



ANNUAL REPORT



INTRODUCTION - GORDON THOMSON

It has been a positive year for Ceartas. In a challenging funding climate we have continued to deliver independent advocacy and a variety of groups and initiatives for a growing number of people. This has been possible due to the involvement of service users, staff, volunteers and trustees working together with the common purpose that more people have their voices heard and their rights protected. We hope this report gives the reader an insight into the achievements of Ceartas in the past year.

CHAIR OF SERVICE USER FORUM – NICOLA WILLIAMSON

Ceartas continues to deliver independent advocacy for people living with in East Dunbartonshire. This support is vital for many people and it is important that more people hear about Ceartas. The Forum have placed this as a priority for Ceartas and we believe that the group work undertaken this year along with the planned growth in outreach next year are evidence that people who use the service are helping shaping the future direction of Ceartas. Service users were especially pleased to be involved in the Creative Writing project, "I Am..." this year. This culminated in the publication of an anthology of our work. It was really encouraging and enjoyable to be part of this and we are keen to see more groups of this kind so that people can get a chance to find their voice as well as learning new skills. We want Ceartas to be inclusive for all. We want the service to continue to run

different activities that help people find out about advocacy. We look forward to working together to make more good things happen next year.

CHAIRPERSON - MARION MENZIES

I am delighted that once again Ceartas has worked hard to give people a voice. From austerity to welfare reform people continue to struggle to be heard at critical times in their lives. As an organisation we continue to strive to be creative in our approach and not be complacent. The past year has seen Ceartas deliver a number of projects with service users at the heart of the activity. This has included our work with people affected by dementia. Our approach in this field is renowned and our innovative activities have continued this year with evidence of this particular area of work contained within this report. Ceartas is all about our determination to ensure that people are treated equally and fairly no matter their circumstances and we will endeavour to maintain our high standards of work in the year ahead. My thanks to the staff team and volunteers who are committed to making positive change happen for the people they work with each day. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the board, with a special mention to Louise Benson who stood down from the board and also a warm welcome to David Wiseman, Ann McNair and Sandra Peat who have joined in the past year. It has been pleasure for me to serve as chairperson and I am confident that Ceartas will continue to grow and achieve its core aims of giving people the power to have a voice and real choice in their lives.



ADVOCACY IN ACTION



CASE

The advocacy worker visited Mrs X in hospital and used the communication book to facilitate discussion. The communication book encourages discussion about advocacy, making decisions, legal rights, feelings, home and nursing care. Mrs X was able to communicate her views to the worker on each occasion and each time she clearly stated she wanted to return home.

AWI meeting subsequently held and Advocacy Report provided. Social Worker advised at this meeting that Mrs X views had changed and she had agreed to move to a nursing home. Chair of meeting suggested joint visit with advocacy to clarify views and this was arranged.

At this meeting I again used the communication book to ascertain Mrs X views which she clearly expressed. The social worker said Mrs X had agreed to move to nursing care but Mrs X clearly said she didn't want to do this. Social worker accepted this.

OUTCOME/REFLECTION:

Although assessed as lacking capacity, Mrs X had been consistently clear in her views about her wish to return home. These views were also confirmed by her brother who visited her regularly. I'd also had previous contact last year so was aware of Mrs X's views about how important her home was and the views she expressed now were consistent with previous views.

These views were called into question at the AWI when the social worker said Mrs X had changed her mind and agreed to move to nursing care. The social worker was alone with Mrs X when she expressed this view and this fact was noted by the local authority solicitor who advised on the value of another person

witnessing what amounted to a volte face on Mrs X's part.

At a joint meeting with advocacy and social work the views Mrs X had consistently expressed were made very clear and plans to move Mrs X under 13za were abandoned.

It is useful to use communication aids/tools and be clear about content of discussion – relevant to particular situation – when attempting to ascertain a view. The direction from Chair of AWI and comment on good practice by solicitor to social worker also demonstrated upholding Principles of AWI.



