



# LOMOND & ARGYLL ADVOCACY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

## Lomond and Argyll Advocacy Service Updates

We hope this short newsletter finds you well. It has been a difficult and challenging time for each and every one of us, and for so many businesses, services, groups and individuals across our communities.

It is hard to believe we have all been operating our daily lives so differently for around nine months. Considerable changes have taken place as has life as we knew it. We hope you are finding these changes manageable. We do know that some of the most vulnerable people across our communities will have found this extremely challenging, lonely and distressing and our team have worked hard to be available to reach those individuals.

### Can our Service assist you or someone you know?

Advocacy is about supporting you to know and defend your human rights, to be heard and included in conversations and to be consulted in decisions that impact on you. We are independent of all other services, our role is to be on your side and ensure you are treated fairly and reasonably throughout any process.

Our service is funded to work with Adults with:

- Mental Health issues
- Learning Disabilities
- People aged 65 and over
  
- Individuals impacted by Problem Alcohol or Substance use in Helensburgh, Kintyre and Bute areas.(Recovery Advocacy Project)

#### *Contact us:*

01546 606056  
[admin.argyll@laas.org.uk](mailto:admin.argyll@laas.org.uk)

[www.laas.org.uk](http://www.laas.org.uk)

Facebook [@LAASAdvocacy](https://www.facebook.com/LAASAdvocacy)  
 Twitter [@LAASAdvocacy](https://twitter.com/LAASAdvocacy)  
 Instagram [@LAASAdvocacy](https://www.instagram.com/LAASAdvocacy)

## Our Service

At the start of the pandemic we moved to home working, and promptly adapted our ways of working, broadening our IT skills to ensure we could meet with people through a range of digital platforms. This has certainly tested our skills but enabled us to think differently, be creative and connect with individuals in many different ways.

Over the last year, our staff and volunteer team have assisted 383 open referrals. Since the pandemic started in March 2020, we have provided independent advocacy to 179 people across our communities.

We have been challenged with exploring new creative ways of connecting with people who require our support and services as we reduced our direct face to face contact with people. This has been through digital platforms, including Skype, Near Me appointments, phone and email.

We continue to work closely with other organisations who we make and receive referrals from. We connect through attending online meetings and sharing development sessions. We continue to use social media to engage with communities and services far and wide across the local authority area.

**If you know a group or organisation that may benefit from finding out more about our service, please let us know on 01546 606056 and we can make connections with them.**



## The Advocacy Team

### Cowal and Bute:

Julie: 01369 840250 / 07736 872790

### Kintyre:

Lindsay: 01586 553428 / 07810 823300

### Mid Argyll / Succoth Ward:

Jo (Admin) 01546 606056

Ann: 07387 090047

James: 07950 771857

Ailsa: 01546 606056

### Oban:

Carol: 07841 277913

### Recovery Advocacy Project

**Helensburgh:** Jane: 07920 027411

**Bute:** Jamie: 07736 872791

## Digital Training

We were given the opportunity to undertake some digital training which would allow us to help people we assist to get online.

We have also been trained in the Near Me technology, which is the secure video consulting service from the NHS. We can provide a confidential video call service for clients who have access to a suitable device.

We applied for funding to update our technology and software from Foundation Scotland and we are delighted to have been awarded funds to support IT improvements.



## Funding

Throughout the last year we have been successful from many different funds. One was from the Mid Argyll Co-op where we were selected to be one of the local community causes for our Self Advocacy Skills training to be hosted in the local high schools.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to start this yet, but with over £8000 we have plenty of scope to deliver the training in a different format! Huge thanks to the Coop and our community for supporting us! It's a much needed project and we feel that the students will benefit immensely from our project.

We also received funding from the Argyll NFU Mutual during the pandemic, who have been impressed with our work in Argyll & Bute. We received money to alleviate extra expenses incurred by Covid preparations and to help us connect with people in the most remote and rural areas.



## Wellbeing

Working from home has had its challenges and we have continually supported each other to make sure that we are looking after ourselves, ensuring that our own mental health and wellbeing remains good. This has been through getting out into nature, picking up a new hobby or even doing jigsaws!



We have also found the Action for Happiness Calendar useful, lots of positive suggestions.



You can view this at [www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)

There are lots of interesting online learning, wellbeing and support services available online. We have been encouraging the team to get out and about as much as possible. There are lots of opportunities available - you can see some at the Act Argyll [EConnect Map](#).

### Useful contacts:

These are some numbers that may be useful to anyone who needs more information from other services.

**Argyll and Bute Council:** 01546 605522

Please note that the Customer Service Centre is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

If you require help or support during this time with food, essential supplies, medications or other services, and you do not have access to other sources of support, please contact them using the online [Test and Protect support form](#), or by calling 01546 605524 (available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Guidance for self-isolating is available on the NHS Inform website <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>

**Welfare Rights:** 01546 605517

If you wish to arrange either an individual appointment for advice on a private issue, or a talk for your community group contact the appropriate Welfare Rights Officer for your area or complete the online [Welfare Rights Enquiry Form](#)

**Argyll and Bute Benefits:** 01546 605512

You can notify changes by calling, emailing: [benefitsgeneralenquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:benefitsgeneralenquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk) or by visiting your local service point.

**Citizens Advice Bureau:** 01546 605550

email: [info@abcab.org.uk](mailto:info@abcab.org.uk) or visit [www.abcab.org.uk](http://www.abcab.org.uk)

## Living Well Project Helensburgh

Our Living Well project funded by HSCP for a year has now come to an end. Throughout the project our advocate Jane assisted people across the Helensburgh locality. Due to Covid, we perhaps did not receive as many referrals as we had envisaged, and we were disappointed not to have been able to run our Self Advocacy Skills Course.

Overall though we felt that it was a success and Jane did a great job of increasing awareness of our service. During the pandemic Jane was able to support individuals with remote advocacy across Argyll to alleviate waiting lists in other areas which was hugely beneficial to the people we support.



## Recovery Advocacy Project

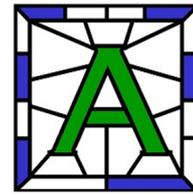
We are delighted to have secured funding from the Alcohol & Drug Partnership and Bank of Scotland Foundation. They have funded us to develop the Recovery Advocacy Project (RAP) in Argyll & Bute.

We now have new staff in place in Helensburgh; Jane, and on the Isle of Bute; Jamie.

We are hopeful that we will have another person in place in due course for Kintyre. This project will enable our Peer Advocates to assist people with problematic alcohol and substance use to feel respected and heard in their recovery journey. We warmly welcome them to the team!



 **BANK OF SCOTLAND**  
Foundation



## Volunteer Learning, discussion and reflection sessions:

We are in the process of developing some In house learning sessions. This is taking shape, with sessions covering technology, Adults Support and Protection, Mental Health Act and visual and hearing impairments already being developed.

Once we have tested our programme we can begin to look again at volunteer advocate recruitment. We will keep you informed of volunteering opportunities. You can find out more about volunteering through our website [www.laas.org.uk](http://www.laas.org.uk) or through the TSI at their [volunteering portal](#).



**If you have any comments, ideas or suggestions to enhance the work we do and reach more people please do get in touch.**

**If you have worked with us during the Covid period, we welcome you completing our [satisfaction survey](#) available on our [website](#).**