

Business Plan 2015-17

Background

Oxfordshire Advocacy (OA) came into being in 1989 to help ensure that the voices of users of social services were heard and responded to, under the new Health Services and Community Care Act 1990. Initially we concentrated on education and awareness and became a registered charity in 1992. We set up our first generic advocacy scheme in 1996, delivered by trained volunteers. This was followed by a specialist dementia project in 2000 and a learning disability project in 2002. From 2007 we have provided the Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) Service delivered by trained staff.

In recent years, encouraged by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) we have formed an informal partnership with a national advocacy service working in Oxfordshire - SEAP (support, empower, advocate, promote). Working under the banner of Getting Heard, we provide mainly statutory advocacy services funded by the Council for disadvantaged and vulnerable people coming within the scope of various pieces of legislation. In its first year the funding contract covered OA's generic service but this did not continue. With the introduction of the Care Act 2014, OA were contracted to provide statutory Independent Care Act Advocacy on behalf of the Council under the Getting Heard contract.

Volunteers are central to our ability to respond to people's needs and to sustain our services. We currently have 40+ trained volunteer advocates supported by a central Co-ordinator and they are the main providers of our generic advocacy, as well as assisting us on our cancer peer advocacy project and both our IMCA and Care Act contracts. The provision of generic services to individuals falling outside the requirements of specific legislation remains a particular challenge in the current economic climate, but is one we are determined to continue.

Our Mission

Oxfordshire Advocacy exists to support disadvantaged adults, ensuring their needs are expressed and their voices heard, empowering them to have their rights, views and wishes taken into account in important decisions that affect their lives.

Our Values

We believe that all members of society are equal and that everyone has the right to plan their own life, to be listened to, taken seriously and to be respected.

Our Activities

Advocacy is about helping people put their views into words and take control of their lives. The four strands of support provided by the Getting Heard partnership are all statutory services.

- **Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)** (Mental Capacity Act)
- **Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)** (Mental Health Act)
- **Independent Care Act Advocacy (ICAA)** (Care Act)
- **NHS Complaints Advocacy**

Our trained and skilled advocates are on hand to offer support when it's needed. They help someone work out what they need; subsequently working with them to try to help them achieve their goals. They don't tell someone what to do or make a judgement about what they decide. It's a person's wishes that count. The advocacy services provided by Getting Heard are free, independent and confidential. Much of the work that OA does under the Care Act and Mental Capacity Act is **Non-instructed advocacy** – for people who cannot give instruction because they have complex communication needs or long-term illness or disability; advocates take time to get to know that person and the significant others in their lives, so that their views can be safeguarded and represented.

We run a project providing **Peer Advocacy** to those affected by cancer. This is supported by funding from: the BIG Lottery Silver Dreams Fund, Macmillan Cancer Support and OPAAL UK. *Our* aim is to help resolve issues or difficulties, cancer related or not, to improve quality of life. We assist with many issues including treatment and care, social, financial and employment issues and can provide a listening ear.

We also provide an **Independent Advocacy** service delivered by volunteers. This service has recently been given consideration to how best it can help those that need the service at a time of drastic budget reduction and have come up with the following:

1. We help those **facing housing issues** – residents of both social housing and private landlords.
2. We support people with a **learning disability** who may not have the understanding, the vocabulary or the communication to participate in decisions being made about their lives. We can help them to understand the information that is given to them and then support them to put forward the points that they wish to make. We help people to communicate in the way that is best for them including easy read information, pictorials or Makaton.
3. We will assist those affected by their **mental health** and do not have an issue that comes under the auspices of other services such as MIND or SEAP.

www.gettingheard.org

Company Number: 6845465

Charity Number: 1131403

4. **Family support** is available in the form of attendance at Child protection and family support conferences, recognising that our reach is limited and should not duplicate other services.
5. We can help **any disadvantaged person residing on Oxfordshire who is 18+** that seeks our help who cannot be assisted by other services or organisation in the county, and who would be facing major life issues if not provided with our advocacy support.

In the financial year 2014/15 we directly supported over **500** individuals in helping them to have their voices heard and improve the quality of their lives.

The difference OA Makes

We know that we must make a positive difference to people's lives and be able to report on this to our stakeholders. This can be challenging, because our clients are often not able to directly express themselves. Nevertheless, we can demonstrate our value to individuals, their family and friends, and have a direct positive impact on other services, organisations and the community in general.

