, we have supported numerous young carers involved with safeguarding issues. To ensure that young carers feel in a safe environment to discuss areas

of concern we arrange visits in various settings including schools, their own homes, family members homes, community centres, cafés and at Sandwell Advocacy. They have been supported in Team Around the Family, Child in Need and Child Protection Core



Groups. Where appropriate we encourage young carers to take part in these meetings with the support of their advocate. Where necessary, and when consent has been given by the young carer, we have supported parents to ensure that they understand the process of what is taking place and what is required of them. The unique relationship we have with the families has enabled us to work closely with parents and their children. This holistic approach works well to build lasting changes and reduces the need for families to reach a crisis point. This has been particularly beneficial where families have been reluctant to engage with, or trust, other professionals and organisations where there has been a breakdown in the relationship.

There has been an increasing number of young carers accessing this service with poor mental health. This has shown in the numbers of those who experience low mood, anxiety, depression and self-harm. Advocates have subsequently undertaken training and are now fully qualified Mental Health First Aiders. This

has been invaluable when working with young people, and their parents. The skills developed have also been useful when working with parents who don't know where else to turn to for support but have built that relationship of trust with us.

As part of our innovative approach to establishing positive and trusting relationships we have continued to take small groups to Warrens Hall Riding Stables to access equine therapy. This involves grooming, stable care and horse riding. There is a lot of evidence to support equine therapy as an effective exercise in helping individuals to process and change negative thoughts and behaviours as well as improving their emotional well-being and self-esteem. This has also enabled a small group of parents to provide peer support and to enjoy one another's company.

In response to feedback from young carers we have supported we have organised sessions with a health and well-being practitioner to increase their self-help skills around mindfulness and meditation. The young carers have told us they appreciate this hands-on approach in contrast to the activities they have participated in elsewhere. They have also found this beneficial when talking about certain issues they would not normally feel comfortable in doing so.

The Independent Advocates work across many settings within Sandwell including primary, secondary schools and academies. We have built strong and positive partnerships in many of these settings. In one such example, we were invited to give a presentation to all staff at Holly Lodge School of Science to raise awareness of the issues faced by young carers, and how this might impact on their education, attendance, mental health and behaviour. The information we provided will help teachers and their colleagues to identify any hidden young carers who have additional support needs to those of their peers. Teachers will be able to use this awareness and take a holistic approach to support young carers and explore the possible reasons for some of their emotional and behavioural issues.





In February nearly 80 front-line practitioners drawn from across the public and voluntary sectors in Sandwell gathered to launch a new partnership initiative: 'Sandwell Early Help Partnership', aimed at improving access to support for local children, young people and families. The event was attended by Cllr Simon Hackett, Sandwell Council Cabinet Member for Children's Services, and Frances Craven, Chief Executive of the Sandwell Children's Trust. We were very privileged to be allowed to promote our service and showcase the first of our young carers films produced with young carers and parents that have accessed the service.

It had been identified in one of our Young Carers User Engagement Forums that the leaflets and information we were using seemed to be aimed at professionals and that they didn't particularly relate to them. With funding awarded from The People's Post Code Lottery, Community Partnership Grant from Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council the young carers worked together with Blue and White Creative to design and produce a set of six bespoke cards and flyers that they felt young people would be able to relate to. The grants also enable the young carers to co-produce their second film based on young carers experiences. This film focused on personal stories and feedback from young carers, families and professionals on the service we provide.



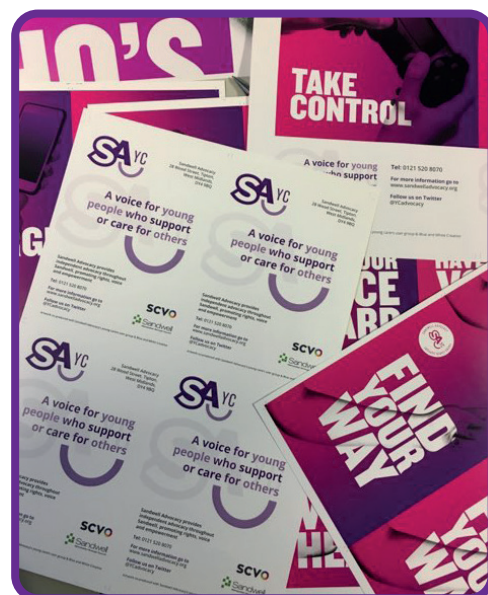
The new marketing materials were distributed across the borough in schools and other settings and were promoted at our 25th Anniversary celebration alongside the young carers film. All involved are very proud of the new range of marketing materials.

