



SURVEY RESULTS: ADVOCACY IN NORFOLK

2024

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INTRODUCTION

When The Norfolk Advocacy Partnership (NAP) decided to create a survey, we quickly came up with a long list of questions. It felt as though we were starting from scratch when it came to collecting data about advocacy in Norfolk. Should we focus on service users, professionals, or the general public? How do we ensure the survey is accessible? How do we promote it?

We worked together to develop this survey. It is by no means exhaustive - this is a topic which deserves research on a much larger scale. Still, we hope that the results of this survey can prove useful.

RELEVANT TERMS

- **Statutory advocacy:** Where a person is legally entitled to an advocate because of their circumstances.
- **Protected characteristics:** Under the Equality Act 2010, you are protected against discrimination because of the following reasons: age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, disability, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- **Demographic:** The qualities and composition of a specific group.
- **VCSE sector:** Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.
- **Social prescribing:** An approach that connects people to activities, groups, and services in their community (NHS).
- **Legal aid:** Program which provides legal advice to those who cannot afford it.
- **Pension credit:** “Pension Credit gives you extra money to help with your living costs if you're over State Pension age and on a low income” (Gov.uk)
- **Public sector:** Public services, controlled by national, state or local government.
- **Voluntary sector:** Organisations whose primary purpose is to create social impact rather than profit (Reach Volunteering).
- **Qualitative data:** Looks in-depth at individual's answers, learning from their thoughts and experiences.
- **Quantitative data:** Looks at a group through statistics and numbers.
- **SEO:** Search Engine Optimisation, meaning adapting website design and content to rank higher for searches on search engines such as Google and Bing.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

“Advocacy is taking action to support people to say what they want, secure their rights, pursue their interests and obtain services the need. Advocacy providers and Advocates work in partnership with the people they support and take their side, promoting social inclusion, equality and social justice.”

- The Advocacy Charter

Individual Advocacy

An Advocate is an independent professional who can support you to have your voice heard on a particular issue. They can help you to understand the process you are going through and will try to support you to build up your confidence.

As a partnership, we provide community advocacy and specialist advocacy. We define our services as non-statutory advocacy whereby marginalised groups are supported to:

- Navigate systems.
- Make informed choices.
- Have their voice heard.

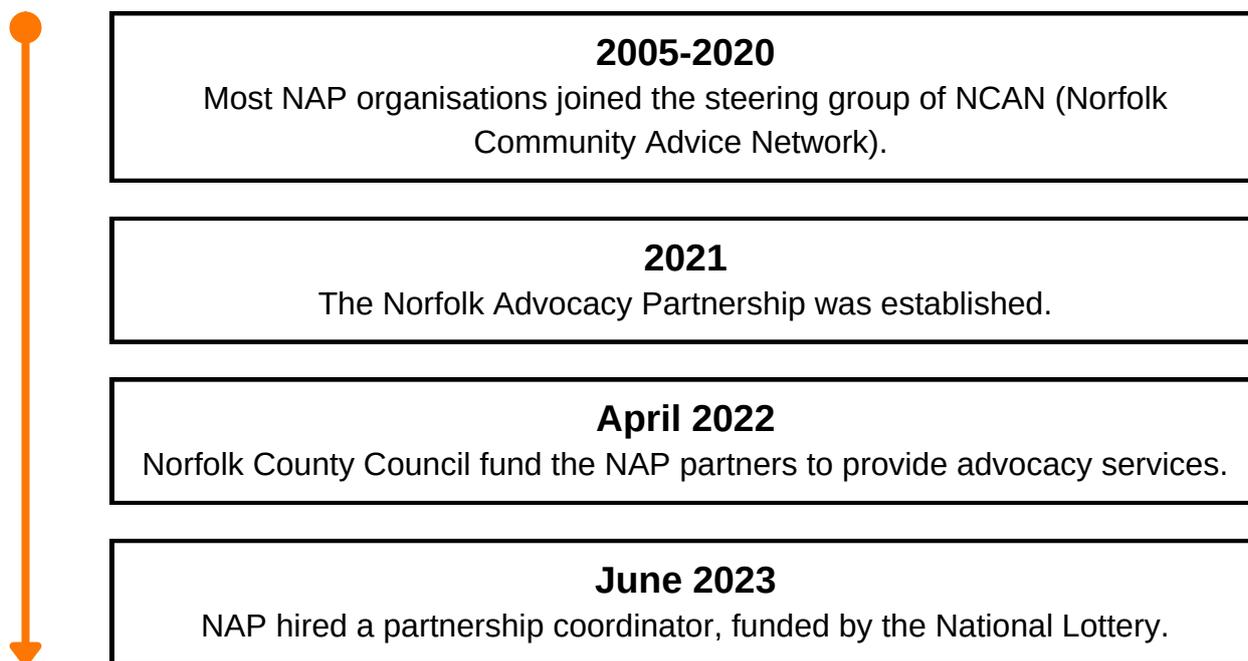
Systemic Advocacy

Systemic advocacy can be thought of as 'macro-level' advocacy as it is about advocating on behalf of entire communities for structural change. It is about challenging things on an institutional level, changing the system. Collectively, we can identify trends and barriers across the county to ensure that the people we support are truly represented.

