



## The Advocacy Project Newsletter

Issue 1, August 2018



## Hi everyone, welcome to our new Service User Newsletter...

**We'd like our service users to feel part of The Advocacy Project family.**

We have lots of exciting ways that you can get involved with us, so that together we can do more and help more people.



Some of these involvement roles are voluntary and some are paid roles.

We have lots of ideas ourselves. But one of the great things about our organisation is the input we get from our service users.



*So if you have ideas on how we can make things better, do things a different way, or just do something new – please let us know.*

## Mystery shoppers

*Paid work, one off commitment*

**“Mystery shopping” is used by many services to test whether staff provide a good service.**

We are planning to do the same with our service during the autumn.

We are looking for volunteers to check our services by calling us, asking us a series of questions and then checking whether we've given you the right information to help you.

We will use the results and feedback to help us improve our services.

*If you'd like to help us, please get in touch.*

## Get involved ...

**There are lots of ways that you can get involved with The Advocacy Project.**

You can:

- be involved in one-off activities
- dip in and out
- be a regular and committed member of ongoing projects.

*Let us know what you're interested in, and if we can add you to our database and we will let you know when new opportunities come up.*

## Contact us

- 020 8969 3000
- [info@advocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:info@advocacyproject.org.uk)
- [www.advocacyproject.org.uk](http://www.advocacyproject.org.uk)

# We are setting up a community choir

*Voluntary, regular commitment or dip in and out*

## The Advocacy Project Choir

We already have one performance booked for 5 December, and we'd like to hold carol concerts during the run up to Christmas, in various locations.

We also have plans to work with nationally known performers, as well as other community choirs.

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***It should be an exciting experience...***

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If you enjoy singing, we'd love you to get involved. It's a chance for you to be part of a group, and come together to create a beautiful sound.

You do not need any experience to be involved.

We are lucky to have Josh Kyeyune as one of our independent advocates, and he will be the musical director. He has lots of experience of bringing singers together to perform.

There will be a wide range of music, some of which you will probably know well, and some that may be new to you.

We plan to rehearse in a number of different locations, such as shared spaces in care homes and hospitals near you. The choir will practice on different days of the week, so that as many people as possible can join the choir.

It should be a lot of fun, and some staff and advocates have also said they'd like to join the choir.

If you have friends who would like to sing with the choir, they can join too.

***Rehearsals will start soon, so if you are interested, please get in touch with us as soon as possible on 07984 353 961.***



## User Focused Monitoring

*Paid work one off commitment*

### **Do you have lived experience of mental health services?**

If so, you could become a community evaluator and tell us which local health services you think can be improved.

It's paid work, and training is provided. The training programme includes survey techniques, data analysis and reporting, as well as boundaries and staying safe. The next training course will be held in September 2018.

***If you want to get involved, please contact us on the details below.***

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## Peer mentoring

*Paid work, expenses covered, regular commitment*

The Advocacy Project are looking for residents of City & Hackney who have lived experience of mental health issues that would like to train as peer mentors and offer one to one support to someone experiencing mental health issues.

***For more information, please contact Sophie Hudson at [Sophie@advocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:Sophie@advocacyproject.org.uk) or on 020 3960 7910.***

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# Older People's Voice

*Voluntary, expenses covered, regular commitment*

**We currently have 19 volunteers who are all older people from Westminster. We run monthly focus groups to learn about and evaluate various services available for older people in the borough.**

In the last three months we have learnt about services like:

- Volunteering opportunities available for older people in Westminster offered by One Westminster
- Talking Therapies for those with long term health conditions offered by CNWL
- Carers Network and common issues faced by older carers

We are also running a consultation on Transport for older people and its links with Isolation. We have already interviewed around 90 older people in North Westminster to establish how they travel to hubs and other daily activities. We will be interviewing more service users in South Westminster.

*If you'd like to help, please contact us on the details below...*



## Making a difference ...



**The Advocacy Project**  
your voice your rights your choice

### Would you like support from a Mental Health Peer Mentor

*A peer mentor has experienced mental illness and can offer one to one support to help you achieve your goals*

Would you like to talk with someone who knows what it is like to experience mental illness?

