

Chairperson's Report

Another year has passed and I am delighted that we have seen a further year of Ceartas working for all individuals within East Dunbartonshire. It has been a privilege serving on the Board and overseeing the variety of work delivered by staff and the ever increasing contribution of our service users. We want to make sure that advocacy is accessible to more people and that we continue to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals through our varied activities. I was immensely proud that Ceartas won the Service User Participation and Influence Award from the Mental Welfare Commission this year. This commended our approach that all the work achieved is with people at our heart. I hope this year's report underlines that fact.

Martin Brickley



Chief Executive's Report

It's been another period of growth for Ceartas. Not only in advocacy casework delivered, but in the development of services within and outwith East Dunbartonshire. This work has been achieved through the dedication of staff, volunteers and of course our service users. The sports project Get Onside grabbed some headlines but that work was consistent with all our other groups - fun, supportive and connecting advocacy and individuals. Our work is about giving people the power to have their voice heard in whatever situation they face. Hopefully this report will give you a flavour of what has been achieved by Ceartas.

Gordon Thomson



Service User Forum Chairperson Report

I, like others on the Forum, have and continue to benefit from the services and activities of Ceartas. We are therefore in a good place to shape the organisation and assist in its planning and decision making on its development. The Forum meets on a regular basis and is linked directly to the board with staff and directors meeting with us to discuss the progress of the organisation. It is great to be part of the organisation and contribute to its improvement and help set the priorities that we want to see achieved. We are proud of all our activities that cater for people across all age groups.

Nicola Williamson



Ceartas – An Award Winning Organisation

We were delighted to have won the “Service User Participation and Influence” category at the Mental Welfare Commission’s Principles into Practice Awards in March of this year. These awards celebrate good practice in mental health and learning



disability services and we are delighted that our commitment to having service users at the heart of the organisation has been recognised.

As part of our nomination a short film was produced about Ceartas and featured some of our ABI Café members. On the day of the awards service user representatives from some of our groups attended the event and gave presentations on the work that we do. You can see the film on our website and Facebook page.

Casework

An increasing element of our work has been supporting individuals undergoing assessment for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). This is the benefit paid to people having difficulty finding work due to long term ill health or disability. ESA assessments can be a lengthy process and can be stressful for individuals. The role of advocacy includes liaising with assessors over appointment times, preparation work with individuals to help them provide an accurate reflection on how their condition affects their daily life as well as support during the actual assessment process to assist the individual to represent themselves. Ongoing assistance is common as often once people feel supported by Ceartas for this issue they are keen to accept assistance to engage with other agencies and services.

Ceartas Dementia Voices

Ceartas Dementia Voices is for people with a diagnosis of dementia. The purpose of the group is to give people with a diagnosis of dementia the opportunity to discuss specific issues or concerns they may face as a person with dementia; members of the group have assisted in the development of a Schools Resource pack and East Dunbartonshire’s new Dementia Website. The group have talked about “What Dementia Means To Us” using a number of ways to discuss this from writing thoughts and feelings down to making use of Envision Cards. This made for some very thought-provoking comments on dementia, including feelings of a loss of self and a loss of purpose but also of standing up to dementia and still being able to contribute. This year the group also met with Councillor O’Donnell to give their views on dementia services locally. Councillor O’Donnell said “This project makes an excellent contribution towards the dementia networks that the council and its partners are developing. The greater the awareness within our communities of this and other services the more the benefits will be for our communities”

ABI Café

(Acquired Brain Injury Group)

We hosted the 4th annual ABI Seminar in May. The seminar provides a forum for raising awareness of brain injury and the theme for this year was 'Recovery and the way forward'.

There was, as usual, a great turnout for the seminar, with guest speakers from Headway and Epilepsy Connections and a whole host of organisations providing information stands.

In the same month, we saw the establishment of our new 'Walk n Roll' group. With the help of East Dunbartonshire Council's W.A.L.K Coordinator Andy Lynch, the group organises health walks which are accessible for all including those with mobility issues and wheelchair users. The idea came from one of our ABI café members and we are delighted that it has turned out to be such a success!

Our very own Roy and Linda are now certified WALK leaders, ensuring the group sustainability. The group has continued to flourish.



Service Users Forum

We want to continually improve what we deliver at Ceartas and to make that happen we need to ensure that the people who use our services have their say. Our service users have started a forum that is open to all who have used Ceartas. The bi-monthly meeting reviews current services, discusses future plans and considers relevant issues for the board. Forum members are able to attend each Board meeting to represent the views of our users and we believe the Forum is further evidence of the organisation working to ensure that people who use our services are at the heart of decision making within it.

Changes

Changes is Ceartas' latest group; it started in September 2015 at the request of some of our service users who wanted to come together to look at "what matters most in East Dunbartonshire".

Changes is a collective advocacy group and aims to support individuals with lived experience in decision making across the local authority. The group are currently part of The Service User and Carer Forum for the Health and social Care Partnership and are looking forward to the opportunity to be involved in the shaping of the new service across East Dunbartonshire.

Changes members are also keen to explore other potential partnerships over the coming year to ensure that the voices of those with lived experience are heard in consultations and decision making.



Power, Voice, Choice

Ceartas were delighted to receive funding from SCVO Building Healthier and Happier Communities Fund earlier this year to provide training courses for individuals living in East Dunbartonshire who had experience of using services.

Power Voice and Choice is a course designed to equip people with the skills and confidence needed to speak out and have their say about the services that they use in their local area. Over the course participants looked at:

Communication skills, Advocacy and how to speak up for yourself, How to increase your confidence, Telling your story, Services available in East Dunbartonshire.

Some of the participants from Power, Voice and Choice have gone on to take part in other user involvement opportunities across Ceartas and are putting all their hard learned skills into action.



And Final Thanks...

Our thanks go out to East Dunbartonshire Council for their continued financial backing to Ceartas in our advocacy, dementia and information work. In addition this year we also benefitted from support from SCVO Building Healthier and Happier Communities Fund, East Dunbartonshire Integration Fund, Scottish Government Support in the Right Direction Fund. We are also indebted for the numerous personal donations that individuals and families have kindly given. Their generosity has been greatly valued and has helped us enhance how we deliver our group work.

Who are Ceartas

Ceartas is a free, independent advocacy and information service available to adults in East Dunbartonshire. We support people to have the ability and confidence to speak up for themselves and make their voices heard.

We have service users at our heart, shaping the way the service is run.

What is Independent Advocacy

Independent Advocacy is a way to make a person's voice stronger and to give them as much control over their lives as possible. Advocacy workers do not make decisions for a person. Independent Advocacy will help a person get the information they need to make good choices, and support them to express themselves clearly. We are independent of any other service provider like Social Work or NHS.

Get in Touch...

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