



Angus Independent Advocacy

ANNUAL REPORT 2021- 2022



FUNDED BY:



Every voice matters!

We are here to support *you* to be heard.

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"You have been an enormous support and brilliant during this difficult period. Just knowing you were on my side made a huge difference to my time in hospital"

Advocacy Partner

"I've never been able to open to anyone like I have with her (worker). She hasn't judged me, and knowing she has been in a similar position makes it easier for me to talk to her. She's an inspiration. I truly don't think I'd be alive if it wasn't for her"

Advocacy Partner

Board Members, Monitoring Officers and Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Emma Crouch	Chair
Fiona Arnot	Vice Chair
Robin Ross	
Derek Stewart	
Deborah Cruickshanks	Treasurer (until May 2021)
Stephanie Wren	(from Jan 2021)
Martina Gamble	Treasurer (from May- Nov 2021)
John Grant	Treasurer (from Nov 2021)

MONITORING OFFICERS

Terry Irvine, Service Leader, Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Services

STAFF

Suzanne Swinton	Chief Executive Officer and Company Secretary (until January 2022)
Heather MacMaster	Citizen Advocacy Project Manager (until March 2022)/ Chief Executive Officer & Company Secretary (on interim basis January – March 2022)
Craig Bartholomew	Interim Operations Manager
Sandra Stewart	Families Development Worker
Jackie Frame	Senior Independent Advocacy Worker
Fiona Bridges	Senior Independent Advocacy Worker
Lisa Webster	Citizen Advocacy Development Worker
Michelle Spink	Citizen Advocacy Development Worker (Nov 2020- Sept 2021)
Nicola Riach	Office Manager (until Dec 2021)
Linda Walsh	Office Manager (from Dec 2021)
Debbie Brown	Children & Young Person's Advocacy Worker (June 2020 to May 2021)
Nathan Corr	Children & Young Person's Advocacy Worker
Catherine Shephard	Children & Young Person's Advocacy Worker
Laurie Falconer	Peer Independent Advocacy Worker
Mark Rogers	Independent Advocacy Worker (from Jan 2022)
Lucy Mackie	Participation Worker (from Jan 2022)
Jackie Reid	Cleaner

Chair's Report

This has been yet another year of change in AIA. Coming together again in person, though very welcome, brought new challenges including adjusting to working alongside colleagues again but staff rose to the occasion and worked with their usual professionalism. There have been other changes - most significantly in our management team. Our long-standing CEO, Suzanne, moved on to use her skills and knowledge in a national post and our Office Manager, Nicola, accepted a post nearer her family. Following a robust process we were delighted to appoint Heather as our new CEO. She has slotted into the role with confidence and a clear vision. Linda came to AIA at a time of great change but she has stepped into the Office Manager role with some ease. We have also made some changes to the structure of our management team with Craig now Operations Manager and the appointment of a Duty Worker to triage the ever-increasing referrals to our service. These posts have provided much-needed support to both the CEO and the staff. The number of staff has also grown and the calibre and experience of our new members complement the invaluable work of all at AIA.

The Board look forward to meeting with the staff to sharing ideas and generally getting to know each other at our upcoming development day in the summer. The Board would like to take this opportunity to thank them formally for all of their dedication and hard work over the last year and how they have embraced the challenges presented by change. Doubtless we will face new challenges in the future especially in the current climate of rising energy costs. However I am confident that, together, we will meet those with the same determination shown in the past.

It was with sadness we noted the passing of Sandy Stuart, an erstwhile Vice Convenor and staunch supporter of AIA. Sandy brought insight and humour to the Board and was renowned for his attention to detail which many of us might have overlooked!

Finally I would like to say a personal thank you for the support I have received from both staff and Board members in my role of Acting Convenor especially from Heather, John and Robin. That support has been much appreciated. A final thanks to our Citizen Advocates whose enthusiasm and commitment provide invaluable support and friendship to many. We look forward to continuing and building our partnerships.

