



south ayrshire
health & social care
partnership

Independent Advocacy Plan 2024-2029

May 2024



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Purpose

- 1.1 South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) is committed to ensuring people have their voice heard, can express their needs, make informed decisions and have their rights and interests protected. The role of advocacy has been hugely influential in protecting the rights of the most vulnerable in our society, creating freedoms and inclusion for the disenfranchised and ultimately supporting us to build a fairer and more equal society.
- 1.2 Within South Ayrshire those who experience mental health issues, dementia, autism or a learning disability and may be subject to the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2015 have a legal right to independent advocacy.
- 1.3 The implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 also sees rights for those who provide a caring role with the provision of an information and advice service for carers. The services must provide information and advice about specific topics, including carers' rights, income maximisation, advocacy, bereavement support, and emergency respite care and future care planning.
- 1.4 Advocacy within the context of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 is defined as "services of support and representation for the purposes of assisting a child in relation to the child's involvement in a Children's Hearing".
- 1.5 Care Experienced Young People have a right to advocacy. This includes those young people who we have in safe care.
- 1.6 A full list of relevant legislation and guidance is set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.7 South Ayrshire HSCP has a legal duty to commission and provide advocacy services to set standards, as set out in Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) Guidance for Commissioning Advocacy.
- 1.8 This Independent Advocacy Plan for South Ayrshire HSCP is a strategic document which sets out services currently available; the need and demand for independent advocacy; stakeholder feedback; and intentions for planning and commissioning independent advocacy.
- 1.9 This new Plan will take us from 2024 to 2029 and it is hoped that this time frame will help partner organisations to work together with stakeholders and continue to improve the provision of advocacy services to the people who need it most.
- 1.10 The Plan has been informed by information from the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA), guidance from Independent Advocacy Guide for Commissioners from the Scottish Government (2013) and by the views of advocacy providers, users of independent advocacy services, their carers, and families.

2. Who We Are

- 2.1 The South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership brings together a wide range of community and primary care health and social work services into a single operational delivery unit. In South Ayrshire, the Partnership includes Adult Services, Children's Services, and Justice Services. The Partnership is governed by the Integration Joint Board (IJB). The IJB has members from NHS Ayrshire and Arran, South Ayrshire Council, representatives of the Third Sector, Independent Sector, staff representatives and others representing the interests of patients, service users and carers.
- 2.2 The Integration Joint Board is a separate legal entity from both South Ayrshire Council and the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Board. It is responsible for planning and overseeing the delivery of a full range of community health and social work/social care services. The IJB is responsible for allocating the integrated revenue budget for health and social care in accordance with the policy priorities set out in its [Strategic Plan](#).
- 2.3 In practice, this means that services will work more closely together to deliver streamlined and effective support to people that need it.

2.4 Our Vision

'Empowering our communities to start well, live well and age well.'

2.5 Our Values

- 2.5.1 The following are the values to which those employed or contracted by the HSCP, or who are stakeholders in it, will be expected to adhere to:

We will be:
Empowering
Respectful
Compassionate
Open

We will demonstrate:
Equality
Integrity
Ambition

2.6 Strategic Objectives

- 2.6.1 The IJB has approved strategic outcomes and policy priorities which have been designed to deliver progress locally against the [National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes](#).
- 2.6.2 The Strategic Objectives are:
- We focus on prevention and tackling inequality.
 - We nurture and are part of communities that care for each other.
 - We work together to give you the right care in the right place.
 - We help build communities where people are safe.

- We are an ambitious and effective partnership.
- We make a positive impact beyond the services we deliver.
- We are transparent and listen to you.

3. What is Independent Advocacy?

- 3.1 Independent advocacy supports people to have their voice heard and to have as much control as possible over their own lives. The person who can help is called an advocate.
- 3.2 An advocate is someone who provides advocacy support when you need it. An advocate might help someone access information they need or go with them to meetings or interviews, in a supportive role. An advocate might write letters on a person's **behalf** or speak for them in situations where they don't feel able to speak for themselves.

