



Speaking up for Advocacy

Community and Voluntary Disability Advocacy Programme 2007

In 2004-2005 the Citizens Information Board began its support programme for advocacy in the C&V sector, resulting in more than thirty projects throughout the country which now employ an advocate. In 2007 the approach has been slightly different as the main purpose was to focus on areas where no project existed, to encourage cross-disability projects and to target large residential centres with the most vulnerable potential clients.

Eleven projects fill the first two criteria, some having a CIS as the lead agency, while another four will be based in residential services. In the latter cases the advocate will be employed by another agency. CIB is also providing a certain amount of funding to self advocacy projects in order to encourage this training for people with disabilities in speaking up for themselves.



Launch of Co. Offaly Disability Advocacy Service, November 2007

Cllr Eamon Dooley,
Cathaoirleach Offaly
Co. Council who launched
Co. Offaly Disability
Advocacy Service with
Citizens Information
Representatives and Offaly
Advocacy Services Steering
Committee Members

2007 Community & Voluntary Sector Advocacy Projects

Ballyhoura Development, Co. Limerick

Ballyhoura Development advocacy service for people with disabilities in the East Limerick/ North East Cork region.

Project partners: Limerick & County VEC's, HSE, Citizens Information Service, Limerick, Cork Co. Council, Dept. Social & Family Affairs and FÁS.

Blanchardstown Centre for Independent Living, Dublin 15

Blanchardstown Centre for Independent Living (BCIL) aims to provide a personal advocacy service for people with disabilities in the South Fingal area.

Project partner: Blanchardstown CIS Dublin 15.

Clondalkin CIS, Dublin 22

The Clondalkin Advocacy project will develop a community advocacy service in Clondalkin/Lucan area for people with disabilities, especially those who are marginalised.

Project partners: Rowlagh Mental Health Clinic, St Ronans Day Centre, Irish Wheelchair Association, Headway, Clondalkin Mental Health and Scoil Mochua (Spina Bifida).

Cork Social and Health Education Project (SHEP)

SHEP will provide independent advocacy in Cork for people with disabilities (including age-related disabilities).

Project partners: Disability Federation of Ireland, Centre for Independent Living, Cork Mental Health Association and REHAB Care.

Irish Wheelchair Association, Tipperary

Tipperary Town IWA and North Tipperary Support Services will provide an advocacy service to work directly with people with disabilities in Tipperary.

Irish Wheelchair Association, Wexford

The IWA project will provide a one to one advocacy service for people with disabilities in the Wexford area.
Project partners: National Council for the Blind, Centre for Independent Living and Carnew Enterprise Centre.

Kildare Coalition of Supported Employment (KCSE)

KCSE helps people with disabilities in Kildare in the employment area and will provide a one to one professional advocacy service for people with disabilities in Co. Kildare.

Partner: Kildare Community Partnership.

Leitrim Citizens Information Service

The Leitrim Advocacy project will target people with disabilities especially those who are isolated, and young people making the school/work transition.

Partners: Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities, IWA, REHAB Care, National Learning Network (NLN), HSE, Co. Leitrim Partnership & People with Disabilities Ireland (PWDI).

Midway (Meath Intellectual Disability Work Advocacy You Ltd)

MIDWAY will provide an independent advocacy service to adults with disabilities throughout Meath.

Partners: Enable Ireland & EVE Holdings.

Tallaght CIS

Tallaght CIS will set up a service to respond collaboratively to the advocacy needs of people with disabilities in the community.

Partners: St John of Gods Menni Services & Firhouse Day Activity Centre.

West Limerick Centre for Independent Living

West Limerick CIL enables people with disabilities to live independently and will provide advocacy in Limerick City and county, for people with disabilities living in the community seeking social services.

CIB hopes to fund independent advocates in four residential services and is also supporting a small number of Self Advocacy projects.

Support to Advocacy in the CIS

Two new Advocacy Resource Officer projects were set up in 2007 in West-Cork/Kerry CIS and Donegal/Sligo CIS.

Making Rights Work for People with Disabilities

September 2007, Day's Hotel, Galway

Anne Leahy, Area Executive with CIB writes:

Nowadays virtually every conversation about services involves customer rights; but this was not always the case for people with disabilities. Historically, they may have been viewed as special – but not as people with rights.