Fiona Arnott (Acting Chair of Board)

Board Attendance

DIRECTORS	29/04/21	16/11/21	25/01/22	21/03/22	ATTENDED	APOLOGIES
Emma Crouch (Chair)	√	√	x	x	2	2
Fiona Arnot (Vice Chair)	√	√	√	√	4	0
Deborah Cruickshanks (Treasurer)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Robin Ross	√	√	√	x	3	1
Derek Stewart	√	x	x	x	1	3
John Grant	-	√	√	√	3	0
Stephanie Wren	√	√	√	√	4	0
Martina Gamble	x	-	-	-	0	1

Chief Executive Officer's Report

We began this year with Covid-19 still affecting our work, and wider society. The team continued to embrace technology and hybrid working to ensure that individuals had access to independent advocacy. Our newer projects (Peer Independent Advocacy/Children & Young People) were able to further develop and begin working with more partners, offering access to advocacy to a wider range of people. The Citizen Advocacy project hosted some smaller scale social and learning events as restrictions eased later in the year. As we entered 2022 we rebranded and launched our new accessible website.

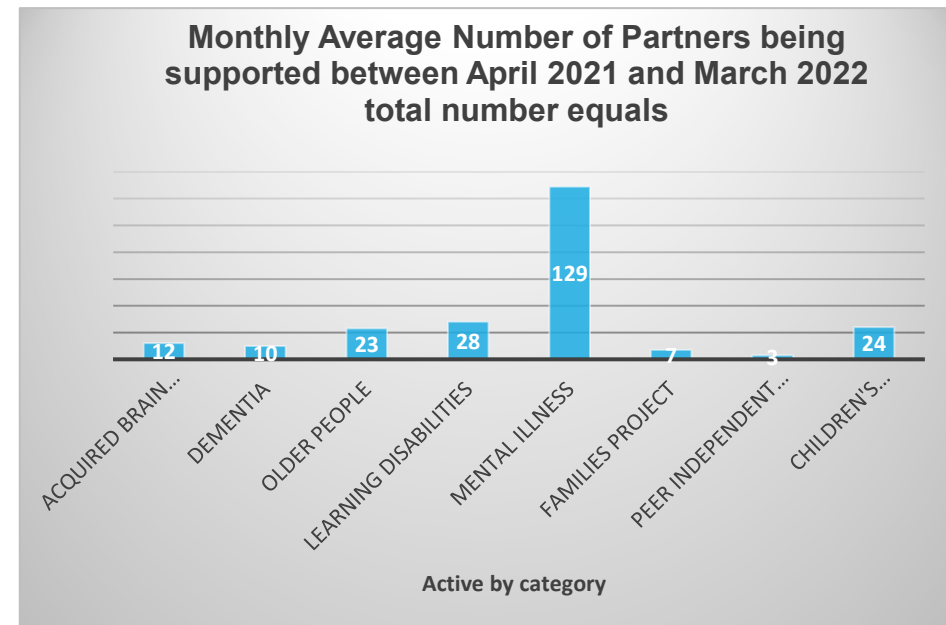
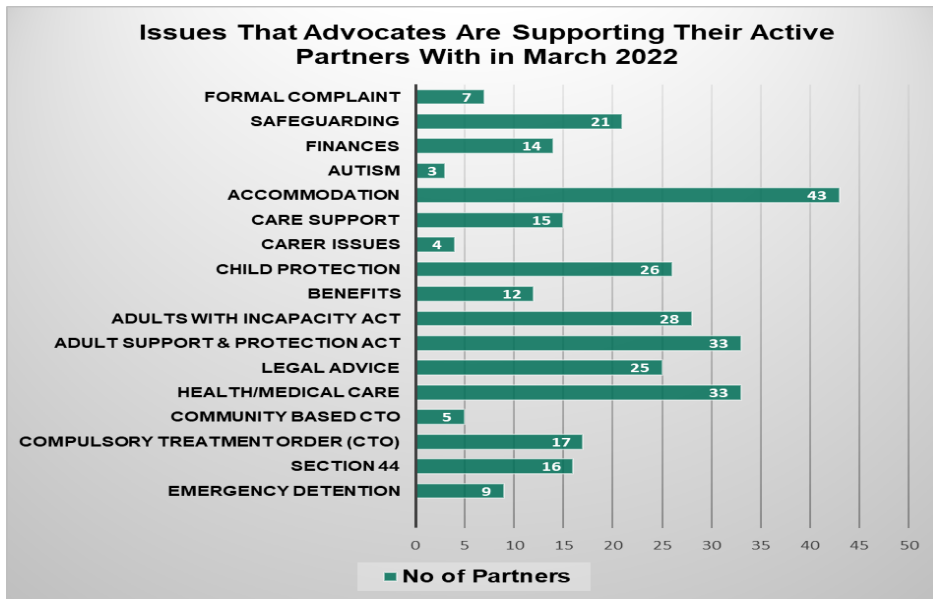
AIA also saw some big changes to our staff team, with two of our longest serving members, Suzanne Swinton (CEO) and Nicola Riach (Office Manager) leaving AIA after over a decade. They both played a pivotal role in the growth of AIA and in many of the team's advocacy journeys. I'd like to thank them for their role in developing the AIA that I am so proud to be a part of. We also saw the departure of some newer members of staff, -thank you for your contributions to Advocacy and the best of luck for the future.