Through the identification of and removal of systemic barriers across the county we can support people to be confident to amplify their voices and understand their rights. This anticipatory approach will benefit more people as they will not encounter those barriers once they have been addressed.

ABOUT THE NORFOLK ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIP (NAP)

NAP advocates for systems-wide change across Norfolk. We aim to disable barriers for people of protected characteristics, from disability to age and race.



What we do

First off, we signpost to services. There are services across Norfolk which can support with most issues, but it can be hard to navigate them; individuals and professionals can contact us to find the right service.

Second, we connect organisations. Through networking, co-production and other partnerships, we establish connections with other organisations in the sector.

We also work to improve and promote advocacy. Many people who may benefit from advocacy services do not know that they exist. By promoting advocacy in Norfolk, we can attract more funding and increase our service offer.

We share knowledge, attend training and strive to improve our services.

Finally, we provide structural advocacy. We aim to promote the rights of disadvantaged groups. This may include campaigning, increasing awareness and providing training.



Our Partners



BACKGROUND FOR THE ADVOCACY SURVEY

We decided to create the survey because...

We wanted to find out what people know. An important part of what we do as a partnership is to promote advocacy. This includes teaching people what it is, why it is important and who provides the services. Before doing this, we wanted to find out what people already know, so we can make sure the information we share is relevant and accessible.

We wanted to teach people about advocacy. We hope that by filling in the survey, people learnt something new about advocacy. They may even discover that either they or someone they know might benefit from an advocacy service.

We wanted to promote our organisation. We aim to signpost local organisations and individuals to the appropriate advocacy provider. We also want to teach them about advocacy. These goals are easier to reach if they know who we are! By promoting the survey, we were also promoting our organisation.

We wanted to learn about other organisations. Norfolk has hundreds of charities. We wanted to find out if there are organisations providing advocacy services that we were not already aware of.



We wanted to learn about the community. It is important to us that our work benefits the community. By learning about local residents, their views and their opinions, we can adapt our work so that it is relevant to them.

THE PROCESS OF THE SURVEY

1

Development

We worked together to ensure our questions were relevant, accessible and useful. We wanted to gather data from professionals, individuals who have accessed advocacy services, and the wider community.

2

Survey Design

We offered the survey as an online form. The form used conditional fields to adapt to the individual filling it in. We also offered paper copies.

3

Data gathering

We promoted the survey in newsletters, through talks about advocacy, at events, at Shopmobility in Chantry Place, and through our advocacy organisations. We also offered a chance of winning a reward of £50 to encourage participation. The survey was open from 1st December 2023, with the last response submitted April 2024.

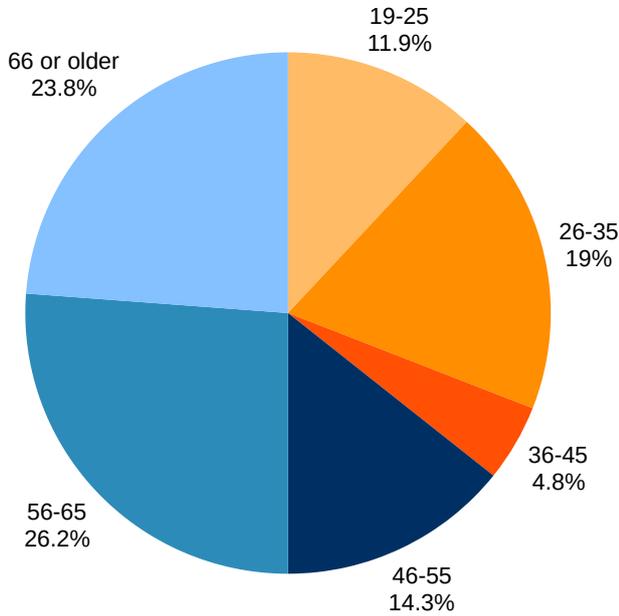
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Analysis

