

Citizens Advice Sheffield:

Advocacy provision in 2021-22



Table of contents

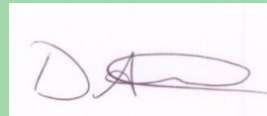
- Introduction from the Service Manager
- Who we are
- Our team
- Our network
- How we work
- Our clients
- Client testimonials
- Our work in action
- Challenges
- Our impact
- Contact us

A note from the Service Manager

It has been a year of reflection for Citizens Advice Sheffield as we continued in our role as the lead providers of Sheffield Advocacy Hub. We've reflected on the importance and uniqueness of advocacy, particularly around empowering our clients and ensuring that *their* voices are heard. We've reflected on the changing needs of the communities we serve.

We saw the lingering effects of Covid continuing to impact on clients, the emergence of a rising cost of living crisis, national scandals around hospitals and care of clients in the community, and proposed changes to several of the types of legislative frameworks we work under. With these crises, we saw the immediate consequences being felt by those we support in communities.

Throughout the past year, it has remained fundamentally important to us that we continue to provide excellent, person-centered advocacy to each individual client we worked with. I am so proud of what this organisation has achieved over the past year and of our advocacy in general. While the pressures will continue to present themselves, I have no doubt that advocacy will remain key to ensuring clients' rights are upheld and that we are listening to those most impacted by the decisions being made.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DA', is shown within a white rectangular box.

Danielle Atherton

Who we are

Citizens Advice Sheffield is Sheffield's leading provider of advice services and advocacy services. Our services are confidential, independent, impartial and free. We are an independent charity and a member of the Citizens Advice network and Law Centres Network.

Our purpose

- We provide free, confidential and independent advice and advocacy services to help individuals, families and communities have the knowledge, expert support and confidence to solve their problems.
- We provide services for everyone. We recognise that some clients, because of their circumstances or the impact of the problem or the discrimination they face, need more help to achieve the best outcome.
- We campaign for improvements to policies and practices that affect the lives of clients we help by using evidence and research from service provision.
- We serve Sheffield communities. We also contribute to regional or national service delivery when we can show benefit to Sheffield communities alongside others.

Our values

- We are values driven organisation. Our People are motivated by their desire to make a difference to the clients we help and this is our focus.
- We are committed to fairness, across our society and within our organisation.
- We are committed to challenging the impact of poverty, inequality and discrimination on the lives of the individuals and communities we help.
- We are proud of, respect and celebrate our diversity, the diversity of our clients, communities and our People, and are committed to being an inclusive organisation.
- We encourage and support our People to work with others, to seek out and develop partnerships across communities and neighbourhoods and be generous with how we share our skills, resources and support each other.


Citizens Advice Sheffield and the Sheffield Advocacy Hub

Citizens Advice Sheffield are the lead providers of **Sheffield Advocacy Hub**, one of the largest advocacy providers in the country. Through the Hub, we deliver most of our advocacy work. We also provide some advocacy as a Citizens Advice Sheffield service, separate to the Hub.

Every year **thousands of people** access these services for independent advocacy.

Our independent advocates work with clients to ensure that **their voices and wishes are listened to** and **held at the centre of decision-making**.

Some independent advocacy is a statutory right, which means it is something people are **entitled to under the law**.



"My advocate was very approachable and listened. They gave options and were very flexible, open and honest."

How the Hub works

We work in partnership with **Cloverleaf Advocacy** and **Disability Sheffield** to provide independent advocacy in the city, under the name of **Sheffield Advocacy Hub**.

Citizens Advice Sheffield is the lead partner, providing the infrastructure to receive referrals, record casework and provide support for the delivery of services.

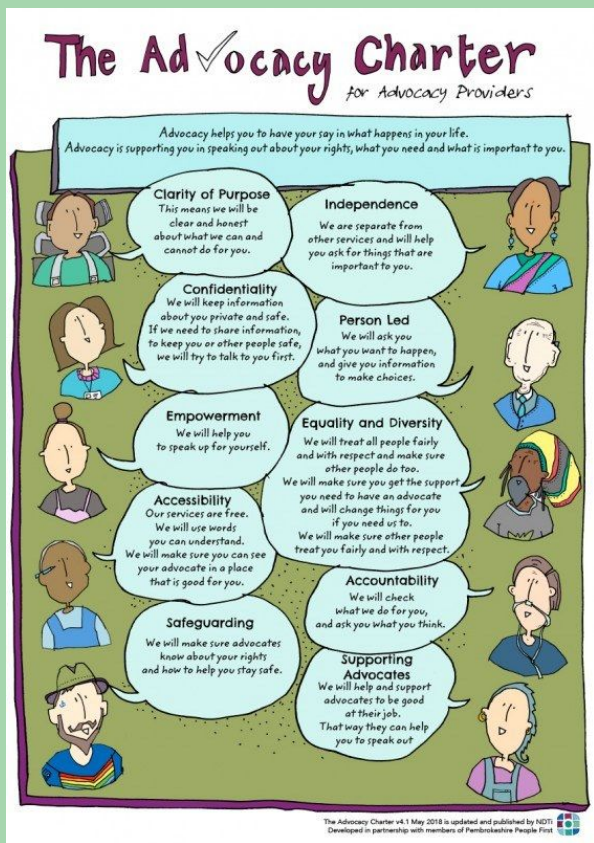
Our partners bring valuable perspectives, knowledge and experience to our work which enriches the service all of the advocates provide.