With change, though, comes opportunity and interim arrangements put in place to support transition in our leadership allowed us to rethink organisational structure and ways of working. As we ended this reporting period, I was delighted to take on the role of CEO permanently after providing interim support since January 2022. We enter 2022/2023 with more challenge and opportunity ahead and I look forward to working alongside the board and wider AIA team as we look to develop our new strategic plan.

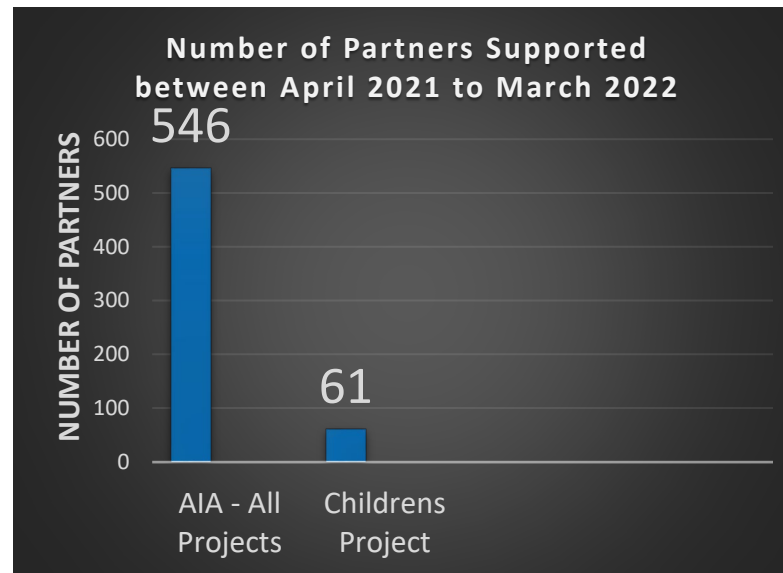
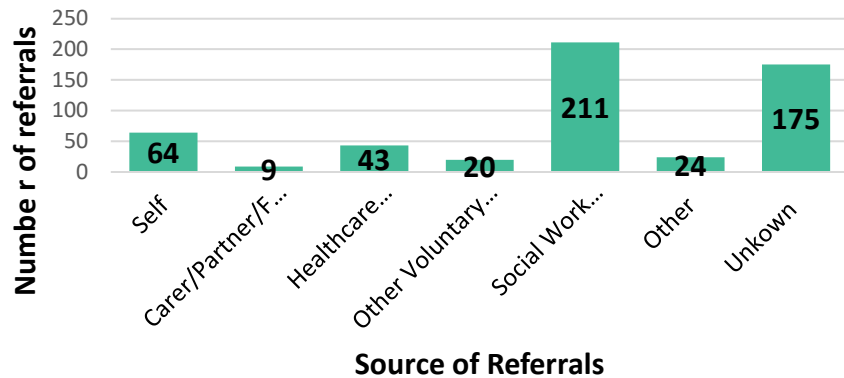
I'd like to finish by thanking our Board of Directors, staff, citizen advocates (volunteers) and advocacy partners for all their dedication and support over the past year. It is your collective knowledge, experience and passion that ensure people are able to have their voices heard and rights realised. AIA prides itself on being a values-based organisation, and the ability of the team to come together and continue to deliver on our vision of Angus communities in which *"every voice matters"* during this period of change and challenge is truly testament to that.

