

# Speaking up for Advocacy

## Local Advocacy projects launched



Blanchardstown launch: l-r Aine Lawlor, Tony McQuinn (CIB), Laurence Whelan, Minister Mary Hanafin, Professor Orla Hardiman, Mary Leahy

The first six months of 2009 have seen the launch of three advocacy services at well-attended events in three far flung locations, Blanchardstown in Dublin, Drumshambo, Co. Leitrim and Charleville, Co. Cork.

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin attended the Dublin 15 launch along with Mr Tony McQuinn CEO of CIB and a large number of dignitaries and people with disabilities. A highlight of the Leitrim event was a wonderful rendition of "Feet of a Dancer" by Charlie McGettigan who launched the advocacy service. Ballyhoura planned their launch in tandem with an Equality Authority exhibition: "Giving Stereotyping the Boot" where Deirdre Toomey was the speaker.

All three launches highlight the work undertaken to date and the value of this work to people with disabilities in the three areas.

## Why Advocacy? Musings of an Advocate

I have been involved in advocacy in Ireland for over six years and continue to be amazed by the impact advocacy has on people's lives. Sometimes it is not the outcome, but the involvement in the advocacy process that makes the greatest difference to people's lives. I have witnessed people growing in self confidence and self worth as they come to realise that what they want from life is theirs by right and not by privilege.

Those who have started on their advocacy journey will no longer just accept what is given, but will seek what is theirs by right, as equal citizens and valued human beings... Advocacy has power. It has the power to change people's lives in little and big ways.. Why Advocacy? This is the why. Or perhaps the real question is- Why not?

Read Cabrini De Barra's full article in *Frontline* magazine No 75, 2009.

## Creative Canadian Ideas for community inclusion

At a seminar in the National Disability Authority offices on August 19th, two Canadian visitors from the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL), Bruce Uditsky and E. Anne Hughson spoke about community living for people with disabilities. AACL seeks to empower people with disabilities and their families while also pressing their Provincial Government to improve and restructure the way services are delivered.

Self managed supports have brought considerable improvements to the lives of people with disabilities and according to Bruce, do not cost the State any more than funding disability agencies. Direct funding to the person and the family also allows them to build up local community supports.

However Bruce did accept that middle class families are in a better position to use such funding creatively. To sustain the process over time and allow it to be a force in the transformation of services, infrastructural supports, advocacy and links to community and community

services are needed. The greatest change to date has been in services for young people with disabilities, with inclusive education widely accepted and a campaign for inclusive third-level education now underway. Outcomes for people with disabilities improve markedly if they are able to graduate.

In the adult area, direct funding has brought less change. Most people still chose traditional-type services and individuals find it difficult to get contractual arrangements with agencies. Service brokerage – small independent agencies which negotiate on behalf of individuals with disabilities – has not been prominent.

The AACL is a small organization with a lot of ideas as can be seen from its website [www.aacl.org](http://www.aacl.org). They concentrate on the ordinary a life for the person with a disability as similar, as possible to that of their peers, creative responses to community inclusion and simple processes and supports.

## Listen Up! Speak up! by John Tufail and Kate Lyon Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

**“Advocacy is always about speaking up in the right way.” But what is the right way?**

Two New Zealanders - have published four plain text guides to Advocacy aimed at people with learning difficulties. They are bright 50-page texts with pictures and a meaty amount of content.

*Listen up Speak up!* is the third in the series. One of the things it emphasises is that before you can speak to be heard, you have to learn to listen. There is a difference between talking at and talking with and persuasion is a very useful tool. The authors use the story of Roy, whose life had been completely boxed in by his family and his (apparently) low IQ, but who managed to break free with help from an advocate and a teacher. The authors also stress the client's active role: "You have to be sure in your

own mind what it is you want. You need to be clear that the words you use will help you get what you want."

*Listen up! Speak up!* provides guidance for the person with learning difficulties who wishes to be an advocate for someone else. It hones in on meetings – pointing out the need for time-limits and agendas and the possible pitfalls – how familiar they sound!

"If you start thinking of other things when the partner is speaking, it will show and you will lose the partner's respect."

Other elements covered are the difference between wants and needs and how to negotiate. In their last chapter the authors ask how people become better advocates. Their answer is: through practice – with mentors and friends and through role-play.

## Bringing Advocacy to Nursing homes through NAPA

The HSE, in partnership with Age Action Ireland set up the National Advocacy Programme in 2008 to provide an independent, volunteer advocacy service for older people in residential care in order to help them to effectively express their wishes, access their entitlements and assert their rights.

NAPA is recruiting volunteers and the first cohort, from North Dublin and Meath, has undergone a training course

in the National College of Ireland. All Volunteer Advocates will participate in induction training, ongoing training, support and supervision and will have Garda vetting carried out.