In 2021-2022

We delivered **26,655 hours** of statutory independent advocacy

We received **1,631*** statutory advocacy referrals

*some of these may be multiple referrals for the same client - for example, one person may have an IMCA and an NHS advocacy referral.



We adhere to the **Advocacy Charter** and in 2022 we were awarded the **Quality Performance Mark from NDTI**.

This evidences that we meet quality standards, and that we remain **committed to the principles of the Advocacy Charter**.

Meet the team

Sunny is a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Relevant Persons Representative (DOLS RPR).

She works with people who cannot consent to their care arrangements in care homes and hospitals to ensure that they are protected if those arrangements deprive them of their liberty.



Our team is made up of **37 staff members** performing a variety of roles including Independent Advocates, Assessment and Support Officers, and supervisors and management.

Jenny is a Care Act Advocate.

She works with people to empower them to take part in needs assessments, and planning reviews of their support packages.

She works with vulnerable adults who are going through Adult Protection procedures, to ensure that their views and wishes are at the centre of the process.



We deliver many different types of advocacy

Most of our services are delivered through the Advocacy Hub.

Some services we deliver as Citizens Advice Sheffield only.

Citizens Advice Sheffield

Generic Mental Health Advocacy

Advocacy for patients undergoing treatment at Becton CAMHS Hospital, and for their parents

Advocacy for adolescents and adults undergoing treatment at Riverdale Grange

Sheffield Advocacy Hub

Care Act Advocacy

Deprivation of Liberty Relevant Persons Representatives (DOLS RPR)

NHS Complaints Advocacy

Generic Learning Disability Advocacy

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)

We're part of the community

We attend a variety of groups and committees, including user-led, NHS, Council and other voluntary sector services.

We always ensure that the focus in meetings and groups is on the person and that their rights, views and wishes are at the forefront of decision making.

- Mental Health Partnership Network
- Sheffield Autism Partnership Board
- Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Mental Capacity Act Action Network
- Mental Health Legislation Operational Group
- Advocacy Partnership Development Network
- Least Restrictive Practice Group
- Lived Experience and Co-production Assurance Group

Our clients

We keep track of client demographics to make sure that a variety of people are able to access our services, and to identify if there are any gaps.



Language matters.

Languages spoken



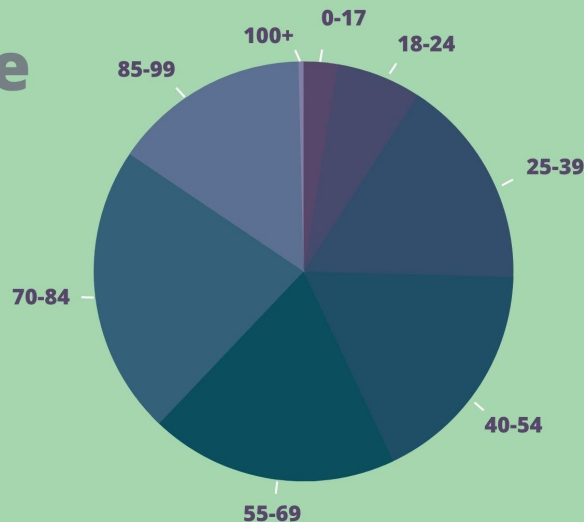
A word cloud of languages spoken by clients, with 'English' being the largest word. Other languages include Arabic, Urdu, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, French, Italian, Turkish, British Sign Language, Spanish, Romanian, Latvian, Tigrinya, Mandarin, Bengali, Portuguese, Slovak, and Cantonese.

