

# Independent advocacy for independent lives:

A groundbreaking evidence  
base to grow inclusive support  
services for people with learning  
disabilities and autistic people

[socialfinance.org.uk](https://socialfinance.org.uk)

EASY READ

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The  
Henry Smith  
Charity

founded in 1628



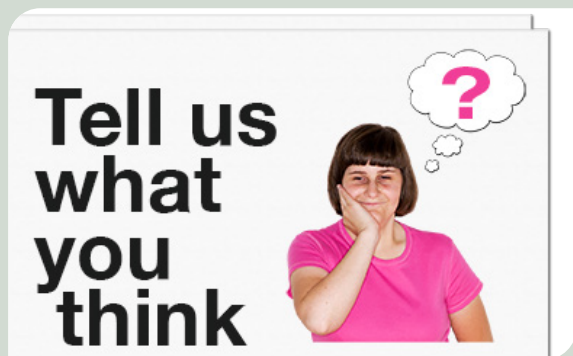
## About the project and what we did

The Henry Smith Charity set up a grant fund of £2.6 million in 2022. This is a three year programme which ends in 2025.

The grant supported 15 organisations across the UK who offer non-statutory advocacy for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

The Henry Smith Charity worked with Social Finance – an organisation working with the government and charities on lots of social issues – Social issues are things like housing, health care and employment.

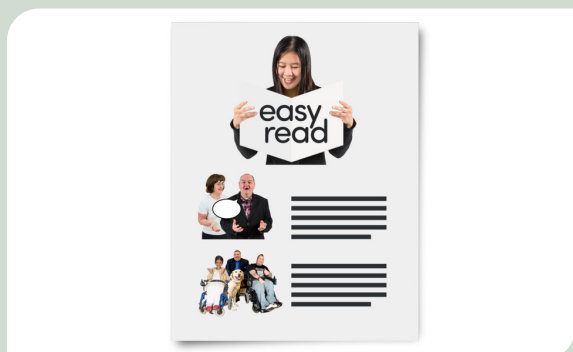
Social Finance is the learning partner for this programme. Together we worked with 15 organisations across the country to understand the work they do and share this with people who make decisions.



We used numbers, group meetings, interviews, case studies and other ways to show people why supporting non-statutory advocacy is important.



Speakup is an organisation run by and for people with learning disabilities and autistic people. Speakup supported this work by adding the views of experts by experience.



This is an Easy Read summary of the research that looked at what non-statutory advocacy is and and the difference it can make in people's lives.



We hope this research will help people who make decisions understand advocacy better and fund more of it.

## What Non-statutory advocacy is



Non-statutory advocacy is advocacy which is not legal advocacy like the Care Act, Children's Act, Mental Capacity Act and Mental Health Act Advocacy.



This is different to statutory services which have laws and policies. Both types of advocacy are very important.



Non-statutory advocacy supports people who may not get health and social care funding.



Non-statutory advocacy makes sure the person's voice is at the centre of important decisions about their health, care, employment, education or housing. It can take many forms such as one to one, self or group advocacy.

## How Non-statutory advocacy makes a difference



Non-statutory advocacy can make a big difference to people's lives. It can:



- Help people to learn new skills and knowledge.



- Mean people are part of the community.



- Mean people have better health and wellbeing.



- Give people the support they need to stop a problem getting worse.

## The four big questions we asked

Social Finance asked people 4 questions as part of this work:

1. What is non-statutory advocacy?
2. How did advocacy help people?
3. What difference did advocacy make in people's lives?
4. How much does advocacy cost and what are the benefits of this work?



Social Finance answered these questions by collecting data, this means we:

- Asked people to fill in questionnaires.
- Held events.
- Interviewed people and organisations.



We also worked with experts by experience and our advisory board throughout our work.





## This is what we found out

**We found out – Non-statutory advocacy can offer support that statutory advocacy does not.**



- Non-statutory advocacy can support people with lots of different issues statutory services cannot.



- There are different types of non-statutory advocacy, for example there is self-advocacy, peer advocacy or group advocacy.



- The services often support people in lots of different ways and do this by having trust and good relationships with people.



- They help people to live more independent and good lives even if they do not reach their short-term goals right away.





**We found out – People used non-statutory advocacy support and groups to help them work towards lots of different goals.**

A goal is something that someone wants to do or learn.



- The goal most people wanted was to be able to use services more easily, for example health services, social services and other services.



Non-statutory advocacy also helped people with:

- Housing.
- Supporting different things with or without their family.
- Mental health and wellbeing.
- And lots of other things including speaking up, finances and employment and skills training.



**We found out – Non-statutory advocacy groups helped people to reach these goals by helping in different ways.**

For example:



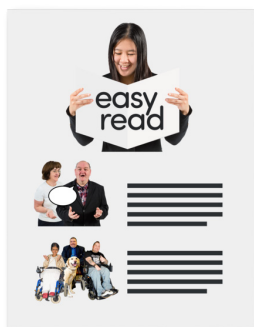
- Helping people have their voice heard and making decisions.