Here are two examples:

Feedback on benefits of our IMCA service –

“Greater concentration on patient as a person, focus on his rights and self-identified needs. Amplified his agency challenged notion that he is a passive recipient of care”

Support with personal care budget-

Mr G is aged 70 with multiple health problems for a number of years including bowel cancer, two strokes and heart problems. His mobility had become extremely restricted and he had a live in carer. Because of his deteriorating condition and the increasing level of care needed Mr G sought to have his Personal Care Budget increased. However for a variety of reasons including staff changes within the local authority his level of support was not increased to the amount needed.

For almost a year one of our trained volunteers was involved in multiple meetings with Mr G, making telephone calls on his behalf and handling numerous emails to and from the local authority. The result was a retrospective payment to the client's Personal Care Budget to cover the shortfall in the provision of care and support.

The need for Independent Advocacy

Given the different communities, individuals and needs we are supporting, we believe that there are many more potential clients who would benefit from having an advocate to help their situation and improve their lives. This belief is based on professional knowledge and

www.gettingheard.org

Company Number: 6845465

Charity Number: 1131403

understanding about the populations of people in a wide spectrum of circumstances, including those without immediate or close relations in Care Homes; people who are deprived of their liberty under the Mental Health Act; those in crisis due to housing issues or family breakdown; individuals who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and those suffering long term illness or the challenges of learning disabilities.

Current pressures on local authorities and other statutory bodies means that access to services has been reduced or restricted. These bodies often have real difficulty in setting priorities in conflicting circumstances. Invariably, they recognise that the involvement of an Independent Advocate helps ensure the rights and wishes of their clients are respected, listened to and receive a response. Often, it helps ensure a more holistic approach to service delivery by such bodies and organisations can be achieved.

Without the actions and work of Oxfordshire Advocacy it is true to say that many people not able to express their needs or communicate effectively on their own would have lives of lower quality.

A seemingly low level example is given by one of our clients who has severe learning disabilities and is unlikely ever to have their personal liberty restored. Oxfordshire Advocacy has helped this person and their carers to identify and promote her enjoyment of water, so that once a month the client now regularly attends a jacuzzi. The client has poor muscle control and is visibly tired at the end of this day, which takes a good deal of organisation and support. However, it is now unequivocally clear to all who work with her how great her enjoyment of the experience is. Before our involvement, her care workers gave no priority to this activity and many months they missed taking her because they did not understand what a life enhancing experience this was for their client.

The Future- our Aims

We want to build on our success to date and we have engaged with our stakeholders (major partners, volunteers, clients and staff) to identify our Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results we want to achieve. Using this foundation the Board of Trustees have agreed the following three medium term objectives for the charity covering the period up to 2019. These will be reassessed annually and incorporated within annual activity planning as appropriate, with shorter term objectives and targets being developed.

Objective 1

Services: To be the preferred provider of independent advocacy services to organisations across Oxfordshire, delivering effective, valued support to any adult in need.

Objective 2

Finance: To achieve a level of sustainable income that allows for realistic three year detailed budget planning.

Objective 3

Clients, Staff and Volunteers: To continually improve client satisfaction rates by ensuring our staff and volunteers have the necessary skills, experience and

enthusiasm to deliver our services, and confirming a three year development plan to underpin this.

Current Objectives: 2015

Using the output from the work completed by volunteers, clients, staff and trustees to analyse our strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results, we have developed five objectives for the period up to April 2016:

- Identify, trial and evaluate performance indicators in the areas of client numbers, client satisfaction, number of volunteers, costs per client and response times.
- Increase external fundraising to sustain generic advocacy services and provide support across the organisation to a level of £70,000/ year.
- Increase and expand the use of marketing and communication activity to support achievement of objectives.
- Develop resilient systems and processes in the specific areas of: Appraisal, Volunteer database, Generic advocacy supervision and support.
- Prepare for the necessity to tender for provision of advocacy services to Oxfordshire County Council to meet contractual timescales.

Specific targets for each objective have been identified, together with the lead individual responsible and realistic timeframes for achievement, aligned to available finance. Quarterly reporting on progress will be direct to the Trustee Board and communicated throughout the organisation as appropriate.

Funding and Finance

As a small charity with a relatively low level of resources it is challenging to sustain and improve our services. Nevertheless, in the last twelve months we have successfully tendered for provision of advocacy services to help Oxfordshire County Council fulfil its obligations under the new Care Act, and developed a new specific service to support older people suffering from cancer; doing so by working in partnership with others.