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## Maximising Choice and Promoting Social Inclusion

In 2009 the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), published National Quality Standards for Residential Services for People with Disabilities. Prior to this there were no Irish standards or independent inspections of disability services, despite the sector receiving about €1 billion in State funding each year.

In May of 2009 the Minister of State for Disability John Moloney, launched the new Standards. He welcomed the HSE's commitment to start implementing the standards on a non-statutory basis, but said that due to pressures on public finance, the Government did not have the funds for full implementation (including regulation and inspection) for the estimated 28,000 disabled people in residential care. The initial focus will be on "achieving better outcomes within the existing physical infrastructure, current staffing and revenue."

The standards address quality of life, staffing, protection, development and health, individual rights, the physical environment, governance and management.

The Citizens Information Board welcomed the Standards as an important milestone. "Maximising choice and promoting social inclusion within residential services should be the primary focus. The introduction of standards provides a timely opportunity for service providers to consider how access to independent advocacy for people in residential services can be strengthened and enhanced".

Taken from CIB Submission October 2008 on National Quality Standards for Residential Services for People with Disabilities.

## Nuggets from the Journals

Every now and then academic journals come up with gold. The last issue of *Social Policy and Society* is a case in point. As well as a reprint of Peter Townsend's rousing article, "A society for People", it has a number of interesting takes on Mental Health & Human Rights with guest editor Lydia Lewis of Warwick University, who contributes an article on the politics of recognition based on work with three groups of UK mental health service users. Struggles for social recognition are made real in service users' comments on their involvement in official groups.

"You're classed as some sort of under-dog, that's for sure... If you haven't got a paid job, haven't got a title, then you're the under-dog. No matter how much you say you've got empowerment, you don't have it." (*Maureen*)

"There's always when you say something controversial, 'oh well she's not feeling very well at the moment' muttered under people's breath" (*Carol*)

Lydia Lewis sees these comments as evidence of the insidious workings of power within the field of user involvement in mental health services which may undermine this involvement. As such it is challenging food for thought for Project Steering Groups.

Lydia Lewis can be contacted at:  
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## Ombudsman's Report for 2008 is now on the website

The Ombudsman's report contains a number of cases of interest to advocates – one in particular about the awarding of domiciliary care allowance. The Ombudsman

expressed concern at the low level of complaints under the Disability Act and the lack of knowledge of and action on the responsibilities placed on public bodies under this act.



Ballyhoura Advocacy Launch: Standing l-r Rosemary Bradley, Frances Egan, Toni Gleeson, Mary Carroll. Sitting l-r Carmel Fox, Lisa O' Sullivan, Irene Whitely, Michelle Melia.



The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services. It provides the Citizens Information website and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Centres and the Citizens Information Phone Service. It also funds and supports the Money Advice and Budgeting Service.

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## Getting to Yes *by Roger Fisher & William Ury, Random House, 2006*

Fisher and Ury set out their concept of "Principled Negotiation" - this form of "win-win" negotiation involves an agreement process that integrates the goals of all parties through creative and collaborative problem solving.

- **Separate the People from the Problem:** Step back and adopt a more realistic perspective while becoming clearer about both sides' positions.
- **Focus on Interests, Not Positions:** Identify shared and compatible interests as "common ground".
- **Invent Options for Mutual Gain:** Generate many possible solutions before deciding which of these best fulfil your joint interests.
- **Insist on Using Objective Criteria:** The more you bring standards of fairness, efficiency and scientific merit to bear on your particular problem, the more likely you are to produce a final package that is wise and fair.
- **Develop a "best alternative to a negotiated agreement":** The more easily and happily you can walk away from a negotiation, the greater your capacity to affect its outcome.
- **Don't be a victim:** Never bend to pressure, only to principle.

## Case Management for Advocacy Work



In 2008 Citizens Information Board (CIB) began the development of an electronic case management system with Engine Solutions. User Acceptance Testing (UAT to initiates!) is underway and training of advocates and line managers in the Community

and Voluntary Advocacy Programme for People with Disabilities will begin in November with training for Citizens Information Service staff following early in 2010. The availability of a standard system to record case details will be of benefit to clients, advocates, line managers and the CIB. It is hoped that the system can be used for all advocacy work in 2010.



Leitrim Launch: Charlie McGettigan, Musician  
Geraldine McDonagh, National Learning Network.

## Training News! Advocacy Practice Course 2009 2010 for Information Providers

Topics include:

- Employment Law
- Health/Disability
- Social Welfare: Focus on Appeals
- Immigration
- Equality/housing
- Negotiation Skills
- Case Management, and
- Report Writing.

Taking place in alternate venues in Kilkenny and Limerick.  
Please contact CIB Training Department on 01 6059000