

Advocacy Newsletter

Issue No 2 January 2021

Happy New Year to you all

HOPE project news

Staffing update

The HOPE project has seen a couple of organisational changes recently. Deiniol Jones who started with the project as the Volunteer Co-ordinator for Cardiff & Vale has changed roles to that of Advocacy Development Officer for Cardiff & Vale and Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Sara Timothy who joined as Advocacy Development Officer for Gwent has taken over the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator for Swansea, Neath Port Talbot. Active recruitment has taken place to complete the HOPE project team and we're now delighted to report that with effect from 11 January 2021 the final two roles have been filled and we welcome Briony and Janet. Our HOPE team is now complete and consists of fifteen members.

A word from our team

Rachael Wellings and Sian Hughes are our Project Officers for Conwy and Denbighshire and Gwynedd and Anglesey respectively. This is their contribution for our newsletter edition, detailing their journey so far through Wales as members of team HOPE.

They've been working on a volunteer handbook as well as a volunteer training package and look forward to seeing them in action.

It has information ranging from HOPE staff contact details, to valuable services across the country, and not forgetting the all important policies! So they feel very proud to finally have it in the bag!

Over the last couple of months, Rachael and Sian have been getting to know different areas of the organisation, local partners and services in their areas. This has helped them build strong working relationships with valuable contacts, meaning we've been able to recruit volunteers and help spread the word on what the HOPE project is and what we hope we'll achieve. They've become members of forums, networks, and discussion groups so have really seen the value in these relationships, both for themselves as project officers and also for the clients that will use the service. The conversations they've been having are leaving their mark and allowing people to recognise the project now. They are so glad to be given the opportunity to network and collaborate with other services to ensure no-one is left feeling lonely, afraid of where to go, or unsupported.

Rachael and Sian are grateful for the warm welcome into the organisation and are looking forward to working with you all alongside the HOPE project.

Dementia Advocacy Project

Our independent dementia advocacy project enables people living with dementia to access the services and support you need and to have a voice in decisions that are being made.

Continued...

Dementia Advocacy Project (cont.)

It's also to support you through situations where you may be abused and need to find safeguarding solutions.

The advocacy we offer will be independent of any other service people living with dementia use. This means the person with dementia will be at the heart of the decision making process, and we can support and represent them without any conflict of interest.

About our dementia advocacy project

For most people, making their own decisions and choices is a matter of considerable importance. Being part of decision-making processes is not only where self-identity is expressed but is also an important aspect of personal freedom. This principle is at the heart of advocacy services for people living with dementia.

For more information about our dementia advocacy project, please visit our [website](#).

Wales advocacy survey

People across Wales, including those living in care homes, have seen their human rights breached and some of their access to advocacy, health and social care suspended during the pandemic, finds a survey of 72 professional advocates based in Wales.

The report has been jointly produced by advocacy services across Wales and was published to mark the start of Advocacy Awareness Week, following a survey that was undertaken in June during the first UK lockdown.

The advocates, who are in a unique position to identify weaknesses in systems and blanket abuses of rights, were not only concerned by some of the restrictions brought about by the pandemic but also with some of the prejudices within society towards vulnerable people.

Natasha Fox, Advocacy West Wales Eiriolaeth Gorllewin Cymru, said:

“The findings in this sector-wide report make for shocking reading and show the stark reality of worsening inequalities for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities across Wales. Advocates and their organisations have worked together to provide evidence about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the people we support.”

Specific findings

The survey found that people's needs are not being met or even assessed despite legal obligations on local authorities being unchanged. Eighty-five percent of advocates felt the human rights of the people they supported were not being fully upheld.

There was a consistent failure to implement the Mental Capacity Act which meant that people who are unable to make decisions were not being listened to and their interests were ignored.

A third of the surveyed advocates had experienced *Do Not Attempt Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation orders* (DNACPRs) being placed on the people they support without any regard to the person's feelings, wishes, values or beliefs, and without formal capacity assessments or consultation with family.