Heather MacMaster (Chief Executive Officer)

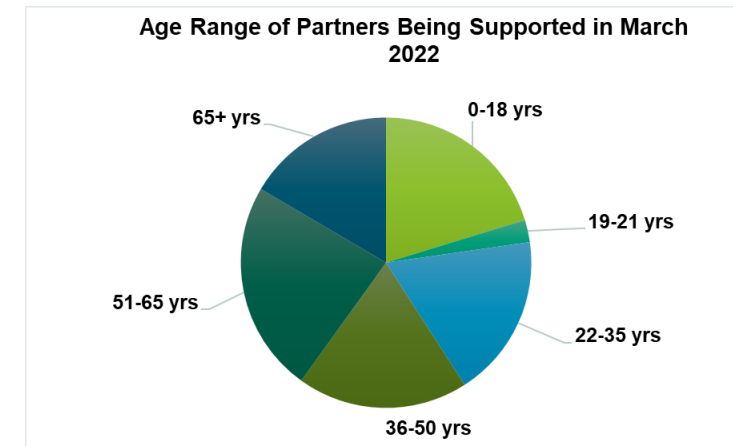




Source of Adult Referrals between April 2021 and March 2022



Note AIA- all projects- differs from that reported on p.6 of financial statement as this figure did not include citizen advocacy project.



Direct Advocacy Report

Overview

Key achievements over the year include:

- Continuing to provide quality advocacy during times of significant organisational changes
- Implementing the Duty Work test for change from January
- Inducting new team members Catherine Sheppard and Mark Rogers

“No two days are ever the same and I thrive on this variety. The saying “every day is a school day” comes to mind and it is certainly true for me as I continue to learn and develop and I look forward to the challenges ahead” (Jackie Frame, Duty Worker)

From my perspective as a manager, it was very motivating to see how our team members responded to changes and challenges. Having to stop and think about the “how” and “why” we do things really focussed our thinking. Team members showed creativity, energy, and determination to make improvements as well as dedication in helping achieve positive outcomes for their advocacy partners.

The team also participated in:

- Awareness raising for the Children and Young Persons resource
- Updating of AIA website and leaflets
- Contributing to short films about advocacy
- Delivering opportunities for learning and support within the team

All of AIA engaged in the induction of our new team members. It was heartening to see our values in action and how welcoming and helpful everyone had been.

The team have shown passion and drive to keep achieving and improving throughout 2021/22 and continue to deliver our goal of quality advocacy.

Craig Bartholomew
Operations Manager

Families Project

Our Families Project continued to support parents, predominantly with child protection processes. Continued restrictions throughout the period made it challenging to explore collective advocacy and parents preference was for 1:1 direct support.

34 families supported

30 statutory meetings attended

“A number of parents have become more confident at meetings and will put their own views across and ask more questions. One parent has kept their own journal on how contact has gone and records actions and comments made by workers that they can refer to at meeting if required “

Peer Advocacy

54 people were supported by the Peer Independent Advocate . The worker also began development work with the aim of establishing local forums to facilitate collective action; around common issues faced by those affected by substance use and specifically around the MATS standards.

“The collective side of my role is relatively new so the groundwork is establishing contacts and relationships which will hopefully in the future build a forum and panel that will gather views from people with lived life experience and input these into the ADP-hopefully to influence services. This is done by way of attending Recovery café, walks with services and liaising with services within the ADP who can identify individuals that would like to be involved in this new project going forward. This is new and exciting, and I will hopefully be able to update further in next year’s report”.

Children and Young Person's Advocacy

Angus Independent Advocacy (AIA) began taking referrals for Children's Advocacy in Children's Hearings (CACH) in December 2020 and continued to develop the resource throughout 2021/22. Children's Hearings work is funded through the Scottish Government and advocacy for children and young people out-with hearings is made possible via the Local Authority / Angus Health & Social Care Partnership.

This blended model is not found in every area of Scotland. The principle of barrierless access to advocacy enables children and young people to receive advocacy support (if they wish) for example, in hearings, child planning meetings, school, and health, enabling a holistic and person-centred advocacy experience. This ties in with the ethos of The Promise and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and helps to ensure that the child or young person has meaningful involvement in decisions affecting their lives, examples of this are detailed below along with key achievements in the past year.