The young carers have also worked with iSandwell, a collaborative project between Sandwell Council, community organisations and residents looking to encourage the use of digital media/ platforms. This work demonstrated how

best to use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook as well as engaging in two days of workshops on blogging and vlogging. These new skills have benefited them informally and creatively. We look forward to them becoming the next up and coming vloggers.

Our User Engagement Forum's provide an ideal opportunity to consult with children and young people about strategic developments within Sandwell Advocacy and issues of importance to them. At one such Forum, we were discussing food-banks and why some families need to access them. Some of the young people involved confided that they had needed to use them on occasions but that they and their parents were unsure with what to do with some of the staple food-bank items. One young carer asked us "What do you do with pilchards?" We didn't know what to say other than "Feed them to the cat" and this got us talking about cooking generally. They told us that they would love to know how

to cook meals using tins and packets which are distributed by the food-banks. As a result of this, we co-produced a successful application to The People's Postcode Lottery and the Caring Cooks Project was born! There will be much more to come from our Caring Cooks Project as it continues.



During the period 2018/2019, we developed an exciting partnership with Salop Drive Market Gardens. The children and young people have enjoyed being outdoors at the allotments and love picking the fruit, vegetables and flowers to take home to their parents/carers. In October a group of young people completed an accredited Food Safety course at Salop Drive, the following day we went back for pumpkin carving as part of our annual Halloween celebrations and were able to make pumpkin soup as well as using all the other fresh vegetables available to us.

We had a big celebration for our 25th anniversary in December 2018 and as always, we were keen to involve the young people we support in any way possible. As such a number of young carers and young volunteers enthusiastically took on the role of 'Advocacy Champions' for the evening, proudly wearing their volunteer lanyards they helped staff with all aspects of the event, particularly meeting and greeting guests and talking to them about some of the things they have been involved with at Sandwell Advocacy. They thoroughly enjoyed the experience and said they can't wait to do it again.

Recently we have been doing more informal peer group advocacy and have seen a huge difference in the positive relationships we have established with the children and families. In consultation with the young carers we decided to have a family day out to Essington Farm where they were all able to pick their own fruit and vegetables. Parents and children told us how much they enjoyed having this time together with others who were in a similar situation to themselves. Talking to parents on the day and

afterwards, we realised how difficult it is for some families to get out and have fun together. We have since decided that Family Day's out will be at least an annual event and we will wait to hear from the young people where they want to go next.

It is so inspirational to experience the difference that advocacy support and related activities have made to so many young people's lives. We get so much satisfaction from seeing people grow and develop both in terms of their confidence and self-esteem, as well as in terms of practical skills and experience. We always adopt a person-centred approach to empowering young people to have a voice and be better able to articulate their thoughts and feelings. The wealth of positive feedback we receive from those we support and the fact that many of them are eager to continue their involvement with us to support others in similar situations is a testimony to how much they care.

Helen Charles – Senior Independent Advocate

Juanita Williams – Independent Advocate



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Quote from Parent of Young Carer:

“How come you have just come in, done the Early Help Assessment and suddenly everyone is now running around getting the things done. I've waited ages for (S) to finish the assessment and then I've been told it's been cancelled, then not completed. You have just started it all again, making sure everything is put in, and now things are moving so fast I can't keep up. I've never had it like this before”.

“

Quotes:

“Juanita and the team have been a constant source of support for our families. Being non-judgemental in their approach, whilst being willing to have some open and honest conversations, has gained the trust of parents; together we have been able to work together to support our children to the best of our ability. They are only ever a telephone call or email away and nothing is ever too much. I would wholeheartedly recommend the service to anyone.”

Head Teacher

“I used to think ‘Why me?’ all the time but now that I have talked to some of the other young carers I know it's not just me. I know I can tell school if ever I want to see you and they will get in touch. I know I can talk to you about my sister as well because sometimes when she is having panic attacks I worry. Most of all I know that mom trusts you and she knows we are safe and happy when we come to see you. I am really happy that I can take on the role as a volunteer and give the support to other people just as you have helped me”

Young Carer

“They give you a voice to help you speak up, be there for you, they won't judge, It's to keep you safe, to be there if you want to talk”

Young Carer





Young Carers Case Study

Lucy, Sam and Katie were referred into the service by the family support worker from the local COG Team. One of their parents suffered from an auto immune disease which affected their mobility. The parent suffered from a great amount of pain which affected their ability to take care of themselves, the children and to parent effectively.

