



Autumn 2005

What difference does advocacy make?

My advocate helped me get my support hours changed so that I can do activities all week

People listen to me now

My advocate helped me get a support worker, and on the waiting list for a bungalow

I have more confidence from coming to the self advocacy group

Speakeasy Advocacy

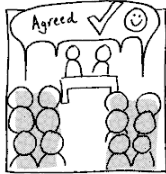
Giving a voice and support to people with learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and/or Asperger's syndrome



Registered charity number: 1108304



Speakeasy Advocacy News



The Annual General meeting

The meeting was on Wednesday 31 August from 6pm to 8pm



New trustees were elected to represent the self advocacy groups



We heard a report from the trustees about all the work we have been doing over the last year, and information about our finances - please get in touch if you want a copy of the report



These are some of the things people said about Speakeasy Advocacy this year:

- members of Happy Club were pleased that they had more confidence about running the group themselves, particularly when Matthew had been ill recently
- the staff said the move to 17 New Road went really well
- Campbell from Basingstoke Advocacy Service thanked us for helping to train some of their new trustees and volunteers



The party to celebrate 10 years of advocacy in Basingstoke



The deputy mayor opened the party by welcoming everyone, and thanking them for all their hard work over the last 10 years. He posed for photographs with the cake, and the picture was published in the *Gazette*.

The deputy Mayor handed out certificates to members of Happy Club who had done a training course where they had learnt how to train other people.



Our chairman, Bob Hannah, thanked all the people who have used the service, volunteers and staff for their commitment over the years. He said "we have been successful because of you all".



The MP for Basingstoke, Maria Miller, came along and enjoyed looking round and meeting people who use the service. Maria said she was very impressed by all the work we do here, and wants to keep in touch with us.



Everyone enjoyed the food, drink and Karaoke - thank you to David and Sarah who made sure the singing continued all night!



Self advocacy groups

Self advocacy = speaking up for yourself



Wicked and Wacky have enjoyed doing some sessions looking at "how we behave". So far they have talked about money and relationships, thinking about how their actions affect others. They keep copies of their work in a folder.



Happy Club have published their agenda for the rest of the year. Activities include social evenings at member's houses, and parties in the group room. There are also some bowling evenings on Saturday nights.



Virtual Friends continue to meet in the White Hart pub on Monday nights from 7.30pm. They want to start up a chat room so that people from all over the country can join in.

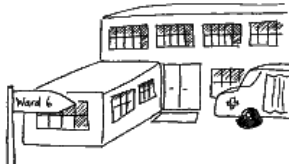


Internet Explorers were happy to be back after a summer break during August. The group have a short meeting every week, when they decide what activities they want to do.

Get in touch if you want to know more about the groups



We say goodbye to Mark and Andrea in the next few months



Mark Winwood has been the "Moving On" advocate since May 2001, working with the residents of Darlington and Sherborne House. The residents have all moved into houses and bungalows in Basingstoke, and have better lives than they did before. Mark made sure that the residents wishes were taken into account, as they couldn't speak for themselves. Mark is leaving because this project ends in September.



- Mark has also worked on other projects over the years
- training with the Happy Club, where they learned how to train others
 - getting to know people who use the day services and finding out what they want from their lives

Thank you Mark for all your hard work!



Andrea Somerville, our volunteer co-ordinator, leaves in October to have a baby - she will be back in a year. Good luck Andrea!

A FEW HOURS A MONTH CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Many of us have people we can turn to, that listen to us, and support us to make decisions in our lives

Some people with learning difficulties or autism have paid carers and professionals involved in their lives, but no-one who is there just to listen to them and find out what they want.

We are looking for people just like you to become advocates - all you need is some free time and a common sense approach.

Interested? Full training and support will be given plus travel expenses. Call Andrea on 01256 332795 or email speakeasy.advocacy@btconnect.com



Volunteers needed for Saturday coffee mornings (starting soon)

- support users of the service to run a coffee morning
 - spend time with people who drop in for a chat

Life with Asperger's Syndrome

Matthew is a trustee at Speakeasy Advocacy, and founder member of Virtual Friends and Happy Club.

“After meeting others with AS I realised that there was a desperate need for a group in my local area. The group that I set up is called “Virtual Friends” and is supported by the charity “Speakeasy Advocacy”, though when it first started it was supported by HAS Advocacy. The charity’s office is our base, but we would also go out on our evenings and meet up in the local pubs. We had a chat-room (which we are trying to revamp) and this was a good way of communicating with people who couldn’t make it to the group each week. Also we might have members who were unable to get to the group because of distance, lack of confidence or other commitments, so they could spend some time talking if they wanted or leave a message in the chat-room and we would pick it up later.

This group was an ideal way for people to get to know each other and offer support and encouragement because we were all in the same situation, and although everyone is different; there were common links between all of us. It can be very isolating if you don’t know how to make friends, and the point of us going out into the community was so that we had more opportunities of meeting people. In the pubs we used to find that people would talk to us and want to find out more about what we were doing. We did not have any “official” training, but all the things we have learnt through working as a group and the challenges this has brought, was our main source of training. People made friends and saw each other outside the group, people learnt social skills, what was acceptable behaviour and what was not. Sometimes we had disagreements, but this was all part of the learning process, and we are not all the same so we don’t all think the same.

Although there were (and are) staff and volunteers who run the group, we are run by the members and all decisions about the group and what happens to it in the future are made by the group members. Everyone has their say and all are encouraged to give their opinions and ideas. Because we are already supported by an established charity, this means that we are able to regularly feed back to the organisation our thoughts and ideas and then they will be brought up at the meetings held by the trustees who run the charity. So we influence the whole charity, not just our group. Also if someone is not sure which way to turn, we will make them aware of the options that are available to them. We have had real life situations brought to us and have been successful in helping people to overcome their difficulties.

We try to have regular social events, though ironically, we haven't been successful with this of late because all the group members are too busy with their own lives. This is excellent though, it means that people are leading their lives and getting out there and doing things, which is what we had aimed for in the beginning. So when people tell us they are too busy to come to the group, we don't get upset; we think it is really good that they have moved on. The ideal thing about this sort of group is that people come along when they want to and if they want to, there is no rule that says you have to come every week, it is totally by choice.”

How to get in touch:



01256 332795 (you can leave a message)



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speakeasy.advocacy@btconnect.com

What's on in Basingstoke?




We can support you to:



find out what you want to do



try new things

Ask Jackie if you want to know more or  us on
01256 332795