Are there any skills or goals you would like to work towards?

Have you experienced mental illness?

Do you live in the City or Hackney?

Would you like to receive one to one support?

**Want to know more?**  
Contact Sophie Hudson at The Advocacy Project  
07934 2987149  
sophie@advocacyproject.org.uk

***We had some very positive feedback from all of you who attended the course – thank you!***

**The Advocacy Project is all about helping people making a difference in their lives. We're always looking for new ways to do this.**

## Peer mentoring

**Recently, almost 50 people from Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea got involved.**

They came to our four-week training course to help them become peer mentors for other people with mental health issues. We will be holding a big celebration in September for all those who completed the course. Queens Park Rangers helped us deliver the training and Westminster Adult Education Service funded the work.

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# Speak Up Speak Out (SUSO)

**SUSO is a project led by service users with Dual Diagnosis (Learning Disabilities and Mental Health) in Westminster.**

We have been working closely with the Westminster Improving Access to Health (WIAH) Steering Group, which consists of professionals from Learning Disabilities and Mental Health teams.

The Westminster Improving Access to Health meeting brings together professionals and Experts by Experience who work together to improve access to mental health services for adults with learning disabilities.

We recently had the privilege of meeting Sylvia, who shared with us her experience of the support and care she received at St. Charles hospital.

Sylvia's honest and fair feedback will help us to make services better. We look forward to more personal stories and to working together to achieve our aim of improving people's experiences of mental health services.

Mette Le Jacobsen, the Bi-Borough Interim Head for Learning Disabilities team has said she found the service user's stories extremely powerful and would like to continue involving SUSO members in shaping services in Westminster.

***We have recently recruited three new members!***

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***“Sylvia's honest and fair feedback will help us to make services better.”***

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*Sylvia - SUSO member*

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# Helping us grow, as a Service User Trustee

We'd like to introduce two of our service user trustees, who have been involved in steering and shaping the work of The Advocacy Project over the past year:

## Adam Antonio



**Adam became a trustee as he felt he could use his own experiences to give others a voice at the board table.**

### What's important to you about The Advocacy Project?

"I found out about The Advocacy Project through someone I know who works in the social care field. I thought it would help me, as I am close to someone who has a mental health condition.

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***"There's a stigma around mental health; the doors are closed for people with disabilities.***

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The Advocacy Project is opening these doors by giving people a voice and showing them that there is support out there.

"I was a member of The Advocacy Project's Different Voices group. We used to meet about once a month to share our experiences of patient care. I'm close to someone who has been sectioned, so

I've told other people what it can be like. I've been able to share with them how this person felt. I then gave feedback about our experiences in management meetings at St Charles Hospital in Kensington & Chelsea, as well as in care quality meetings."

### What do you like about being on the Board of Trustees?

"The trustee board at The Advocacy Project is diverse in terms of cultures, abilities, disabilities, experiences, ideas and outlooks. This means we have more informed conversations. No question is a silly question. Everyone's point of view is heard and valued."

### What do you do in your spare time?

"My background is in art and design; I have a knack for putting ideas on paper then designing and bringing them to fruition. I originally studied art and interior design. I was also keen to learn how to develop properties – from the ground up – so I studied architecture too.

"In my spare time I go to art and design classes. I also enjoy writing music lyrics. In the past I have been on BBC television, singing with a gospel choir as part of the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year competition. I also enjoy doing Tai Chi."

# Michael Hagan



**Michael is a trustee who has personal experience of living with a learning disability.**

## What's important to you about The Advocacy Project?

"I've been using services at The Advocacy Project since 2012. I spend time raising awareness of the charity's advocacy work and recruiting members to join our user groups. It's really important to me that I support people with learning disabilities to have a say in their services.

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***I think it is vital that people who use our services learn from each other and share their experiences.***

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I'm keen for us to run a project that brings together people from each of the three service areas – mental health, learning disabilities and dementia – to learn and raise awareness."

## What do you do in your spare time?

"In my spare time I volunteer as a youth worker in Sloane Square, and I volunteer for a charity in East London which runs music classes for those with disabilities.

