

## Background

In Argyll & Bute, service providers and people have identified the need for advocacy support for many years. The Recovery Advocacy Project was set up in 2019 after discussions with Argyll & Bute Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP). This is a core service delivered by Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service (LAAS). It covers Helensburgh and Lomond, Cowal, and Bute and Kintyre.

Firstly they recruited three part-time peer advocacy workers to support the service; who all completed their Scottish Qualification Award (SQA) on a Rights Based Approach. They then consulted with local community and partner agencies about their service model. This helped refine their plans and strengthened connections with stakeholders. Promotion of their service was achieved by a virtual consultation call with a range of stakeholders, seeking a range of views to guide the development of the project.

They also distributed leaflets, posters and information packs to local groups and services and introduced their peer advocacy workers via blogs and posts on social media. Further awareness raising of their service happened through their 'Step into May' walking challenge. This encouraged people to meet up and learn more about options available to them in their recovery journey.

## Impact

The Recovery Advocacy Project now provides a voice to people impacted by alcohol and substance use. With no judgement or stigma, they ensure individuals are treated with dignity and respect and support them to access services. With someone on their side, people are given the confidence to challenge barriers or discrimination when they feel they are not being heard. Satisfaction rates are good and the team continue to monitor these to review and refine their services. They also receive repeat referrals which demonstrates the confidence people and partners have in their service.

## Learning

Activities such as their Group Recovery Project have provided the team with insights into the needs of the people they support. They have fostered a culture of collaboration and trust with people and services which continues to grow. They are working to overcome challenges in trying to engage women affected by alcohol and substance use.

## Top Tips

- Have a clear vision of what you want to achieve.
- Include people with lived and living experience at every stage.
- Be creative when promoting your service.

## Next Steps

Over the coming months the team aim to secure longer term funding to embed and extend the reach of their service, publish their new advocacy 'Book of Hope' and trial their self-advocacy skills training pack on the Isle of Bute.