CASE

Advocacy support was provided to Mr Y to prepare in advance for his upcoming ESA assessment having previously attended one before alone. He described this experience as being terrible, as he was escorted out of the building by security staff after the assessor reported him for recording the meeting. The man advised he had asked in advance for the appointment to be recorded but was told this was not made known to the assessor, therefore would not be happening. The man strongly stated that he felt he was not given the opportunity to explain fully his conditions and the impact this has on his daily life.

Having helped prepare the man for the various questions he could be asked, I also accompanied him to his 2nd assessment. There was occasions when he was unable to fully explain the difficulties he faced, therefore I assisted where possible to inform the assessor. After the assessment was complete the man explained how he felt much calmer having had support before and during this process, as he didn't think he would have done as well explaining matters on his own.

OUTCOME/REFLECTION:

The man was awarded ESA and also moved into the supported group. This meant that he did not have to attend the Jobcentre at present and his fortnightly payments were slightly increased. The man was extremely grateful for the support he had received and for someone being there to listen to him.

CASE

Long term advocacy support offered to a gentleman who initially was not receiving any benefits having lived and worked abroad.

Mr Z had been diagnosed with a number of complex health conditions. Due to this he was finding it very difficult to engage with professionals and have his views known and he needed the support to do this. Mr Z was also homeless, living in substandard accommodation and in financial difficulty.

Over two years the advocacy worker supported Mr Z. They took time to build up a trusting relationship with him by listening to, and supporting him to tell others, his views.

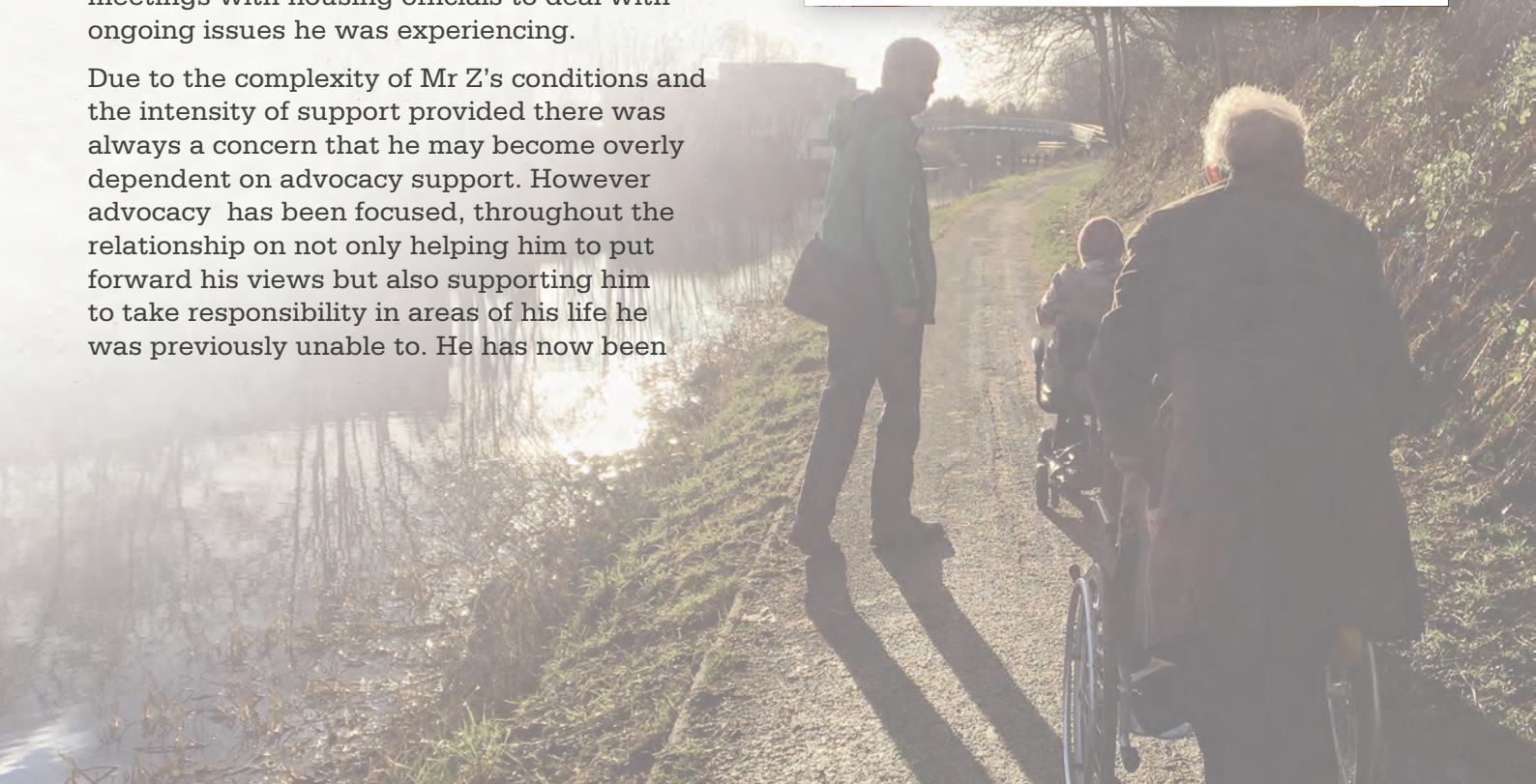
The Advocacy Worker supported him with his appeal for PIP and spoke with his Psychiatrist to get medical evidence which led to his PIP appeal being upheld. Advocacy supported Mr Z through the housing process and subsequently meetings with housing officials to deal with ongoing issues he was experiencing.