More than forty percent of advocates said care providers had stopped all visitors and almost a third reported that people were being confined to their rooms denying access to outdoor space or gardens without any clear justification.

Our Head of Safeguarding, Louise Hughes, who helped produce the report, said: “People are at greater risk of abuse or harm because of the impact of the restrictions, the removal of essential services and the absence of independent safeguards in the settings where people live.

A core tenet of advocacy is to redress inequality so that people's rights are upheld and that they are respected as individuals who are listened to and understood irrespective of who they are or any health condition or diagnosis they may have.

Advocacy has a vital role in improving people's health and wellbeing that must not be overlooked."

As the second wave of the pandemic sweeps across the UK, the report calls for an urgent priority to reinforce the rights and improve the support of people who rely on social care. There needs to be a new political and public consensus so that we are all supported to live full lives in our communities.

Link to the full report below:

[Wales advocacy survey](#)

HOPE project useful links

Click below to view:

[HOPE project](#)

[Referral form](#)

[HOPE project bilingual overview](#)

[HOPE project FAQ's](#)

Older People's Advocacy Alliance

The Older People's Advocacy Alliance (OPAAL) and the National Coalition of Advocacy Schemes are undertaking a modest piece of research to identify some of the most disempowering aspects of the Coronavirus restrictions since March 2020 for older people. Questions that the research will be exploring will include:

How many people (informal advocates) found that the blanket recommendation that everyone over 70 should lock themselves away prevented them from playing any positive role in caring for others in their community?

How were they able to work around this – non direct contact etc?

What where/are the experiences of families and friends who were/are prevented from visiting their loved ones indefinitely?

How negative an impact has their absence had on the mental and physical wellbeing of their loved ones?

Was there any effort to provide care homes with the support and equipment that would make visiting safe?

What efforts were made by care homes to involve families and friends as much as possible during the lockdown via telephone, video etc?

In which ways has the role of care staff both in residential care and at home care changed during the crisis?

What was the impact on people of knowing that their loved ones were enduring lonely deaths in hospital and care homes?

The researcher is looking to hear from a range of people across a geographical spread. These would include some care home managers; relatives; pastoral workers; befrienders; hair and beauty workers, informal advocates and people living in care or supported living situations.

If you would like to be involved in the research, please contact us at

advocacynatcoalition@gmail.com

Advocacy Network Update

A range of regional advocacy provider networks have been developed across Wales to complement the work of the National Network for Adults Advocacy in Wales. The networks are an opportunity for services who currently provide advocacy, and those who would like to in the future, to get a better understanding of the current situation in the region, potential future commissioning opportunities and to have space to network and share information and ideas.

Below are the details of the next round of advocacy network meetings which will take place via Zoom or Teams:

National Network 21/1/21 10am - 12pm
Cwm Taf Morgannwg 25/1/21 2pm – 3.30pm
Gwent 11/2/21 2pm - 3.30pm
Cardiff & Vale 15.2.21 9am – 10.30am
3 Counties 9/3/21 10am – 12pm
Powys 17/3/21 10am - 11.30am
Neath PT & Swansea - 18/3/21 10am–12pm
North Wales TBC

For more information on any of the advocacy networks, please contact Marc Forster on 07932 989656 or marc.forster@agecymru.org.uk

Age Cymru Advice

Age Cymru's advice line can provide free, impartial advice on a range of subjects.

Perhaps they may want advice about how much they should be paying for a loved ones care? Or perhaps they may want to know if they are eligible for Pension Credit and want help with claiming it?

Age Cymru Advice can help with all these issues, and more – call us today

0300 303 44 98

Contact us...

- To subscribe to the e-bulletin or newsletter
- If you have any comments or questions about the articles
- If there's anything you would like to see in the next e-bulletin or newsletter

Email: sue.vaarkamp@agecymru.org.uk

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