



Joe Monaghan

***The role of Informal Community
Advocacy in pro bono law clinic
settings***

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***National Coalition of Advocacy
Schemes***

2001 to present

Liverpool Citizen Advocacy

1992 to present

Liverpool Integrated Advocacy Group

2008 to 2020

Merseyside Legal Services Committee

1998 to 2006



National Coalition of Advocacy Schemes

Founded in 2001

Represents small groups operating within local communities

Not all of these are 'Advocacy' groups per se

Some provide a mixture of advocacy

They have declined in number in recent years, as Local Authorities have had to concentrate on statutory provision within a climate of less funding for community development generally, including informal advocacy

The groups operate on different footprints

My work in Liverpool Citizen Advocacy, for example, is on a very small footprint

Looking Out For Each Other

We launched our new policy document in the West Midlands on 20th March

‘Looking Out For Each Other’ – defines informal advocacy and the different ways in which it can occur

It provides some useful guidance for those assisting people in speaking up and in having a say in what happens to them

This includes what we describe as natural advocates such as family members, neighbours, care workers

Different roles

Most of our groups support one-to-one generic advocacy activity

Some of this is undertaken by volunteers who support people on a longer-term basis with either several issues or maybe with a very specific one. Some of our groups employ paid staff to assist with issues.

Some provide telephone support, regularly checking in on people and identifying issues

Some have regular 'drop-in' sessions and/or social activities where issues are identified

The support is usually needed because the person is socially isolated and or needs independent support

A very large part of our work is about signposting and active signposting at times

Difficulties that people face

For some time now there has been a growing emphasis on people using the Internet and or telephone services

This might suit many of us, but it has further marginalised people who are not as comfortable or capable of using these methods

This trend accelerated during the Covid restrictions

There is a growing need for people to be assisted in accessing many things including Advice services

Most people have no idea where to start when they have a problem

Informal community advocacy has a big part to play in facilitating people's access to these support services.

Support issues

•Some examples of issues that regularly arise in community advocacy are:

- Welfare benefits including completion of applications and attending meetings
- Issues of poverty and isolation, most particularly for refugees and asylum seekers
- Family law
- Consumer issues
- Health and social care (e.g. bus pass)
- Employment
- Fuel poverty
- Housing (including disrepair)

Advocacy Plus

The Coalition is committed to an *Advocacy Plus* approach

This recognises that for advocacy to be effective, it must be connected to other types of support

Links to pro bono Law Clinics, where they exist, are an essential part of that

The Continuum

Friends/ Relatives/ Informal Carers/Peers

People working in services (with potential for conflicts of interest)

Befriending and mentoring

Informal citizen advocacy

'Hidden' advocacy within community groups

(add on to main role)

Community/Social activities

Group and self-advocacy

Independent Issue based advocacy

Statutory Advocacy - IMCA/IMHA – Care Act

Advice and Information

Help lines/Websites

Lawyers



Further reading:

***Informal Volunteer Citizen Advocacy in
England (2007)***

Citizens and Advocacy (2009)

***Community-based approaches to advocacy
(2015)***

***Looking out for each other (2016) University of
Liverpool***

***Learning from the impact of Covid 19 to better
promote the rights and dignity of older people
(2022)***

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