We consistently receive positive feedback from both referrers and children and young people we support. We have decreased the waiting time that children and young people have to wait to access advocacy support.

Successes include:

- A young person has left hospital after a long term stay and has now secured their own tenancy and is managing this well. The advocate's role supported them to share their views during this process.
- A young person who had not accessed education for over 2 years, was able to share their views with support from advocacy and is now receiving an education which is tailored to support their specific individual needs.
- Working creatively with children and young people during Covid-19- this included providing sessions outside, online and phone calls. This demonstrated commitment and flexibility of worker practice.
- Time has been spent developing child friendly resources and designing the meeting space within the office to be a welcoming environment for child and young people (see photo below)
- Supporting partners to feel confident to adapt to changes in the way hearings and meetings were run due to Covid-19. This continues to be an area that staff discuss with their partners to ensure their needs are being met- offering flexible options to attend (in person or online) is proving beneficial.

Case study

I supported a young female who initially attended online hearings due to Covid-19 and she was happy to attend these. However, once these meetings returned to face to face, her intention was to attend but she struggled to do so due to anxiety about the process. With support from her advocate, we discussed what would help her feel more confident and in control to feel less stressed about the whole process. After a period of taking time to establish a trusting relationship with her, we were able to design and create a set of laminated cards, so that she was able to share her needs without having to verbalise these. Examples of what she wanted to include, were:

'Can I take 5 minutes, I don't want to talk about this, can I go to the toilet?'

By using these cards, she felt empowered, had more control over the meeting proceedings and felt safer in sharing her views. This experience demonstrated the importance of being led by the needs of the individual partner and being creative and responsive in our approach. It was a positive experience for her, resulting in her feeling happy to attend the next meeting.

As a direct result of this partner's creativity, staff intend to create a bank of these cards for other children and young people to access and personalise for themselves.

Citizen Advocacy Project

The Citizen Advocacy Team have just finalised their 5th year of funding from The National Lottery. It has been a busy year with a few staff changes, challenges of Covid restrictions and a different way of working whilst awaiting news on funding.

The focus of the project over the end of the last year has been to support existing partnerships and tie up matches from the unmatched Citizen Advocates and partners.

The plans we had for taking the project forward changed at times as the focus was to make sure that existing partnerships were supported and that the staff team had support to do this.