Due to the complexity of Mr Z's conditions and the intensity of support provided there was always a concern that he may become overly dependent on advocacy support. However advocacy has been focused, throughout the relationship on not only helping him to put forward his views but also supporting him to take responsibility in areas of his life he was previously unable to. He has now been

engaging with services he previously felt unable to engage with and is making positive changes in his life.

OUTCOME/REFLECTION:

As the person has PTSD the advocacy worker was aware that he may have created a dependency on them directly, because of his lack of trust of others. However, the worker does not feel he oversteps any boundaries. Advocacy has been focused, throughout this case, on helping him be understood by the authorities and offered the services he is entitled to. This has been successful as services now appear to accept his illnesses and are beginning to offer the help rather than turn him away because of his behaviour. It can be stressful when individuals rely only on you for support, but I feel that is now eased off as more supports recognise his needs.

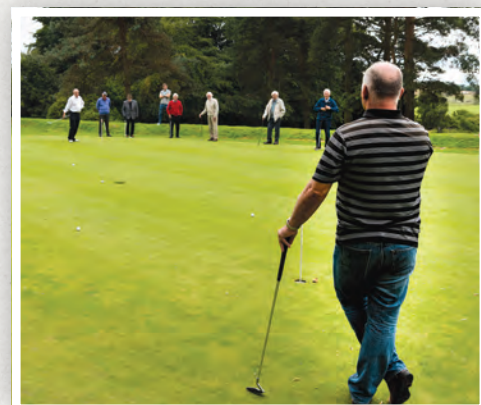


INVOLVEMENT

PEER SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

Peer support benefits people with dementia by providing opportunities to meet others in a similar situation, the chance to share experiences and to reduce social isolation which leads to positive wellbeing. People with dementia tell us they can often experience isolation and loneliness because sometimes the things they used to do like playing golf or going out with friends becomes more difficult due to the changes they experience. Ceartas wanted to make sure people with

dementia had access to peer support and applied for funding through Life Changes Trust to enable us to run a variety of groups for people with dementia. Our main focus is the five dementia cafes we run each month across East Dunbartonshire but in addition we have organised Walking Football, Sporting Memories and a reminiscence group called Made in Kirky. More recently we have partnered with Sporting Memories Foundation Scotland to run a Golf Sporting Memories group with the support of Hayston Golf Club and an art group where people with dementia painted a self-portrait.