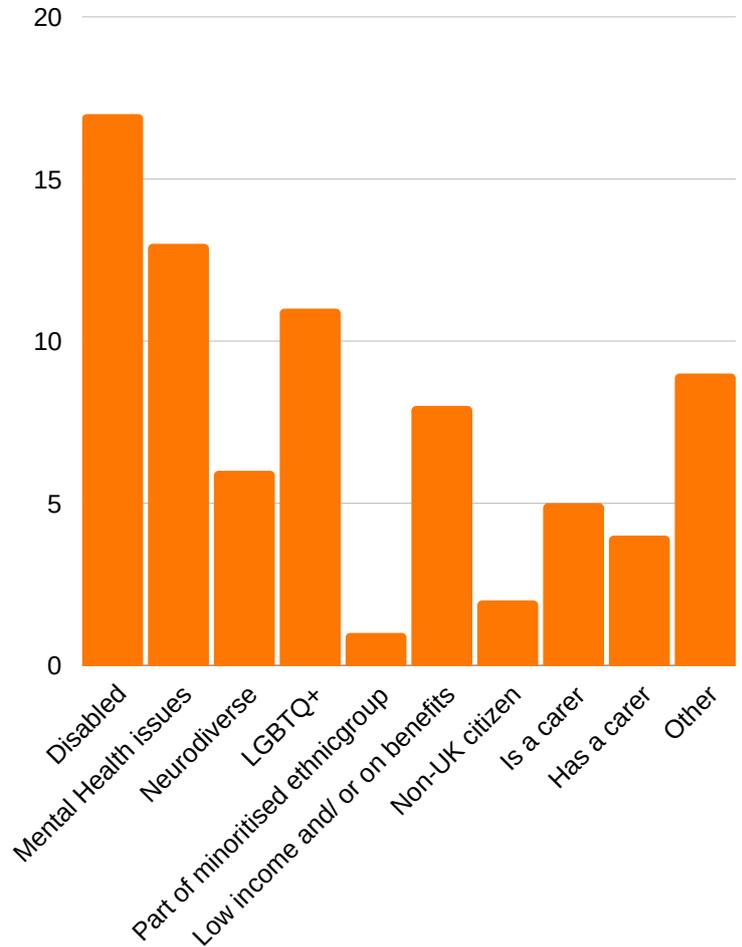
We gathered 44 responses. These were analysed to produce this report.