We have streamlined access for clients by means of a call centre thanks to our partners SEAP; improved Volunteer support and involvement by introducing volunteer observers at trustee meetings and creating a specific staff role concentrating on our volunteers; sought ways to involve our most significant stakeholders in our organisation through the creation of an advisory panel comprising volunteers, users, staff and trustees; made significant strides in managing our staff to help them achieve more and enjoy their work, and held several training events which were well attended and developed our skills.

www.gettingheard.org

Company Number: 6845465

Charity Number: 1131403

All of this costs money. Our success in the major (for us) county contract has allowed us to continue to plan for the future with some ambition. However, “generic” advocacy to help individuals falling outside of legislative requirements is an unmet need as far as funding is concerned, and remains our most significant challenge.

Appendix 1 gives details of our current budget requirements and expectations.

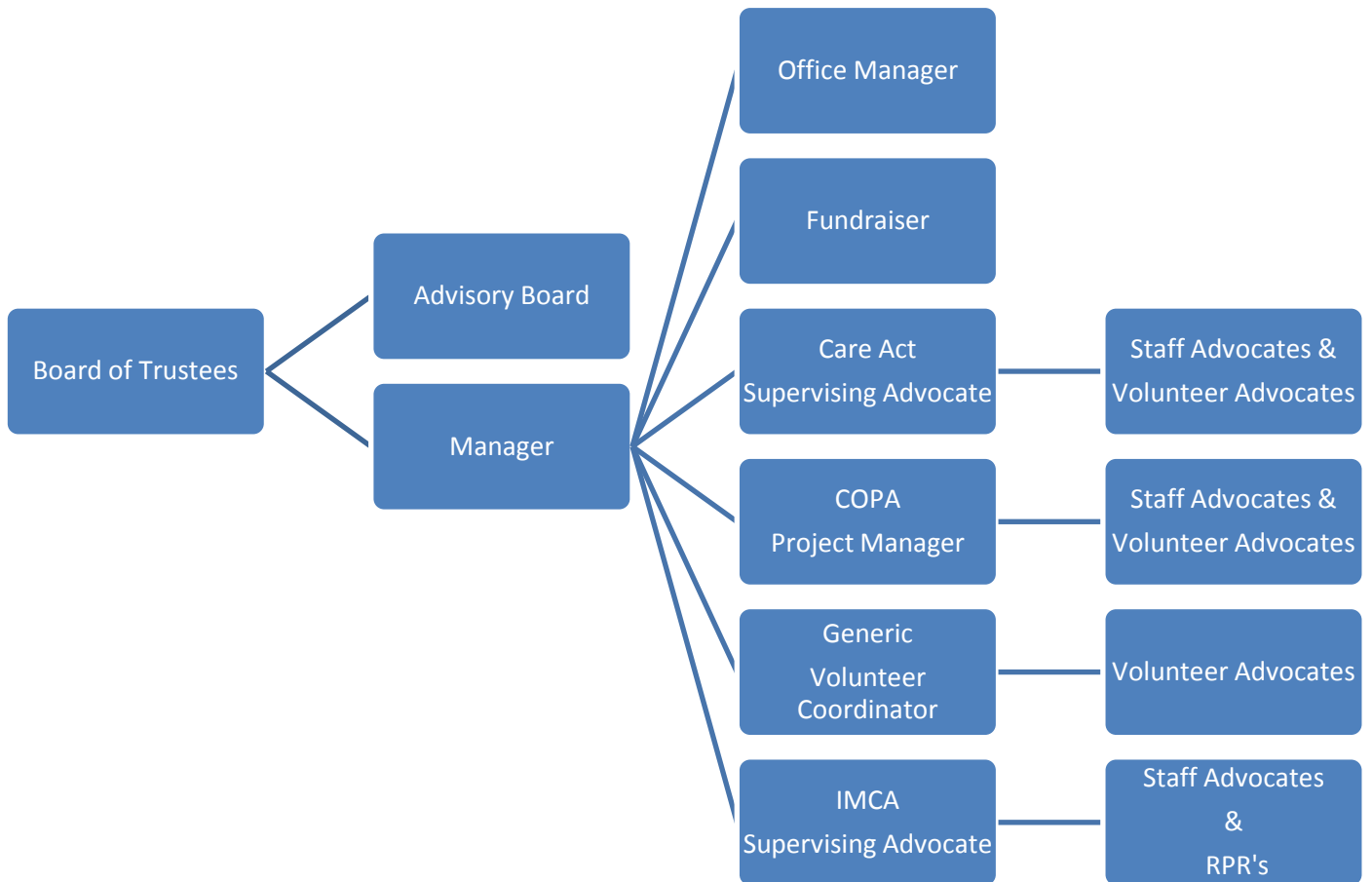
Appendix 2 shows our organisational chart and details of the Trustee Board.