Advocacy enables people to be involved in decisions which affect their lives. It helps them to express their views and wishes, to access information, to make informed choices and to have control over as many aspects of their lives as possible.

**Independent Advocacy – Guide for Commissioners
Scottish Government (2013)**

Independent advocacy:

- aims to help people by supporting them to express their needs, views and wishes,
 - helps people to gain access to information to explore and understand their options,
 - supports individuals to make informed decisions,
 - provides a voice on behalf of people who are unable to speak for themselves, or choose not to, and
 - safeguards individuals who lack capacity, either temporarily or permanently
- The power of Independent advocacy is exemplified in the stories below.**

3.3 Types of advocacy

- 3.3.1 There are many types of advocacy, both voluntary and paid, to support people in a range of situations. The following are the most common types of advocacy:
- 3.3.2 **Professional advocacy.** Also known as one to one, individual or issue-based advocacy, provided by both paid and unpaid advocates. An advocate supports an individual to represent their own interests or to represent the views of an individual if

the person is unable to do so. The advocate provides support on specific issues and provides information, not advice. This support can be short or long-term.

- 3.3.3 **Citizen advocacy.** Citizen advocacy is when ordinary citizens are encouraged to become involved with an individual who might need support in their community. Citizen advocacy brings an individual together with an advocate on a long-term, one-to-one basis. The Advocate supports an individual to defend their rights and is not influenced by the advocacy organisation.
- 3.3.4 **Peer advocacy.** Peer advocates share significant life experiences with an individual. The peer advocate and the individual may share age, gender, ethnicity, diagnosis or common issues. Peer advocates use their own experiences to understand and empathise with an individual. Peer advocacy works to increase self-awareness, confidence, and assertiveness so that an individual can speak out for themselves, lessening the imbalance of power between the advocate and the individual they are supporting.
- 3.3.5 **Group or collective advocacy.** Group/collective advocacy is where a group of people who are all facing a common problem get together, on a formal basis, to support each other in relation to specific issues. This might involve the whole group campaigning over an issue which affects them all.
- 3.3.6 The aim of all these models of advocacy is to help individuals gain increased confidence and assertiveness so that, where possible, they will feel able to self-advocate when the need arises.
- 3.4 A list of independent advocacy providers that work across South Ayrshire can be found in Section 6.
- 3.5 The following case studies demonstrate advocacy provision in practice. All names have been changed.

[George's Story](#)

George was introduced to Circles Advocacy by a local recovery charity. George and his family had been living in private rented accommodation in Ayr for the last five years. A new tenant had occupied the property adjacent to George's and had been causing considerable distress to him and his family by way of verbal abuse, harassment, and unfounded allegations. The landlord of the new tenant was South Ayrshire Council.

An advocate spoke with George and contacted South Ayrshire Council on his behalf to express his concerns, in particular the continued stress on George and his family and potential breaches to their human rights in respect of their right to safe accommodation which because of their new troublesome tenant was fundamentally at threat.

Following these discussions South Ayrshire Council offered George a new secure tenancy for one of their properties in another part of the town. The advocate then aided George in the processes of terminating his existing tenancy and moving to the new property to the satisfaction of George and his family.

George felt that he could not have done this alone and was at risk of relapsing due to the stress he was under. This would have resulted in a significant impact on his health and his family.

Jordan's Story

Jordan is a young man who has a physical impairment and a mental health diagnosis. He recently moved to South Ayrshire and was introduced to Circles Advocacy for support to access services. Jordan is learning how to live independently from his family and has moved into his own accommodation.

During an initial visit, an advocate informed Jordan about advocacy and how this would work practically when assisting someone to access and understand appropriate information and services. Jordan shared that he has difficulties communicating with others as he often feels anxious speaking to new people and can get overwhelmed when undertaking tasks that require concentration. He feels particularly uncomfortable speaking to people over the phone.