- Helping people get ready for meetings.



- Telling people about other services that can help them and supporting them to contact them.



- Making information easier to understand.



- Helping people to think about plans and what is going to happen next.



All of these types of support make sure that people get the right care at the right time to stop issues from becoming worse.



**We found out that non-statutory advocacy support and groups helped people's wellbeing, relationships and ability to speak up.**



Advocacy services worked with more than 1600 people through this programme.



It made a difference in most people's lives.



The research used a co-produced framework (a way to understand what people told us) about 7 important areas:

1. Speaking up
2. Understanding of rights
3. Understanding of local services
4. Having good relationships
5. Living a happy life
6. Feeling listened to
7. Learning new skills



The research showed that non-statutory advocacy is helping people with all of these things and lots of other issues.

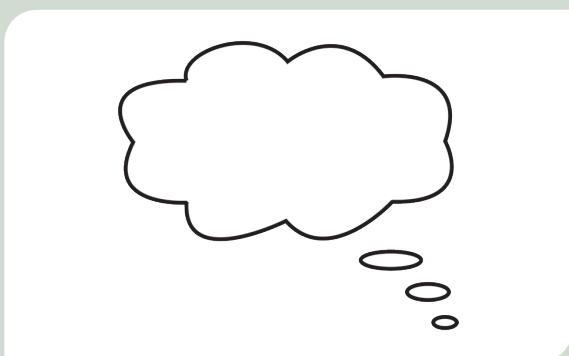
### **A self-advocacy group member said:**

**'Advocacy has helped me to live by myself. We've got more confident by learning together and going out and about. We set up the groups ourselves and set the topics. We're in our own community. We encourage each other to speak up for those who can't.'**



## **We found out – Advocacy helped people reach their goals**

Our research found that most people who took part in this work had reached their goals or were working towards them.



## **We found out – Advocacy helped people even if they didn't achieve their goals**



Even for people that didn't reach their goals, our project found that having advocacy was still good for them and they knew more about their rights and were more independent.

## **An advocate from an organisation said:**

‘From our point of view, somebody feeling that they’ve been involved and listened to and for them to be able to express their views is a huge thing for us because we would never say to somebody, okay, we’ll get this fixed for you or we’ll get you what you want.’



**We found out that advocacy helped in lots of ways (impact). The project showed that people thought lots of things got better through the support they got.**

For example:

- Feeling listened to
- Knowledge of local services
- Knowledge of rights
- People felt having help from non-statutory advocacy made sure they were listened to and could help the person to make decisions.



Advocacy also really helped people that needed lots of support with lots of different things (high levels of need).



**We found – More work needs to be done to support people from Asian backgrounds.**

Our work found that not many people from Asian backgrounds accessed advocacy. This is an area of improvement.



**We found that people having non-statutory advocacy support saves a lot of money.**



People having non-statutory advocacy support saves a lot of money to public organisations such as the NHS and local councils.



It can help people be in the community and not need more expensive support.



**£1.00 = £12.00**

For every £1.00 spent, advocacy created £12.00 worth of benefits.



**£7.00**

**£5.00**

**NHS**

**CARE**

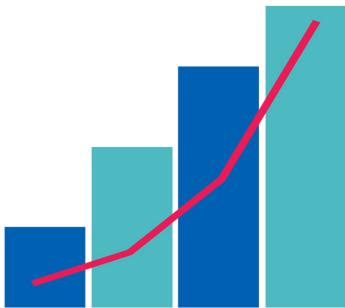
This means that for every £1.00 spent on advocacy services, you would save £7.00 to the NHS and £5.00 to local authorities.



## Non-statutory advocacy faces lots of challenges (barriers)



Councils have less money than they did before and often can't pay for non-statutory advocacy. This means that sometimes advocacy groups and services have to stop.



There is a lack of numbers and data that show the value of non-statutory advocacy. This makes it hard to share impact with decision makers and funders.



There is no team in the government which can support non-statutory advocacy and help fund it better.



There are lots of advocacy groups in the country. But advocacy groups find it hard to speak up about why advocacy is so important.

## Things that need to change (recommendations)



The work we have done has shown us that these things need to change in the future:



1. The government needs to set up a team that can support non-statutory advocacy to help more people and get better in the future.



2. There needs to be more money to help advocacy organisations help more people and in more places in the UK. This should be set up by our Government.



3. More work needs to be done to support people from Asian backgrounds.



4. Advocacy organisations need to have their own national voice to help them share their interests and ideas. This will also help advocacy organisations learn from each other and get better. This group needs to be co-produced with people with learning disabilities and autistic people.



5. Advocacy services should work more with health and employment support. This will help people receive more joined up support.



You can read the full report on the Social Finance website.

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