DEMOGRAPHICS

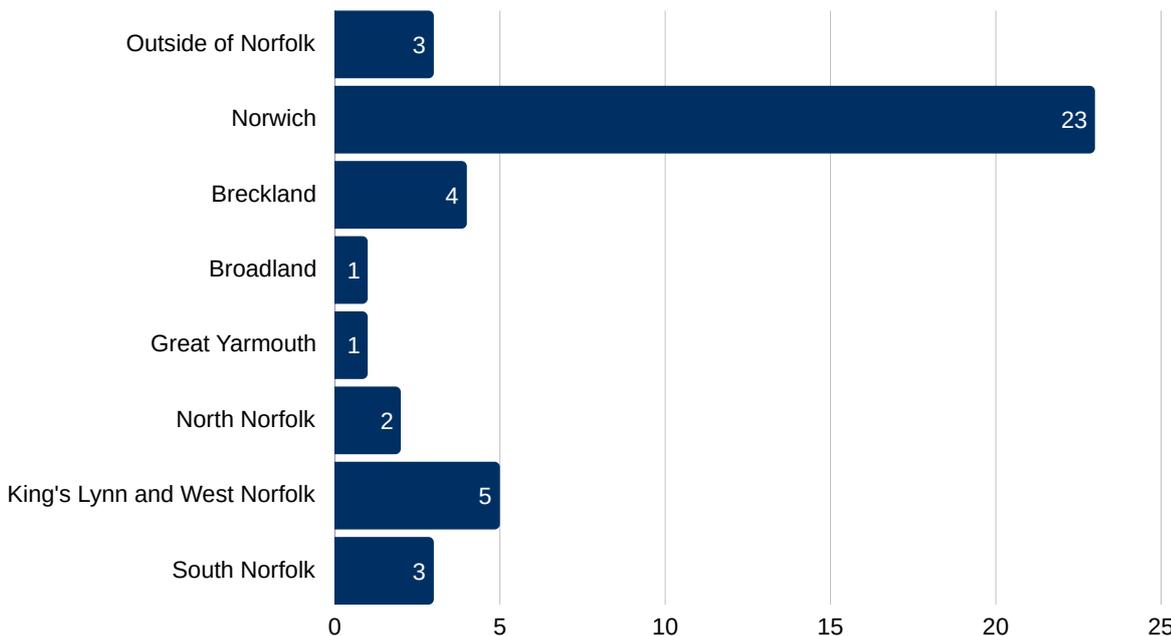
Age



Potential barriers



District



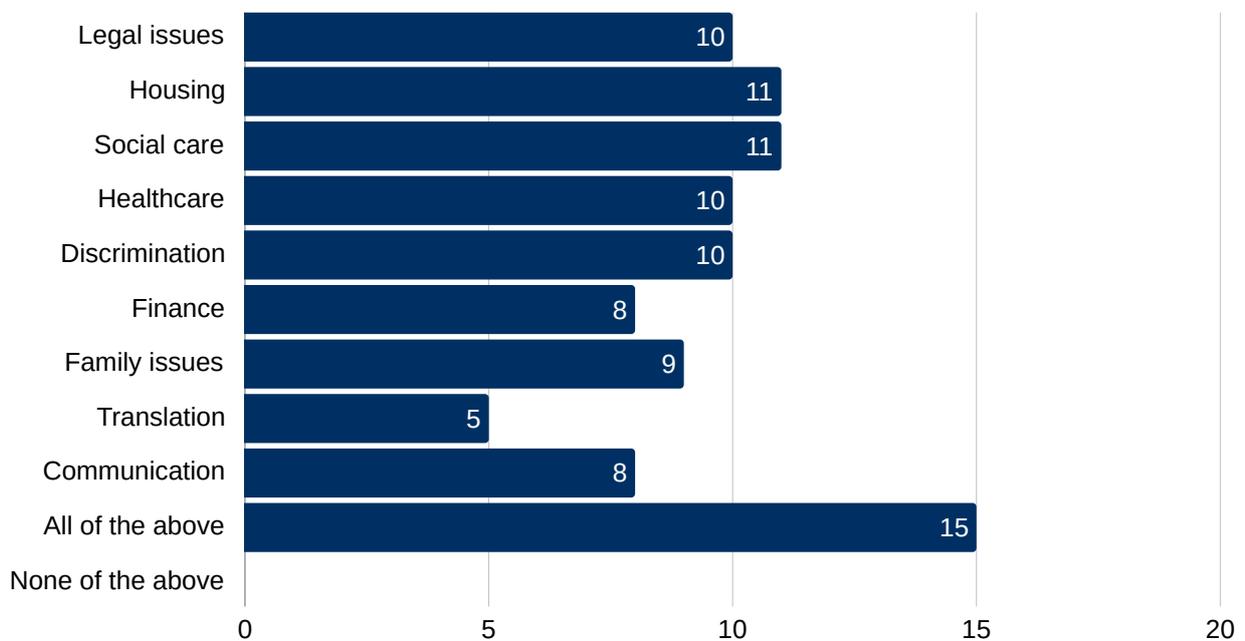
RESULTS

General responses

All respondents were asked the questions in this section. We also asked additional questions to those who work in the VCSE sector and those who have accessed advocacy services. These questions will be explored in the next two sections. Individuals who were part of both of these groups were asked all the questions.

1. What do you think an advocate can support with?

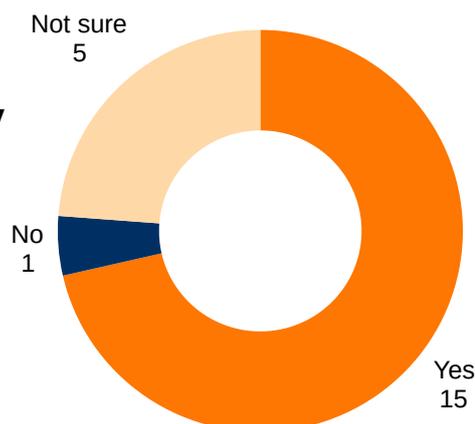
Respondents were given a list of options to choose from. These were the results:



While it may seem like this question has a “correct” response, it is not that simple. The types of issues advocates work with depends on the organisation, their funding, their user group and more. Please find more on this in the analysis section.

2. Do you know what advocacy is?

These were the results:



3. What do you think advocacy is?

These are some of the responses:

“

“Someone who represents your views and is able to help you get your point across.”

“Working alongside a client to help them to have their voice heard.”

“A person that has had training in a particular area, that can give guidance.”

“Being able to advocate a person’s wishes on their behalf to an organisation or another person, to enable and support them through that process, always giving their point of view.”

“Representing a client (individual/group) and their interests to resolve conflicts, solve problems, or improve quality of life.”

“Helping people by campaigning or championing their rights. Or enabling them to access services, support, assistance etc that they are entitled to.”

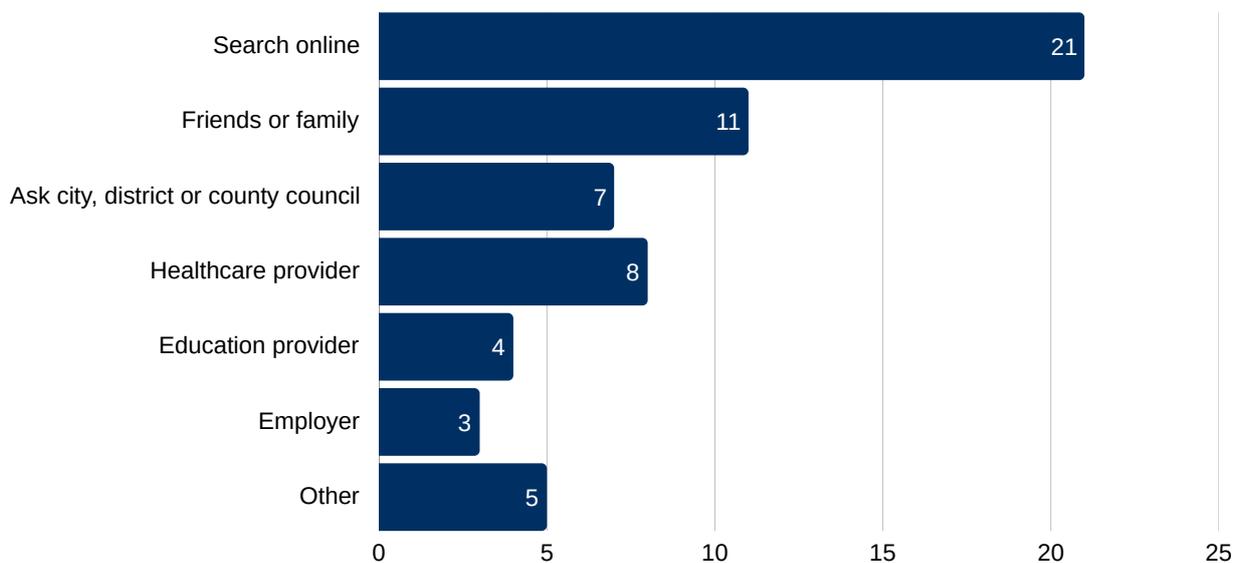
“An advocate supports an individual to feel listened to, confident and independent.”