Jordan's overarching wish was to regain control of his finances. He had an appointee however their relationship had broken down prior to his move. Jordan was supported to navigate the process of removing an appointee which involved support with letters, phone calls and meetings with the Department of Work & Pensions visiting team. This was successful, and Jordan is now managing his money independently.

Jordan was supported to familiarise himself with the local job centre where he was able to access support to learn how to use his Universal Credit Journal and carry out any related tasks. This had a positive outcome as Jordan can now effectively use his journal to digitally communicate with his work coach.

Jordan was also signposted to local money advice services, such as the Information and Advice Hub and access information relating to council tax reduction, the blue badge scheme and cost of living payments.

Jordan said, "Circles Advocacy has been a good help to me with everything. I know at times it's been frustrating due to the nature of the issue. Thank you for all the help you've given me over the last months. It has been much appreciated and is a big relief for me."

Molly's Story

Molly, a 14-year-old young person has been in a foster care placement for a significant period of time. Molly has been supported by her advocacy worker for around 2 years and has established a good relationship with her.

This has taken time as Molly was somewhat reluctant to ask for help or make her feelings known to those who make decisions.

During this time, Molly has consistently been asking to return to the care of her mother and father. Molly began attending groups and having regular conversations with her advocate to help progress her ask and learn about her rights.

With support from advocacy Molly's contact with her parents increased to allow her to spend more time at home and eventually this moved to overnight stays.

Between the advocacy service and the tenacity of her carer, the plan for Molly to return to her parents has been endorsed by the Team Around the Child.

4. Policy Context

- 4.1 There are several relevant pieces of legislation mentioning or giving a right of access to advocacy.
- 4.2 A full list of relevant legislation and guidance is set out in Appendix 1.

5. Population Needs

- 5.1 The population needs analysis is set out in Appendix 2.

6. Advocacy Services in South Ayrshire

- 6.1 In South Ayrshire, independent advocacy support is available across all ages for people experiencing various challenges including children and young people who are accommodated by the HSCP, people with learning disabilities who experience mental ill health and people aged 65 and over.
- 6.2 Current commissioned advocacy support is detailed below. Commissioned advocacy services in South Ayrshire are going out to tender in Autumn 2024, therefore, the below information may change following the awards in late 2024. This plan will be updated and version controlled in Spring 2025 if changes are made following the tender process to reflect the advocacy landscape.
- 6.3 **Circles Advocacy**
Address: 2 New Bridge Street Ayr, KA7 1JX

Phone: 01292 264396

Email: info.southayrshire@circlesnetwork.org.uk

Website: circlesnetwork.org.uk/circles-advocacy/

Referral Method: open referral process i.e. anyone can refer (self or third party)

- 6.3.1 **Circles Advocacy** provides 'issue based,' non-instructive and collective advocacy to people aged 16 or over who live in South Ayrshire to understand their rights, get the right information to help them make informed choices, raise issues they are worried about and safeguard them in situations where they are vulnerable. Circles Advocacy provide advocacy to vulnerable people in South Ayrshire whose circumstances include, but are not restricted to, mental health issues, learning disability, acquired brain injury, dementia, autistic spectrum disorder and chronic illness and who are unable to safeguard their own well-being, rights, care or other interests. Circles Advocacy are also contracted to provide Human Rights based recovery advocacy to individuals and their families residing in South Ayrshire who have been affected by problematic alcohol and drug use. All initial and returning introductions are seen or at best contacted within three days. Circles Advocacy does not have any waiting lists and assistance provided to individuals subject of compulsory measures would take priority.