Cantonese Turkish British Sign Language
Bengali Italian Somali
English French Punjabi
Portuguese Mandarin Polish Spanish
Slovak Tigrinya Urdu Arabic
Romanian Latvian

In 2021-2022,
we communicated with clients in
**over 19 different
languages**

We work with interpreters to ensure we communicate with clients in their chosen languages. In some cases, we are able to provide bilingual advocates.

Age profile



Our clients ranged in age from
10 to 102

Of those who disclosed their gender identity, just over half were female. A very small percentage identified as trans or non-binary.

Gender identity

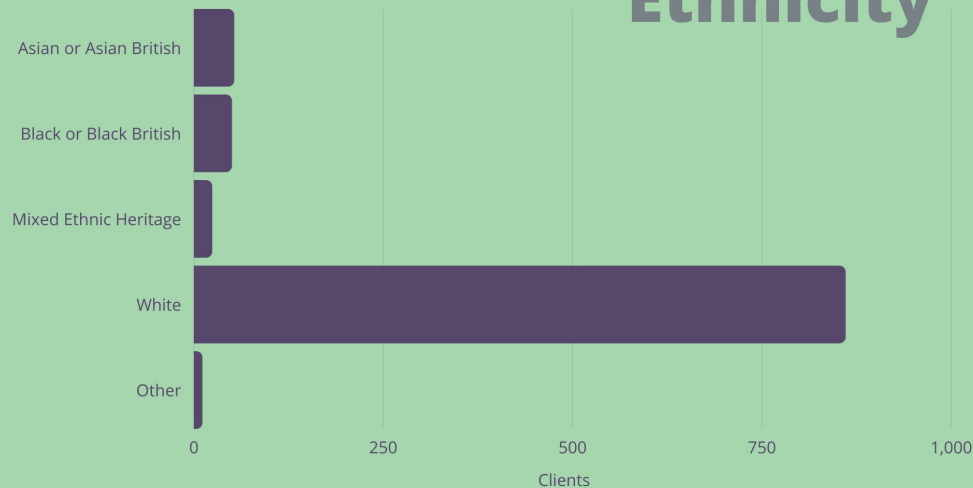


Nationality



We have advocated for clients from a range of nationalities and ethnic backgrounds.

Ethnicity



This graph demonstrates the most frequently recorded client ethnicity. Further data breakdown is available upon request.

Primary need

419 clients had

Mental ill-health

e.g. bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, depression

317 clients had an

Impaired memory or ability to understand

e.g. stroke, dementia, head-injury

186 clients had a

Learning disability

e.g. Downs Syndrome

71 clients had a

Long-term illness or health condition

e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic asthma

We also supported clients with primary needs including: autism/ASD, communication (e.g. speech), hearing (e.g. profound-to-mild deafness), mobility or physical (e.g. walking, dexterity), and visual (e.g. blind or partial-sighted).

Many clients had further impairments/multi-impairments.

A minority of clients had no impairment.

What our clients say

We value the feedback from our clients as it helps us to continuously improve and deliver a better service.

“

“They helped and listened and I could not have done it by myself. **It took the stress out of the situation.**”

“[My advocate] was really helpful and moved things along very well. **It made everything easier.**”

”

“I was **really appreciative** that I got the most out of the support and the advocate did the best they could.”

“I just want to say thank you to the advocate who was so helpful. **I’m really glad the service exists.**”

“My advocate was **very knowledgeable** and hands-on with everything, listened to me, understood things were difficult. We had a **very good relationship**, it felt very comfortable.”

Care Act Advocacy in action: Lucy's story

Lucy has a learning disorder and lives with her parents.

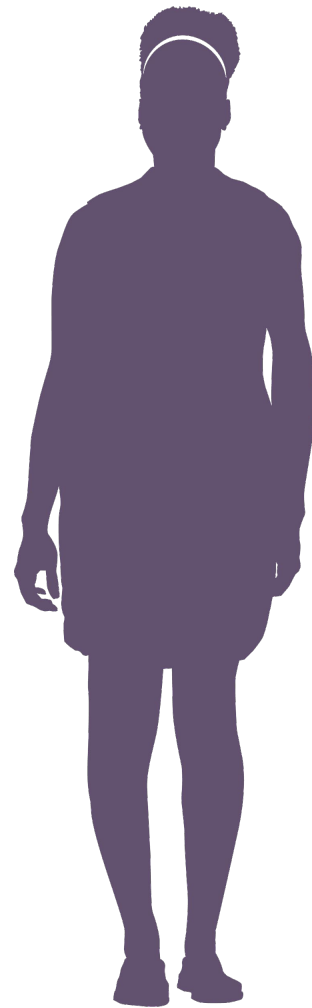
She has recently turned 18 and is transitioning from Children's to Adult services.