“Helping to make sure that people understand what is going on and get their point across the other people in authority, and business.”

“Advocacy is rallying for social change and equity - whether this is challenging the current status quo through advocating for change or by providing support.”

”

4. If you wanted an advocate, where would you get help to find one?



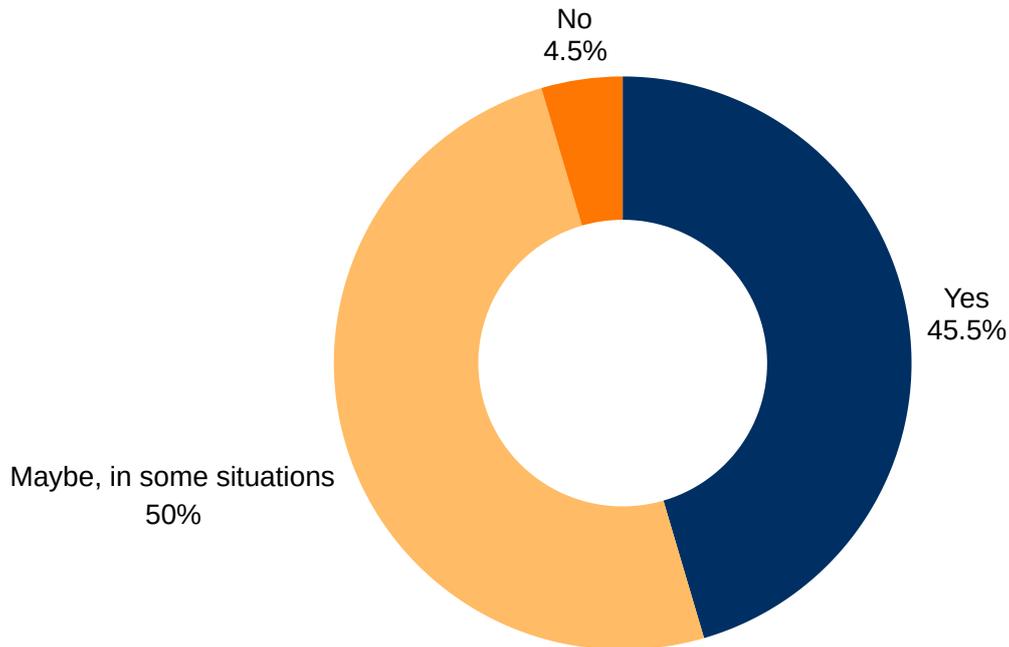
5. Do you know of any organisations in Norfolk who might offer advocacy services?

This was only asked to people who have not accessed advocacy services in the past. Responses from people who have accessed services responses are on page 19.

The top response to this question was Equal Lives. 29% of total respondents were aware of this organisation. The other organisations mentioned were:

- NAP organisations
- NCAN
- NCLS
- The Bridge Plus
- Shelter
- ASD Helping Hands
- The Hamlet Charity
- Carer's organisations
- MAP
- Age UK
- Deaf Connexions
- Opening Doors
- Mind
- POhWER
- UEA SU
- Citizen's Advice Bureau

6. Do you think an advocate could be helpful for you or someone you know?



7. Is there any reason you wouldn't want to access support from an advocate?

The majority of respondents either did not answer the question, or responded "no". The other responses were:

“

“Personally I wouldn't feel I was worthy/ in need enough.”

“I do not believe I am in need of one.”

“A couple of different reasons at various times.. housing/finance/health etc.”

“Probably lack of knowledge and/or being worried I don't qualify for support.”

”

8. Advocacy can also involve politics. What do you think we should try to improve?

“Access to justice and access to support needs to be greatly improved at policy level.”