The children's school attendance was quite low, they were often late for school after having to support their younger sibling to get washed and dressed and take her to nursery. The children also helped their parent when they struggled to get up in the morning and would help to get breakfast and clean the home.

The family had a history of Children's Social Care involvement with positive changes being made but not being sustained.

Support was provided to the children as a group in the first instance to enable them to build a trusting relationship with the advocates. This proved to be quite a challenge as it was felt by other professionals that the children had been primed by their parent on what they could and couldn't say.

The advocates had a good relationship with the children's school as there were other children they had supported and had achieved positive outcomes for the families. The school encouraged Lucy, Sam and Katie to speak with the advocates in a safe and comfortable environment. Support was provided during the Child in Need meetings and continued when it escalated to Child Protection. The young carers shared some of the issues that affected them such as going to bed late, feeling scared when people were coming to their home drinking and arguing. It transpired during our visits that the parent

was misusing recreational drugs and was under the influence of alcohol on a regular basis whilst the children were in their care.

We shared this information with their Social Worker (the young carers had been informed by the advocate

that such information would need to be shared to ensure their safety and well-being). The advocate ensured that the feelings of the children were shared during meetings to enable their needs, wants, and wishes to be heard by those making the decisions about them. This included difficult conversations such as informing the parent of the children's wishes to remain as a family and for their desire for the parent to accept support for their addictions.

The young carers were able to access equine therapy, cooking sessions, healthy eating activities and took part in our user engagement forums. Foodbank parcels and Christmas hampers were delivered as part of a wider support package given to families.

Lucy, Sam and Katie built a very positive relationship with their advocates with visits being made to see them at school and at home. A relationship was also built with the parent, who at that time was service resistant, and would only work with other professionals when they had no choice but to engage. The children trusted the advocates, they felt safe with them and trusted them even when safeguarding alerts were being made. The young carers have been able to share their thoughts, needs, fears, wants and wishes with the understanding that this might be shared with others to help support them and their family in order to keep them all safe.

Referrals were also made for the children to access support services and information was provided on free social and recreational activities they could attend in their locality.

Advocates: "We have seen Lucy, Sam and Katie grow into caring and thoughtful young people. They work hard at school despite the challenges they have faced. Lucy is looking forward to a career in the forces and has been provided with information on recruitment and criteria needed. It has been a pleasure to work with them"

Lucy: "Thank you all for everything you have done for all of us, we can talk to you, you get things done for us, you have got us food when we didn't have any, especially over Christmas with the hamper and all the treats. We have enjoyed becoming part of a group and taking part in the forums. You listened to us and what we wanted. I am looking forward to having a career, it will be hard getting there but I know I can do it"

Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals



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"Well I think that one of the things is that the other services focus on the whole family rather than just that one child. Some of the services we have in school is very difficult for children to make a distinction from who is a member of the school and somebody who can help them. I think when it comes it children's services when they get involved, unfortunately the family see it as something legal something different because there is a stigma about children's services being involved. Whereas with the advocacy service at least it's impartial and it gives them somebody to speak to who listens to just them about them".

Assistant Head Teacher Quote



LIVING MEMORY

Photography and Life Stories
from across the Black Country

Below – ‘Pupils from St Micheal’s School in Rowley Regis work a series of stories around community photography collections’



The Living Memory Project has had a very successful second year. We have been busy across Sandwell and the wider Black Country recording life stories, scanning family photographs, hosting workshops, giving talks and staging numerous pop-up exhibitions.

Some of our many highlights include:

- an exhibition at Haden Hill House Museum in Cradley
- A day of talks and creative writing workshops around personal photographs and memories
- A series of creative design and printing workshops with St Micheal’s School in Rowley Regis
- A guided walk over the Rowley Hills based on the unique photographic collection of Jim Rippin
- A talk by Ruth Collins and an accompanying exhibition about the Will King Collection that celebrates working life on the canal network

The rest of 2019 and 2020 is shaping up to be an even busier year as we receive additional funds from Arts Council England to commission 11 artists to get involved with the project, and we also start to work on the final Living Memory book and exhibition that will bring the project to a close in May 2020.