DE CAFÉ IS MORE THAN A CUP OF TEA

Every month Ceartas meets many people with dementia and their carers through our de cafes. Most of the time it is an opportunity to meet others and have a chat over a cup of tea but at other times the de cafés are so much more. Each de café has dedicated staff from Ceartas on hand to assist when individuals need that bit more help and support. This can range from finding out about local services like chiropody or meal deliveries to your home to times when individuals need to access more formal support and care. Ceartas is able to guide and signpost individuals to access the help they need.

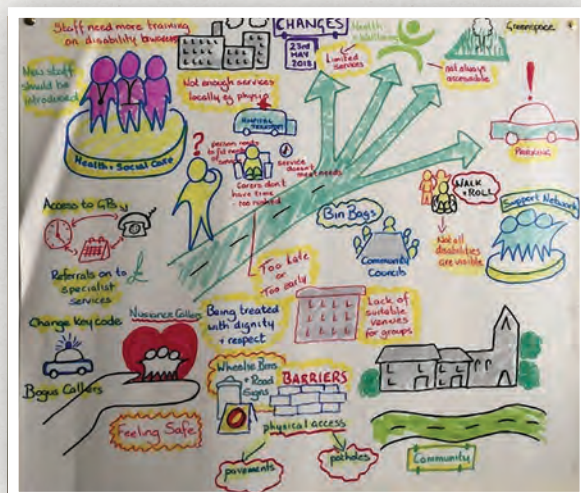
HIID

The Ceartas team - alongside members of the ABI Café - hosted a stand at the Head Injury Information Day in May. The event is run annually by Digby Brown at a venue in Glasgow, this year taking place at the Doubletree Hilton Hotel.

Members of the Ceartas team were on hand to discuss how independent advocacy supports people who have been affected by brain injury with support from members of the ABI Cafe: the only acquired brain injury group in East Dunbartonshire, run in partnership by Ceartas and Headway Glasgow.

CHANGES

Changes is the collective advocacy group facilitated by Ceartas staff to provide individuals with the opportunity to look at wider issues within their community such as accessibility, being safe in your community and health and social care. The group currently meets every two months and have recently been working on an accessibility report which they will be circulating to elected members in the near future.



INNOVATION

WALK A MILE

To celebrate Mental Health Awareness Week 2018, both Ceartas staff and the people we work with went on a short walk around Kirkintilloch. As part of the #WalkAMile campaign, we broke



down barriers and opened conversations about mental health before welcoming walkers back to McGregor House for a cup of tea and a chat. The walk was also open to anyone wanting to access health and local information.

CREATIVE WRITING

Thanks to generous funding from Big Lottery Scotland, Investing in Ideas, we were able to employ a Writer in Residence to facilitate an 8 week creative writing programme for people who have used the services of Ceartas.

We were delighted that our dream of offering a Creative Writing Course was about to become a reality. We already knew that there was a keen interest in this area, as in 2016, with financial support from Live Literature, we ran a pilot one day course and the response from those attending was overwhelmingly positive.

Many individuals who seek advocacy only do so when all other routes have been exhausted. Many feel disempowered, voiceless and personally deconstructed.

If independent advocacy is about ensuring individuals have a voice then what better way to assist that process than using creative writing as a means of providing an outlet for that voice. There are so many labels attached and assumptions made about people living with long term conditions; many face stigma and discrimination as part of their daily lives; they are often denied a voice or lack the confidence to use their voice and speak up for themselves.

Words are a powerful tool for us all, yet for some individuals who use our service, they lack the confidence in using words, in using their voices to be heard never mind having the opportunity to explore the use of creative writing to enhance their wellbeing, developing their skills or telling their stories.