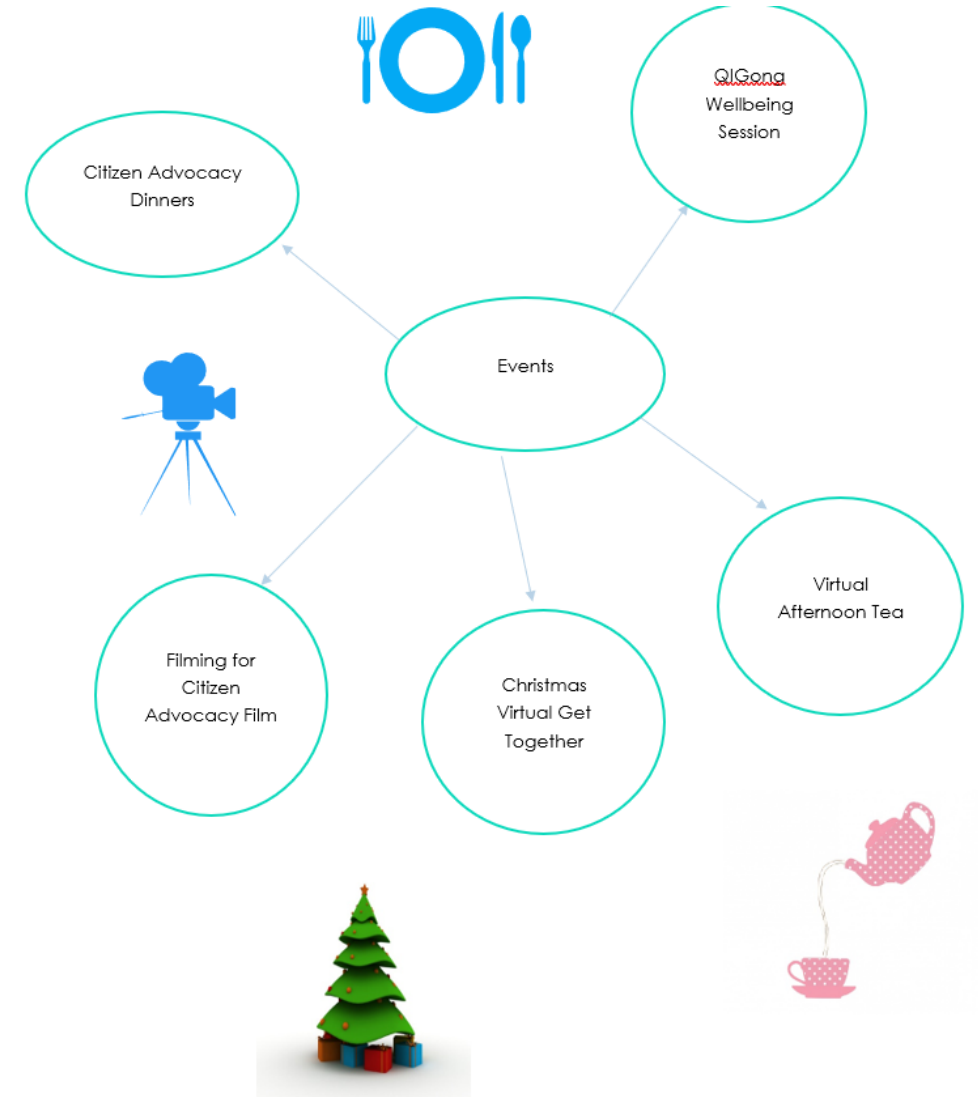
Key Achievements:

- Adapting our learning sessions so they can be delivered online
- Matching partners and citizen advocates
- Awareness Raising to organisations
- Citizen Advocacy Development Day
- Training for new ways of working such as using Microsoft Teams and SharePoint
- Familiarising ourselves with the community, different workers and groups post Covid
- Recruitment of Participation Worker to support the steering group

Challenges:

- At times we have found it difficult to engage people in online sessions
- Not being able to do so much face to face awareness raising

Over the past five years of funding, a total of 123 partners were supported via the citizen advocacy project and we worked with 90 citizen advocates (volunteers)



'It has been good using my strengths to support someone. It is good to see my Citizen Advocacy partner having her voice heard and feeling empowered.' Citizen Advocate
06.10.21

I am really excited to have someone just for me. I don't have any friends; I am looking forward to maybe meeting more new people through my advocate" CA Partner
23.06.21

'If I didn't have my Citizen Advocate, I don't know what I'd do. She helps me to understand things and helps me when I need it. I'm glad I met people from Angus Independent Advocacy.' CA Partner 28.09.21

Impact of the Participation worker on the Citizen Advocacy Steering Group:

The three members of the Steering group have all given feedback about whether the appointment of a Participation Worker has benefited them.

The individuals became part of the Steering group when it was formed a few years ago in order to help represent people who have difficulty having their voice heard in society.

The recruitment of a Participation worker has generally been seen as a positive addition to facilitate this process. I meet with the committee members who need support before meetings and help them to participate during the meetings.

"Lucy helps me to understand by explaining clearly what things mean as I sometimes find things hard to understand. I feel more comfortable coming to the meetings if I know Lucy is there to help me. I think I participate more because she is there"

"I think it's very helpful that we have Lucy there to speak to before the meetings so that we feel prepared and can get our voice heard more during the meetings"

"Lucy helps me prepare for the meetings and understand the papers better. There's a lot of information and she makes it easier to understand. I feel more confident to speak in the meetings because of this."

The challenges have been how to best facilitate this over zoom. It is widely felt that meetings in person are easier to participate in and the members feel more comfortable this way, also in smaller groups which became apparent during the training we had with Kinharvie on Terms of Reference in order to help make the meetings more effective. I am therefore trying to meet the members as much as possible in person. I feel that in the time I have had, I have developed good relationships with all the members I am helping so they now feel they can approach me with any issues before or during the meetings.