You can find out more about the project by visiting the website online at www.livingmemory.live



Above – ‘A groups of participants finish the guided walk over the Rowley Hills based on the photography archive of Jim Rippin.’

Some Highlights Throughout The Year



Above – ‘Anand Chhabra talking about his photography collection at Haden Hill House in June 2018’



Above – ‘Pupils from St Michael's School in Rowley Regis show their work at Haden Hill House Museum’

Caring Cooks Project



In October 2018 we were successful in a bid to The People's Postcode Lottery for our Caring Cooks project. This application came about as a result of comments made at one of the Young Carers Forums. We were talking about the future of Sandwell as part of 'Sandwell's 2030 Vision' and a number of the young carers expressed their concerns about the lack of homeless shelters and the increasing number of Food Banks and the need for both. One family had needed to use their local foodbank and the young carer asked us "What do you do with pilchards?" A simple question which resonated with us. "What do you do with pilchards?" We then started to talk about other tinned food given out by the Food Banks and asked if they knew how to cook with these ingredients. It soon became apparent that the young carers didn't have a vast knowledge of making meals from scratch and so the Caring Cooks application was conceived.

This year long project sets out to teach the young carers how to make healthy meals from scratch using food bank ingredients ensuring they maintain the correct levels of hygiene in the home as well as staying safe around the kitchen. During Autumn and Spring, we visited Salop Drive Market Gardens where participants made pumpkin lanterns for Halloween, cooked butternut squash soup and planted crops ready for the summer ahead. During one such visit they also had a session of Basic Food Hygiene from First

Response Trainers.

All the work on this project has been filmed, recorded and photographed and will be available online by the end of October 2019. Reel Access delivered a number of sessions where the young people learnt about film and photography and they are now confident with using cameras and audio equipment as well as editing photographs and short clips. These films together with a digital toolkit will be available on our very own YouTube channel. A key part of the project was to equip those taking part with the skills to use media as a way of introducing them to the Arts and another smaller project funded by Creative Black Country worked in parallel to this work. This provided us with the support of an Arts Advisor from Blue & White Creative to take the young carers to places they wouldn't normally have visited. This included a live performance by Circus Berzercus at our 25th Anniversary event, a family day trip to Compton Verney and a session of fabric manipulation courtesy of Infamous Arts. We also had a day out at the BBC Good Food Show where we met Ainsley Harriet



and watched Nadiya Hussein cooking in the main theatre. The young carers were fascinated by all the gadgets available and they really enjoyed sampling all the different types of food on offer.

This is an exciting project and we have already seen so many benefits including the young carers tasting different foods, being creative in the kitchen at home, adapting new recipes and showing ingenuity when they don't have all the ingredients they need. Keep looking at our website for all the latest news from this exciting project.

P.S. We are considering producing a section of outtakes as we had so much fun and feel it would be rude not to share with you!



Voices and Choices Project

Sandwell Advocacy is excited to announce that we have secured funding for three years from Lloyds Bank Foundation for a new project, Voices and Choices.

The project has been operating since February 2019 and will provide advocacy for people over 55 years living in Sandwell. The support provided is for those with a long-term health condition to stay in their own home, where safe to do so, or to look at options around care and accommodation.

We understand that people are often faced with making decisions around care they have no understanding about and very little information, such as, being discharged from hospital to find themselves in a care home that was not their choice. Needing help in the home for them to carry out daily activities such as washing and dressing but not knowing how to access or who to call or being able to do so.

Voices and Choices Project aims to ensure people are at the heart of decision-making process by giving people the right information at the right time ensuring they know their rights and can make informed choices. We feel by doing so, not only will people remain and maintain their independence within their own home, if home is no longer a safe place, then people will understand their choices and options around care provision and are more confident to make those all-important future decisions.





Macmillan Benefits Advice Service

**citizens
advice**

**Dudley
Borough**

The Macmillan Benefits Service launched their Black Country Service (Dudley, Sandwell & Walsall) in June 2017 and Sandwell Advocacy is occupied every Tuesday by Macmillan Caseworker Paul Lucas.

It's a service for people affected by cancer in Sandwell, Walsall and Dudley, who are struggling to cope with the financial impact of the disease. After receiving a cancer diagnosis people are on average £570 p/m worse off so this service is designed to help people get access to benefits that they need at this difficult time, so that they can focus on their treatment.