Words and language are important, we need them to tell others what we want and how we want to be treated; we need them to ensure our needs are met and that we are able to connect with others; words can inform our mind, caress and comfort our feelings; excite and thrill our spirit or warm and kindle the flame of our hearts. We all have a voice and we all have stories to tell. Members of the group came along to try something new but with little belief that they could tell or write their stories.

Participants were not only given the opportunity to learn some of the skills used by writers but they also learned and understood that they too had a voice and that they too had stories to be written and told. They came together to support, encourage and learn from each other and in the process created some powerful pieces of work and have been motivated to start to tell their own stories.

We were proud to be a part of this group; we took part alongside members with no distinction between staff and service users; we were all learning and enjoying together. It was encouraging and inspirational; we had the opportunity as a group to find out about each other away from the daily stresses and strains of everyday life. We laughed, and probably almost cried at times over the 8 weeks as we all learned different ways in which to use our voices and tell our stories.

Ceartas feel incredibly proud of the work and commitment shown by members of the group; we have been inspired to explore further how we can use stories, poems and creativity to ensure that the voices of the individuals we advocate for are heard and we are incredibly proud that each and every one of the participants can now consider themselves published writers. The result of the eight week programme is the inspirational anthology, "I am..." which brings together the voices of the group.



CELEBRATION

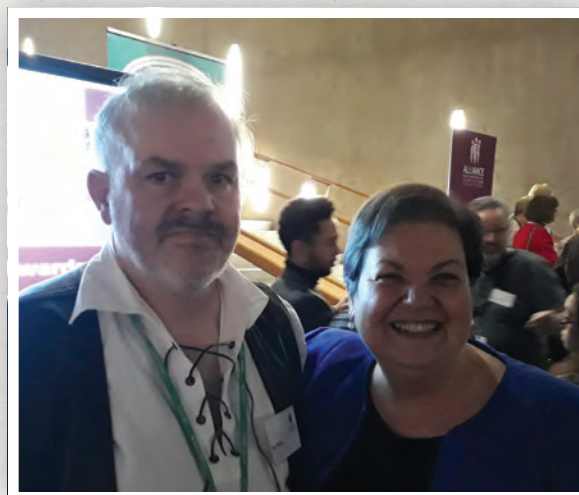
MUSIC AFTERNOON

We celebrated the 6th annual Music for a Summer's Afternoon back in June 2018 and welcomed a record 110 people to the event including; people we have or currently work with, members of groups, volunteers, carers and partner organisations.

Music was performed by our friends at 'The Helen Reeves Experience'. Big thanks to those who volunteered on the day and to Paul's Fine Foods, Table13, ASDA Bishopbriggs and Tesco Kirkintilloch for their generous donations which helped make the event possible.

SELF-MANAGEMENT AWARDS

Friend of Ceartas, Tam Willson, was shortlisted for a Champion of the Year award at the Self Management Awards 2017, hosted by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. Unfortunately Tam didn't win but was recognised for his work with the Knowing Me group, a service user led project that encouraged participants to capture and record their personal stories and experience of living with various health conditions. Tam's contribution was paramount to the success of the group and he went on to showcase his story at the 13th Ceartas AGM last year.



CEARTAS CUP

Two teams from Ceartas took part in the first ever Ceartas Cup, run in partnership with Clyde Community Foundation at Broadwood Stadium. The trophy didn't have to travel far, going home with the winners Clyde United who beat Airdrie in the final. The battle for the Clyde FC Plate was fought between both Ceartas teams. The tournament will be running again in December 2018.



Staffing

Gordon Thomson -
CEO

Sharon Bairden -
Services Manager

Patricia Ovens -
Finance and Admin Manager

Gemma Graham -
Senior Advocacy Worker

Susie Martin -
Advocacy Worker

Alex Doherty -
Advocacy Worker

Katherine Moir -
Advocacy Worker

Karen Heath -
Dementia Services Worker

Linda McGavin -
Involvement Worker

Ronnie Whiteside -
Marketing Assistant

Roy Hunter -
Information Worker



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 voice 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...
By Letter
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