With this in mind Joe Murphy Brothers of Charity and myself planned the seminar, *Making Rights Work for People with Disabilities* – in order to create an opportunity for debate between service providers and disabled people on a human rights based approach to services. The participants included people with disabilities and mainstream and specialist service providers in Galway. The interest, participation and feedback at the seminar bear witness to a desire for a new contract which respects the rights and responsibilities of both service providers and disabled service users. Independent advocacy services have a real opportunity to support this.

From the Floor – a Participant's Experience

At Day's Hotel in Galway we registered and got our packs. There were people from agencies throughout Galway and Roscommon and we all started talking and exchanging ideas. The first speaker, Helen Lahert from the Citizens Information Board emphasised the importance of Rights for everyone. Two people who use services – one with a physical disability and one with an intellectual disability – spoke on the meaning

of rights for them. To hear their personal experience was an eye-opener making me realise how much I take things for granted.

Olive Moore from Amnesty International presented *Human Rights – making them work for people with disabilities*, giving an overview on the basis and rationale for different rights. She detailed the fundamental rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and the values of Dignity, Autonomy, Equality and Solidarity. She explained the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) which means using agreed international standards to inform policy, practice and structures. HRBA core principles can increase levels of accountability among those in power.

Christina Burke, a barrister, presented *Rights and Remedies for people with disabilities under Irish and European legislation*. She spoke about Irish Law and Models of Disability and discussed the Disability Act, consent issues, rights and the responsibilities that come with them. Both sessions led to a lot of discussion which continued into the workshops.

In the afternoon three different speakers set out the role of Advocacy services in supporting people to obtain their rights. To close the day a user of services thanked everyone for their participation and reiterated the necessity of working together: 'This is the only way we can bring about the change of attitude which supports a rights culture'.



IT Graduation Higher Certificate in Arts in Advocacy Studies

Starting from left:
Dr Perry Share, Sligo IT & graduates;
Siobhán O'Connell;
Declan Weir;
Sheila Kilkerr; Anne Caira;
Madge O'Callaghan;
Aisling Flynn; also
Róisín McGlone
(Advocacy Course Co-ordinator)

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on the broad range of social and civil services to the public. It provides the Citizens Information website and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service.

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Launch of Limerick Brothers of Charity Citizen Advocacy DVD: 'Do you know me?'

The Limerick Citizen Advocacy Project DVD 'Do you know me?' was launched on 25th September last. Mary Davis (CEO – Special Olympics Ireland and Chairperson – Taskforce on Active Citizenship) chaired the event with keynote addresses from Leonie Lunny (CEO – Citizens Information Board) and academics from the Health Systems Research Centre at University of Limerick.

Members of the project participated in the making of this video to highlight the work of the Limerick Citizen Advocacy Project.



Mary Davis, CEO Special Olympics Ireland
& James Quilligan, Brothers of Charity Limerick

"One of the objectives of the Limerick Citizen Advocacy Project is to highlight the value each citizen brings to our community", explained Martina Neylon, Advocacy Project Co-ordinator.

The Limerick Citizen Advocacy project aims to improve the quality of life of individuals with intellectual disability by helping them to live an ordinary life in an ordinary community. This is done by matching individuals receiving services from the Brothers of Charity Services Limerick with citizens who volunteer to advocate for them.

"Significant partnerships can be built to assist us all in moving from a medical model towards a social model for everybody. Moving people from residential care into communities changes the fabric of society," said Prof. Stiofan de Burca, The Brothers of Charity Services.

For further details or copies of the DVD, contact the Project Co-ordinator, **Martina Neylon**

Tel: 061 412288 (ext. 219)

Email: advocacy@limerick.brothersofcharity.ie

Would you like to be a Citizen Advocate?

A citizen advocate gives freely of their time to develop a one-to-one relationship with a person with a disability who has something to say, who knows what they want, but who may need support to be heard.

Citizen advocates can:

- Support people to express their views and concerns
- Support someone who has no friends or family
- Believe in someone when no one else will
- Be a mentor, monitor, friend, ally or fill another role depending on the needs of the person

- Notice things that no one else notices
- Take action when no one else will
- Support people to access information and services
- Defend someone's rights
- Make time to be with someone who needs support.

Citizen advocates are ordinary people – they do not replace paid professionals.

For more information contact Charlotte Knight (charlotte.knight@cheshire.ie / Tel. 01 2974100)