We can complete benefit checks for patients face to face or over the phone to find out if and what they are eligible to claim, advise on how to claim and to support them in this process if they want us to do that. We can also advise them on how to challenge decisions, and again we can assist them in this process if they wish

Sandwell Advocacy is well known in its support for cancer patients, and even though the Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) Project ended in April 2017. The dedicated team and volunteers have been liaising with Paul to continue their support for vulnerable people affected by cancer.

The commitment and dedication of those involved with Sandwell Advocacy have been invaluable and only with their continued support, guidance and contacts have seen the project grow in success year on year. To the end of August 2019 across the whole service our caseworkers have seen.

1502 Clients and Secured £3,935,229 in gains

Sandwell Advocacy's support for the project is growing in importance as the introduction of Universal Credit and changes to Pension Credits are taking their toll on the people who require assistance the most.

To refer to service please contact 01384 817721 or email advice@dudleycabx.org

**ADVICE ABOUT
BENEFITS?
FINANCES
OR WORK**
WE ARE
MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) Project



This year saw a decrease in the number of referrals made to the SCOPA project due to the fact that Sandwell professionals are aware that this is no longer funded by The Big Lottery. Our dedicated volunteers have continued to support their advocacy partners through to a conclusive end. As we celebrated our 25th anniversary we were very fortunate that they were all on hand to help with the planning and hands-on delivery of the celebration event in December.

Paddy Elmore who used to work for Sandwell Advocacy continues to volunteer on the SCOPA project and has a handful of partners who he still visits and supports. The SCOPA project is a perfect example of how valuable peer advocacy is to older people living with cancer.

We continue to host Paul Lucas, a Macmillan Cancer Support Benefits Advice Caseworker in our offices every Tuesday and most referrals are sign posted to him. He really feels like one of the team and he is often our first port of call, liaising with advocates and partners for visits.

Once again we were supported financially by kind donations from Cadbury's Mondelez, mainly Steve Davies and Michael Huggins who continue to raise money through numerous events and challenges together with a successful application to Cadbury's Community Fund.





Adult Advocacy Support Service

Sandwell Advocacy is now in its 6th year of providing independent advocacy to people who reside in a variety of settings around the borough of Sandwell. This service has been commissioned since 2013 by Sandwell MBC as part of their monitoring standards of care.

We have continued to provide an independent advocacy service for people from different ages and backgrounds. Many have care needs and reside in a Nursing or Care home, in an Extra Care or Retirement Home, or for those who attend Day Care Settings. This year we have had a slight change to some of the services we have visited, these have included women's refuges and sheltered accommodation for younger people.

Sandwell Advocacy provides an inclusive service that invites residents, service users and/or relatives to complete monitoring questionnaires. The questionnaires focus on the choices people have with regards to their care and support and looks at a holistic approach to health and wellbeing.

Our dedicated team of volunteers support the advocates on visits providing assistance to those who need it enabling people to have a voice and share their opinions on the care that they receive. Observations of practice during the visits are recorded and 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 provided. Service users choose who they want their information to be shared with and can remain anonymous. As part of the process service users are also asked for their views on the delivery of the advocacy service that includes providing a listening ear, giving enough time and support to complete the questionnaire, and if there is anything that we can do differently to support the process

We continue to provide Care Act Advocacy supporting service users under the Care Act 2014 who are subject to safeguarding alerts and processes. This takes place when a safeguarding alert has been raised during one of our visits to a setting and the individual identified has difficulty understanding or being fully involved in the process and do not have an appropriate person to support them.

During our standard planned visits service users and family members can raise day to day concerns as well as safeguarding issues. Issues and concerns are dealt with sensitively and with consent from the service user. 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:

- Work within a safeguarding agenda to ensure individuals are safe and free from harm and abuse
- Provide Care Act Advocacy where safeguarding has been raised and there is no other appropriate person to support the individual.
- Provide information and signposting to service users/ family to other sources of support where relevant and appropriate.
- Make referrals for service users to other services where relevant and appropriate.
- 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 this is resolved to their satisfaction.

Helen Charles and Juanita Williams
Advocacy Support Officers.

Sandwell Advocacy Financial Summary 2018/2019

Our income for the year totalled:	£160,368
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Expenditure for the year was:	£165,632
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Fund Balances at 31/3/19 were:	£84,400
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Full details are available in our published accounts



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🌐 : www.scopasupport.org.uk

🐦 : @YCadvocacy

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