“Access to healthcare & support for trans people; refugee & asylum seeker rights; NHS services & availability (esp dental care in Norfolk); access to quality counselling & mental health services.”

“Not to shy away from how certain policies are negatively impacting people's lives.”

“Help get across each parties policies better to the general public.”

“Cycling infrastructure, integrated public transport, changes to the social housing mutual exchange scheme.”

“More funding to WNDA.”

“Adherence to disability rights and ending discriminatory practices.”

“More availability.”

“Wait times for advocacy help.”

“The polite of disabled people i.e. social care and housing.”

“So many issues. Human rights, housing, benefits, right to employment and good quality health.”

“Improving accessibility in accessing government/council services.”

“Trans rights in the UK.”

“Access to and coordination of mental health services, housing, social care, NHS physical health, benefits etc for the seriously mentally ill.”

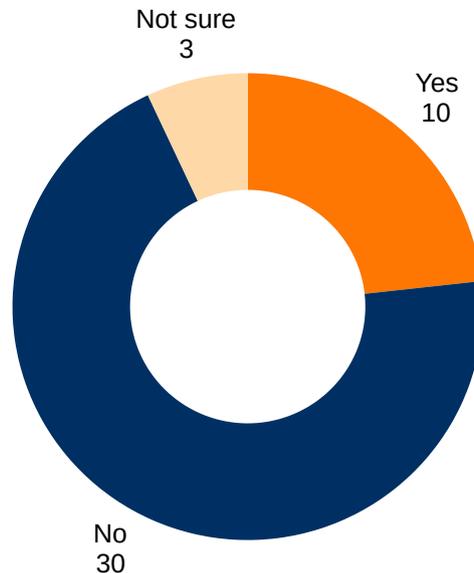
“There is a need for far more advocates for the most vulnerable clients and a clear way on how to access such as using the social prescriber route via GP practices or by having advocates embedded within organisations.”

“Politicians bothering to read and reply the issues in the first place.”

“Access and more knowledge of advocacy.”

Responses from professionals

9. We asked the respondents **whether they work in the VCSE sector**. These were their responses:



Where someone responded that they work in the VCSE sector, we asked them additional questions about their work.

10. In your work, have you noticed any service gaps? Do you run into the same issues repeatedly because of policy or bureaucracy?

The word cloud below expresses some of the common themes in the responses:



The following issues were mentioned in the responses:

- Patchy access to interpreting for people who speak limited English.
- Digital by default agenda.
- Poor communication from statutory services and local authority, particularly around homelessness.
- Client referred many places but cases don't get picked up.
- Persistent service gap in the housing sector, transport and pertaining accessibility.
- Unable to afford legal advice but not eligible for legal aid.
- Increasingly difficult to deal with demand.
- Housing after leaving prison
- Advocacy for vulnerable people
- Access to housing.
- Difficulty working with local councils due to low capacity.
- More demand for services than they are able to provide.
- Social services too stretched to fulfil need.



Many of our clients experience mental health difficulties that are "too complex" for the wellbeing service but they are also "not sick enough" for crisis help, and they end up with no support.



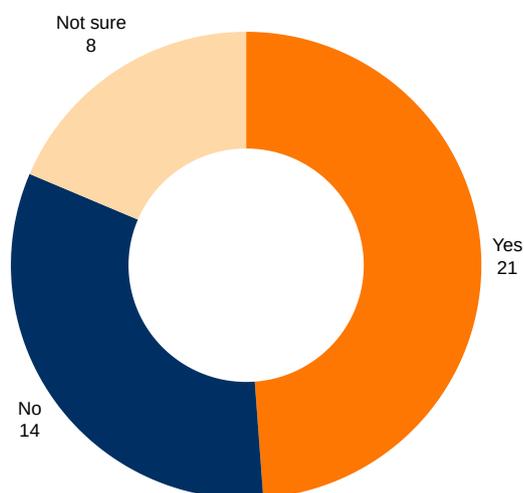
The system to claim any type of benefits but specifically benefits for older people such as pension credit are too complex. Most older people don't know what they are entitled to and don't have access to ways to find out.

