

Approval of Lothian Independent Advocacy Plan 2012 - 2016

Report by Eibhlin McHugh Director of Communities and Wellbeing

1 Purpose of Report

This report seeks the approval of the Lothian Independent Advocacy Plan 2012 – 2016 by Midlothian Council as one of the 5 partner agencies responsible for its delivery.

2 Background

- 2.1** Independent advocacy aims to support people to express their own needs and make their own informed decisions. Independent advocates help individuals to gain access to information and understand their options. The value of *independent* advocacy is that it is free from conflicts of interest.

There are three main kinds of advocacy services. *Individual advocacy* is provided by both paid and volunteer advocates. An advocate supports a person to represent their own interests or represents the views of an individual if the person is unable to do so themselves. *Collective advocacy* is where a group of people facing a common problem get together on a formal basis to support each other over specific issues. *Citizen advocacy* involves an unpaid member of the community being matched with a person who needs someone to be on their side usually on a long-term basis.

- 2.2** The 2012-2016 Independent Advocacy Plan for Lothian is the work of five organisations, who are each responsible for ensuring the provision of independent advocacy services to people across the Lothians. These are: NHS Lothian City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council, East Lothian Council and Mid Lothian Council. The Plan contains a number of recommendations including the need to review the provision of advocacy in light of increased migration and economic recession.

- 2.3** In Midlothian advocacy services are provided through specialist agencies in mental health, older people, learning disability and children. This has the advantages of being independent of the Council and NHS Lothian but also ensures that the provision of the necessary communication skills for each of these client groups

Within existing resources there are plans to address gaps in the availability of individual advocacy for people with physical disability and those involved in Adult Protection investigations. Advocacy services for people with learning disability are under constant pressure and work continues with them to ensure the most effective targeting of limited resources. There are no dedicated advocacy services for BME groups

and this will be reviewed following the publication of the 2012 Scotland Census in December. There is however a clear expectation that all local providers of advocacy services will ensure they are accessible to all “protected groups” as defined in the Equalities Act.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

Currently approximately £240,000 is allocated by the Council and NHS Lothian to the delivery of independent advocacy services. There are no immediate resource implications arising from this report. Gaps and service pressures will be addressed through targeting of existing resources. Following the publication of the census and discussions with special interest groups there may be a need to make provision for BME groups.

3.2 Risk

The risk of not providing adequate advocacy services is that people who are particularly vulnerable and unable to represent their own views are not then provided with appropriate level and type of care services.

3.3 Policy

Strategy

Since the last Lothian Advocacy Plan, published in 2008, there have been a number of important legal and policy developments which have influenced how health and social care services are provided. This includes broad legislation such as the Equalities Act 2010 and more specialist guidance such as the National Dementia Strategy and associated Dementia Standards of Care, 2011

Consultation

The preparation of the Lothian Plan 2012-16 included wide ranging consultation with users, carers and advocacy organisations.

Equalities

The impact assessment undertaken as part of the preparation of the Plan highlighted the need to ensure adequate support for those people from BME Groups where language is a barrier to accessing services.

Sustainability

There are no sustainability issues arising from this report.

3.4 IT Issues

There are no sustainability issues arising from this report.

4 Summary

Advocacy services ensure that people who have difficulty in communicating or representing their views are provided with adequate support to do so. Within Midlothian there are a good range of specialist services although some areas are under pressure. The Lothian Advocacy Plan 2012-16 has been prepared to summarise delivery of advocacy services during the lifetime of the plan.

5 Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to confirm Midlothian Council's approval of the Lothian Advocacy Plan 2012-16

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Background Papers: Lothian Independent Advocacy Plan 2012-16