Appendix 1 2015/16 Budget

Budget	Total
Total staff and volunteer costs including time, travel and training	199,527
Rent & Accommodation	18,000
Utilities	8,000
Office Costs (Stationery, etc.)	5,000
Other (ins, Governance etc.)	5,000
SEAP Charges	5,650
TOTAL	241,177

Expected Funding	Total
OCC Statutory Advocacy contract	129,558
OPAAL	39,126
Fundraising	72,493
TOTAL	241,177

Appendix 2 Organisational Chart and Details of the Trustee Board



Trustee Board

CHRIS BRIGHT – CHAIR

Chris Bright is a solicitor who has worked in the areas of regulation and consumer protection for 30 years. He brings governance skills from roles in the public and voluntary sector, as well as experience of management issues in a law firm. In addition to OA HE sits on the Oxfordshire County Council Schools Admissions Appeals Panel. He was a founder of Advocates for International Development, A4ID, and lives in Oxford and is a past Member of the Competition Commission.

www.gettingheard.org

Company Number: 6845465

Charity Number: 1131403

HILARY BEALE – DEPUTY CHAIR

Following a career in the world of social work and counselling, Hilary retired in 2010 and since then has been heavily engaged in voluntary work. This includes being a governor of a primary school, as well as a trustee of OA. In addition for many years Hilary has been a Guide leader and continues to be a trainer for Guide leaders across the region. As well Hilary is joint coordinator of a food bank, which gives her much insight into the social problems facing so many disadvantaged members of society. Having worked with many people with physical and learning difficulties Hilary has gained considerable understanding of the difficulties so many of these client groups have in “Getting Heard”. Hilary’s own caring responsibilities ensures her continued interest in the work of OA.

CLAIRE WARD

Claire currently works for Guideposts Trust as Oxfordshire’s Dementia Information Service Coordinator. She moved to Oxfordshire over five years ago to study as a mature student and has stayed in the area with her three children since. As a former youth worker and in her present role she encourages empowerment of the people she work with, her volunteer advocate training with Oxfordshire Advocacy was extremely useful and helpful in understanding Oxfordshire Advocacy and as well as her everyday work, particularly the national helpline that she also covers. Most importantly she now understands what a volunteer’s role is as an advocate and the valuable asset they are to the service.

SUE JEFFS

Advocacy services have played an important part in supporting the people Sue has worked with throughout her career and also in various voluntary roles. She recently retired as Manager of the South and Vale Carers’ Centre, which provides specialist advice, information, and support for unpaid carers of all ages, including young carers. Prior to that Sue was an Assistant Director at Bracknell Forest Primary Care Trust, with responsibility for all of the PCT’s partnership work with the Local Authority and the voluntary sector. She had responsibility for Continuing Care (budget over £5 million p.a.), and for mental health, and learning disability performance indicators. Previous roles have included housing development for Social Services’ clients, including the re-provisioning of special hospital units. The role of independent advocacy has been crucial in all of this work, and is something that Sue feels passionately about. She has recent experience of fundraising and financial management, and of serving on and chairing committees, in both a professional and a voluntary capacity.

JOHN PARRY

John was CEO of a UK wide charity which supports injured firefighters and those in need in the fire community. John also worked for over 30 years in the public sector. He was Chief Fire Officer for Oxfordshire for ten years, and also had responsibility for a number of different areas in his time with OCC, including the Youth Offending Service, Gypsy and Traveler services and Community Safety. John lives near to Oxford, is married and has two children. His interests include mountain biking, karate, and looking after a small number of sheep that threaten to expand into a flock.

www.gettingheard.org

Company Number: 6845465

Charity Number: 1131403

ROBERT MATHERS – TREASURER

Robert joined Oxfordshire Advocacy in September 2011 in the role of Treasurer, having recently retired from the post of Financial Director of a peace charity which operated in conflict areas around the globe, but particularly in Africa. Before that he trained as an actuary and worked in financial services for 35 years, holding a variety of positions both in the City and internationally. In addition to his work for OA, he advises at his local Citizens Advice Bureau.

www.gettingheard.org

Company Number: 6845465

Charity Number: 1131403