6.4 **Barnardo's Hear 4U**

Address: Suite 4 Second Floor Boswell House, 10-12 Arthur Street, Ayr KA7 1QJ

Phone: 01292 285372 (0141 884 7896)

Website: [Hear 4u Advocacy Service South Ayrshire | Barnardo's \(barnardos.org.uk\)](http://Hear4uAdvocacyServiceSouthAyrshire|Barnardos.org.uk)

Referral Method: Telephone, write, visit office or complete online referral

- 6.4.1 **Barnardo's Hear 4 U** aims to provide an independent accessible community-based advocacy service for children and young people up to the age of 25 who are living in South Ayrshire. It aims to promote children's rights. Priority for advocacy is given to children and young people who are entering or involved in the children protection system and those who are struggling with their emotional health and well-being and are subject to the terms of the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 or been admitted to a mental health ward on a voluntary basis including those currently accessing support from the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service. The service gives children and young people the opportunity to work with an independent advocate who is not involved in the decision-making process affecting them and provides them with support to ensure that they are able to have a voice and participate in these processes.

6.5 **Who Cares? Scotland**

Address: 40 Wellington Street, Glasgow, G2 6HJ

Phone: 0141 226 4441

Email: hello@whocaresscotland.org

Website: www.whocaresscotland.org

Referral method: through email, telephone or online referrals

6.5.1 **Who Cares? Scotland** provides professional, independent advocacy services in South Ayrshire for all care experienced young people up to the age of 26. The service works one on one with a young person to help them have a say in what is happening to them. Who Cares? Scotland strive to provide advocacy that helps young people feel respected, included, listened to, and understood. The service is independent to any care services a young person receives – this is crucial in supporting young people with no conflict of interest.

6.6 All of the advocacy services listed above receive funding from South Ayrshire HSCP and are monitored by Commissioning Officers within the HSCP.

6.7 Financial Information

6.7.1 The following table summarises total spend on HSCP advocacy services in South Ayrshire in 2023-24:

2023-24	£
Circles Advocacy	£184,032.36
Circles Advocacy – Alcohol and Drug Partnership Work	£28,950
Barnardo's Hear 4U	£42,530
Who Cares? Scotland	£56,048
Total	£311,560.36

6.7.2 A significant challenge going forward will be the need to provide comprehensive and adequate services to those who require advocacy support, whilst facing a restricted public service funding environment.

6.7.3 Below are some examples of issues that will put pressure on the provision of advocacy support:

- Increased demand
- Unmet need for those with complex needs
- Lack of resources / time
- Lack of understanding of the remit and purpose of advocacy

6.8 Carers

6.8.1 [South Ayrshire Carers Centre](#) provide dedicated advocacy support for adult and young carers. The Carers Centre offer specialist information, support advocacy and

advice, respite away from the role in the form of day trips, health and wellbeing services, social activities and peer support from fellow carers.

6.9 Beyond South Ayrshire

6.9.1 Information on advocacy available elsewhere in Ayrshire can be found in

- [North Ayrshire's HSCP Advocacy Plan](#)
- [East Ayrshire's HSCP Advocacy Plan](#)

6.10 The [Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance website](#) is a comprehensive resource for further information, including a list of advocacy services across Scotland.

6.11 Challenges and future requirements

6.11.1 As part of developing the Plan we need to be aware of the pressures and available resources.

7. Raising Awareness

7.1 Within South Ayrshire, there are many examples of innovative practices and developments which demonstrated how we currently raise awareness about advocacy. Since the creation of the HSCP in 2015 progress has included:

- Hosting information sessions across partnership teams,
- Attending the Champions Groups,
- Linking in with local youth groups,
- Attending carers events across South Ayrshire,
- Hosting stalls at wellbeing events in schools,
- Regular drop ins in the elderly and acute admissions wards at Woodland View Hospital,
- Meetings with Care Home residents,
- Attending the Adult Protection Committee,
- Attending the Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership South Ayrshire Delivery Group,
- Attending the South Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership Recovery Orientated System of Care Group,
- Attending an Additional Support Needs (ASN) Forum Event at Ayr Town Hall, and
- Assisting with the Weekend Film, a film directed and produced by children and young people who are young carers. The film shows the reality of life as a young person with caring roles and responsibilities.

8. Developing the Plan

8.1 In developing this Plan, we asked people for their views and experiences of advocacy in South Ayrshire, as well as comments on future needs and priorities.