"My hobbies are listening to music, creative writing and watching films. I also love travelling and have spent time in Sweden, Spain, Greece, France, Switzerland, Germany and Ghana."

## What do you like about being on the Board of Trustees?

"The Advocacy Project supports me to prepare for each board meeting beforehand. This allows me to ask questions about the agenda and think through each of the key items.

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***The board meetings are inclusive so everyone is able to share their views and thoughts.***

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"One of my key strengths at the board table is communication.

It can be a challenge to make sure people understand me, and I'm good at thinking outside the box to communicate in other ways. For example, I can paint a detailed picture by asking questions that prompt people to build up a story or concept." What else do you do?

"Away from The Advocacy Project, I run a video company producing films for different clients including charities. I work with three other members of staff, who each have a disability. Our aim is to get more disabled people in front of the camera and in working environments.

In my role as a trustee, I'm going to produce a video for The Advocacy Project to promote its work.

# Remembering Nawaf



We are truly sorry to report the passing away of one of our staff members, Nawaf Bayoumi. Nawaf was an inspirational person, and we would like to take a moment to celebrate his amazing life as well as the contribution he made to our work here through his commitment to speaking up on behalf of people with disabilities.

In his eight years at the Advocacy Project as an 'expert by experience', Nawaf worked tirelessly to achieve positive change. Here are some of his many contributions:

- interviewing health and social care staff, to make sure that only the people with the right attitudes ended up working in the care sector
- training the next generation of speech and language therapists in City University and psychologists at the University of East London. Many of these students had never even considered working with people with learning disabilities before. One student summed it up best at the end of a teaching session, saying 'I have learnt more in the last 2 hours than I have in the last 2 years of theory'
- checking the quality of information to make sure people with learning disabilities could access services and make informed choices.

We are all proud to have had him as a colleague who constantly challenged misconceptions about working with people with learning difficulties.

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***Nawaf has left a hole in the lives of those he touched...***

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Alongside his work, he will be remembered for his consistently warm personality. Another was his incredible positivity.

Nawaf always looked on the bright side of life and took adversity in his stride, even when stuck on the second floor of the University of East London for hours. And many of us will remember his contagious laugh and wicked sense of humour, finding a reason to giggle about everything.

The topic of his presentations to students was 'Out and about with Nawaf', and this accurately reflected how he lived his life on the go and held important the little things in life. Be it going out to eat some spicy food, heading to an art session (a budding artist, Nawaf submitted work for our Christmas card campaign two years ago), or out with his social club until the early hours of the morning and still making it into work the next day. Nawaf was full of life, and he made the most of every moment.

Nawaf has left a hole in the lives of those he touched, but he has made a difference to so many people and impacted so many different lives. His spirit lives on and so does his legacy so thank you, Nawaf, for everything you have done.

# Whats new...

## We have just started a new project for NHS England.

***This is an exciting opportunity that could help provide a genuine pathway to employment or other voluntary roles.***

This is all about collecting input and suggestions from people right across London on how to improve mental health services.

There will be a range of engagement opportunities available, making sure that services are shaped and influenced by service users and carers.

***For more information, please contact Bonnie Studd at [bonnie@advocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:bonnie@advocacyproject.org.uk) or on 020 3960 7910.***

## ...and finally

### **So that's it, our first newsletter.**

We'd welcome your feedback. What did you like, what could we have done better?

Do let us know your thoughts. And if there's anything or anyone you'd like to know more about in the next newsletter, do tell us.

***We'd love to hear from you.***

## Christmas card competition



*One of the 2016 Christmas cards*

### **We will soon be launching our 2018 Christmas card competition so all you budding artists get ready!**

For the last 2 years we have asked the people we work with – living with mental health issues, learning disabilities, people with dementia and older people – to create art that would send out our collective

Christmas wishes. The handmade works of art were created and incorporated in our Christmas cards.

### **The story behind our christmas cards**

***Some of the people we work with are unable to see their families and friends over Christmas and won't receive Christmas cards.***

This inspired us to create our own Christmas cards to reach out to these people.

The Advocacy Project's work is shaped by the people we work with; we thought that the design of the cards needed to come from the very same people.

***So watch this space...as we will be letting you know how to enter soon!***

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