11. Does your organisation offer advocacy services?
Their responses were:



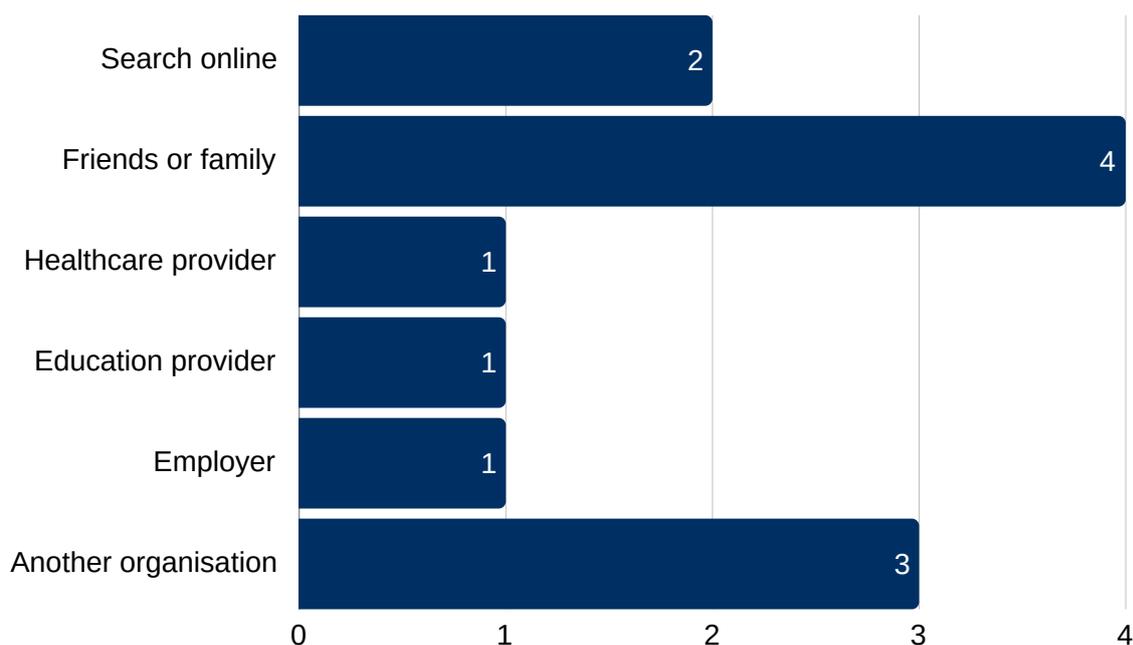
Responses from people who have used advocacy services

12. Have you accessed advocacy services? These were their responses:



Where someone responded that they have accessed advocacy services, we asked them additional questions about their experience.

13. Where did you find out about the advocacy service?



14. Which advocacy service did you use? 53% of respondents answered WNDA (West Norfolk Deaf Association). Other organisations included PALS, a carers organisation, Equal Lives and Dial. One respondent could not remember.

15. Rate your experience with the service from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest level of satisfaction. The average rating was 4.81.



16. Do you have any further feedback about your experience?

Some of the respondents expressed:

- The service made a difference to the help they received.
- Happy with the service.
- Will need more advocacy in the future.
- Helpful with filling in application forms but not as good with advocacy at assessment.
- Their help and support was invaluable.
- Very helpful.



The lady who helped me was so lovely. Without her I wouldn't have the care package I have now.

17. Do you know of any other organisations who provide advocacy in Norfolk?

The majority of respondents either responded with “no” or “only WNDA”. One person said “PALS”.

ANALYSIS

General responses

1. What do you think an advocate can support with?

The majority of respondents responded “all of the above” to this question. Across the NAP organisations, we do support with all of these issues. However, some organisations will not help with certain types of issues, so it makes sense that responses vary.

The least selected option was Translation. This is logical, as translation itself does not generally qualify as advocacy. However, many advocacy services do translation to ensure clients can make informed decisions and access information. Another less selected option was Communication. This may be for a similar reason. While advocacy can include support with communication, communication support is not necessarily advocacy.

Alongside Communication, was Finance. This could be because many respondents were only aware of Equal Lives as an advocacy organisation, and they cannot help with finances.

After “all of the above”, the most selected options were Housing and Social Care. It may seem more obvious than the other categories that people who have housing issues or access social care may need or want an advocate.

2. Do you know what advocacy is?

A high percentage of respondents report that they know what advocacy is. This is likely higher than the average population. This can in part be explained by the amount of respondents who either have accessed advocacy services in the past (46.6%) or work in the VCSE sector (22.2%). Some people may know what it is due to accessing the survey, for example if they followed the link to it from our “What is NAP” flyer, which includes a definition of advocacy. It is also worth noting that only half of respondents answered this question. People who chose to respond may be more likely to know what it is.

3. What do you think advocacy is?

We had some good responses to this question. They were all accurate, but focused on different aspects of advocacy work.

4. If you wanted an advocate, where would you get help to find one?

The majority of respondents said they would search online. This is somewhat surprising due to the older-leaning demographic of the respondents. However, many of the older respondents did not answer this question. A benefit of online search is the anonymity it provides. The second most selected option was “friends and family”, followed by “healthcare provider”. This may be because these are people you are likely to speak to about personal issues, perhaps more so than an employer or education provider.

5. Do you know of any organisations in Norfolk who might offer advocacy services?

The top response to this question was Equal Lives. This may have been because NAP often shares a stand with Equal Lives at outreach events. They also promote their advocacy service more actively than some of the other advocacy organisations. It is also one of the larger organisations in the partnership.

Some respondents mentioned NAP. Whilst NAP does not provide advocacy services, we can signpost to them. This is also the case for NCAN, which had some mentions. There were mentions of all of the NAP organisations individually.