8.2 The HSCP wishes to acknowledge the significant insights received from everyone who took the time to give their views. The complete findings can be found in the engagement report.

9. Areas for Improvement

9.1 As this Plan has been developed in consultation with stakeholders the following key Areas for Improvement have been identified as important and they will be taken forward through the delivery Plan – set out in Section 13.

- Staff Training and Knowledge,
- Public Awareness, and
- Information Sharing/Communication.

10. What We Will Do Next

10.1 We will:

- Establish an Advocacy Planning Group to manage the Delivery Plan with representation from the respective partners, including provider organisations, service users and carers;
- Action the Delivery Plan for the Independent Advocacy Plan;
- Link the Delivery Plan to available resources;
- Identify risks to achieving the Areas for Improvement and propose mitigation measures;
- Put in place robust monitoring and reporting arrangements;
- Report on performance on a six-monthly basis against the agreed delivery plan;
- Consult with service users, carers and partners as part of the mid-term review process in 2027.
- Review the Plan in Spring 2025 following the outcome of the Advocacy tender process.

11. How We Will Know We Have Made a Difference

11.1 We will measure performance, both qualitatively and quantitatively, against the Strategic Themes we have set and report on this to the Health and Social Care Partnership's Performance and Audit Committee. This information will be publicly available to all stakeholders through the [South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership website](#).

11.2 Our Delivery Plan is set out in section 13 and details the systematic and robust approach we will adopt to demonstrate delivery against the Areas for Improvement.

11.3 Review of Plan

11.3.1 In addition to the performance monitoring activity set out above, this Plan will be subject to annual review and a formal review halfway through the period 2024-2029.

12. Glossary

HSCP	Health and Social Care Partnership
SIAA	Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
IJB	Integration Joint Board
SDS	Self-Directed Support
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment

13. Delivery Plan

1. Monitoring			
No	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
1.1	Develop the South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group by establishing a clear membership.	HSCP and Commissioning Partners	July 2024
1.2	Identify strategic links across the partnership and beyond to ensure a joined up, connected approach to independent advocacy.	South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group	January 2025
1.3	Review the provider information following the tender of Advocacy Services.	Planning and Performance Officer	February 2025
1.4	Revisit the Advocacy Plan and further engage mid-way through its' lifespan to monitor progress.	South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group	January 2027

2. Staff Training and Knowledge			
No	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
2.1	Deliver staff training sessions across a variety of teams – particularly those who directly refer into advocacy services.	Commissioning Partners	June 2029
2.2	Develop a compulsory staff learnPro module that details what advocacy is and who it is for in South Ayrshire.	South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group	March 2026
2.3	Develop an information sheet detailing independent advocacy services in South Ayrshire (addresses, phone numbers, emails, referral process).	South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group	February 2025

3. Public Awareness			
No	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
3.1	Update all websites (HSCP and South Ayrshire Council) to include information on independent advocacy services in South Ayrshire.	HSCP and South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group	February 2025
3.2	Have an advocacy section on the landing page of the Connect South Ayrshire website.	HSCP and Partners	July 2025

3.3	Design a poster and flyer to share in public spaces across South Ayrshire.	South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group	March 2025
3.4	Explore various social media platforms to ensure we are reaching all audiences.	South Ayrshire Advocacy Planning Group	March 2025

4. Information Sharing			
No	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
4.1	Providers work well together by sharing service updates.	HSCP and Commissioning Partners	June 2027
4.2	Routine meetings are in place to ensure people get the right help at the right time.	HSCP and Commissioning Partners	June 2026

This information can be made available, on request, in braille, large print or audio formats and can be translated into a range of languages. Contact details are provided below.

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Faodar am fiosrachadh seo fhaighinn, le iarrtas, ann am braille, clò mòr no clàr fuaim agus tha e comasach eadar-theangachadh gu grunn chànanan. Tha fiosrachadh gu h-ìosal mu bhith a' cur fios a-steach.

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