Lucy's parents care a lot about her but they are struggling to recognise that she's a young adult and wants more freedom.

Lucy's social worker thought it was important that Lucy had someone to advocate for her during the care process. Her parents' views were really important, but Lucy's voice was getting drowned out by everyone around her.

Lucy's advocate was able to help her to express her wishes which included doing activities away from her parents with a befriender at a local community centre.

Lucy's activities went really well, and over time Lucy was able to do more activities out of the home. Everyone noticed **Lucy seemed more happy and confident.**



Our work in action

Part of our advocacy involves supporting members of the community through the **NHS Complaints** procedure.

- ◆ Anyone in Sheffield can access this service
- ◆ We listen to clients and help them put their experience into complaint letters
- ◆ We will attend resolution meetings if the client wishes this
- ◆ We will support to take complaints to the Ombudsman if this is requested

Milo wanted to make a complaint about his GP practice after he felt a receptionist had been very rude to him at a time when he was very upset.

We helped Milo to put his complaint in writing and to explain why this had caused him so much distress.

Milo felt better putting these feelings in writing and the GP issued Milo with an apology acknowledging his feelings.

Our work in action

We also provide representation for people who are subject to **Deprivation of Liberty** who do not have capacity to consent to treatment.

These advocates are referred to as Deprivation of Liberty Relevant Persons Representatives (DOLS RPRs).

RPRs ensure that people in this situation have their rights upheld and that their voices are not lost, despite many cases where people are unable to express their views easily.

June was diagnosed with dementia and entered care following a hospital admission for a fall during the Coronavirus pandemic.

June did not settle into her new care home, but her needs were deemed as too severe to return home by Social Care.

Although June was unable to speak to the staff, she was demonstrating her discontent by throwing things and trying to leave the care home.

June's RPR recognised that this behaviour showed that she was objecting to being at the care home, and helped her to access a solicitor to appeal to the Court of Protection.

During this process, other options of care homes were explored, including one near where June used to live. This home also provided far more dementia-friendly activities. It was agreed June could move there to see if this made a difference.

June settled well in the new home and a friend who visited described her as 'more her own self'.

Our work on the mental health wards

- ★ We support people who are sectioned under the **Mental Health Act** to uphold their rights.
- ★ We are also able to support people who are in mental health settings on an informal basis.
- ★ We support staff on mental health settings to understand advocacy and ensure that the statutory rights of patients to advocate is fulfilled.
- ★ We are always happy to come out to different settings to raise the awareness of advocacy.

We delivered Independent Mental Health advocacy to

**over 300
people**

last year in various mental health settings for young people and adults.



Lasting challenges of Covid-19

In March 2020, the global Covid-19 pandemic caused unprecedented challenges for our service and the people we help.

The effects and challenges of Covid continued throughout 2021-22, having a **disproportionate impact** on our clients. In particular, access to healthcare settings remained incredibly limited and our clients faced continuing isolation.

Advocates continued to visit care homes and hospitals throughout the Covid-19 pandemic but this was not without its challenges.

Care homes and wards were forced to continue entering occasional lockdowns, which meant that advocates kept needing to adapt their practices, typically relying on phone and digital communication during these times.

We saw clients struggle not only with the physical impact of Covid, but also with the wider impact on their lives that increased restrictions were having. Advocates were involved in arguing for restrictions to be proportionational, and campaigned adamantly that clients could continue to have a good quality of life as well as being safe.

Unfortunately, many of our clients were particularly vulnerable to the virus and we are sad to say that a large number of lives were lost. We'd like to take this opportunity to recognise and remember these people and their loved ones.

Our impact



Our advocacy services support people to be actively involved in statutory processes, which ensures that the voices of those most impacted by decisions made by services are heard and are at the forefront of decision making.



This provides a better understanding of the needs of the community as a whole to other organisations and statutory bodies.



The Advocacy Hub is active in many service user-led organisations, and contributes to campaigns for policy change locally and nationally by identifying gaps in policy and providing evidence.

*"The best thing was having some support in meetings and being **helped with daunting situations**. The advocate had good abilities to navigating the system and showed me what was available to me."*

*"Very clear, concise and did everything they could. I'm so glad the organisation exists as I **don't know what I would have done without it.**"*

Citizens Advice Sheffield

Our advocacy work in 2021-2022



www.sheffieldadvocacyhub.org.uk



info@sheffieldadvocacyhub.org.uk



0114 2261674



With special thanks and acknowledgement to our partners



Published May 2023