Someone mentioned POHWER, the provider of statutory advocacy in Norfolk. There were also mentions of other organisations who are not advocacy providers at their core but may provide some advocacy services.

6. Do you think an advocate could be helpful for you or someone you know?

Only 4.5% of respondents said “no” to this question. The rest were fairly evenly split between “yes” and “maybe, in some situations”. This is positive. It suggests that people trust the services and would feel comfortable accessing them, or signposting someone else towards them.

7. Is there any reason you wouldn't want to access support from an advocate?

The majority of respondents either did not answer the question, or responded “no”. This is positive.

The other responses expressed concerns about whether they qualified for the service or were “worthy”. As for who qualifies, this is the sort of information we are trying to communicate through outreach, events and flyers. The latter concern is a more difficult one to address, particularly as many services are nearly at capacity and need to be selective with the cases they accept. Everyone who feels they would benefit from advocacy support should be able to access it. Unfortunately, this is not the case at the moment.

8. Advocacy can also involve politics. What do you think we should try to improve?

The answers to this question show a wide range of concerns. One common theme is access to support and services, another is policies and how they impact individuals. As for advocacy services, improving wait times and availability was a common theme. The easiest way of improving this would be with more funding, which was requested as well.

There was additional concern around the rights of potentially vulnerable groups of people such as those who are trans, Disabled and mentally ill.

Responses from professionals

9. We asked the respondents **whether they work in the VCSE sector**. The responses to this showed that the majority of people filling in the survey do not work in the sector. This means we were successful in reaching the wider community.

10. **In your work, have you noticed any service gaps? Do you run into the same issues repeatedly because of policy or bureaucracy?**

The issues raised in response to this question were varied, but there were some common themes. Many responses mentioned access to services, such as advocacy and legal advice. Others wanted communication barriers to be addressed, such as digital exclusion, interpreting, complex systems and inaccessible communication. Homelessness and housing were also mentioned multiple times.

The most prominent theme was lack of service capacity, across both the public and voluntary sectors. The former stems from a difficult financial situation: “The financial challenges faced by local councils cannot be understated. Demand continues to increase, costs continue to rise and government funding remains unclear” (NCC, 2024). For the voluntary sector, this is largely due to a lack of funding, as revealed by NPC’s *State of the Sector 2024*. The economic situation has also led to a decline in volunteering (Evans, 2024).

11. **Does your organisation offer advocacy services?**

Half of respondents said “yes”, the other half said “no”. It is positive that the survey reached beyond the advocacy sector.



Responses from people who have used advocacy services

12. Have you accessed advocacy services? The majority of respondents said “yes”. This makes sense as we were actively promoting the survey to service users.

13. Where did you find out about the advocacy service?

The 3 most common responses were “friends or family”, “another organisation” and “search online”. Most of the respondents to this section of the survey had accessed support from WNDA, meaning they are likely to be part of the Deaf community and therefore know about the organisation through word of mouth. If they have hearing difficulties but are not Deaf, they are more likely to be older, meaning they may not have a current education provider or employer. Additionally, as many of the issues advocates help with are to do with healthcare, it makes sense that people are less likely to ask their healthcare provider about available support.

14. Which advocacy service did you use? 53% of respondents answered WNDA (West Norfolk Deaf Association). This is because they were proactive in helping service users to fill in the survey. Other organisations included PALS, a carers organisation, Equal Lives and Dial. One respondent could not remember.

15. Rate your experience with the service from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest level of satisfaction. The average rating was 4.81. This is a great result but shows that there are still areas we can improve. People who have had a bad experience may also be less likely to fill in the survey.

16. Do you have any further feedback about your experience?

The feedback we received was largely positive. One person said the advocate could have done a better job at an assessment. We would hope that this feedback has also been raised with the provider directly.

17. Do you know of any other organisations who provide advocacy in Norfolk?

The majority of respondents either responded with “no” or “only WNDA”. This shows that these respondents, who were primarily WNDA services users, did not have much knowledge of other advocacy providers. This makes sense as they appear to be happy with the service they are accessing. It may also be that other organisations are less accessible to Deaf people in King’s Lynn, either because of location or language barriers.

CONCLUSION

Overview

Due to the limited scope of the survey and the small number of respondents, these results are not enough to draw any overarching conclusions. We cannot rely too much on this data as it is not representative of the community.

The qualitative aspects of this research, such as people's opinions about what advocacy is, is somewhat more useful. This is therefore what we have focused on when drawing conclusions.

Actions

The below are suggested actions we can take to improve following this survey. The brackets after each suggestion refers to the relevant question(s).

- We need to make it clear which services each organisation can offer as there is some confusion around this. (1)
- While many of the respondents felt they knew what advocacy is, there is still room for training and awareness campaigns to ensure people who may benefit from it, know what it is and how to access it. (2)
- People who want an advocate, are likely to search online to find a service. We need to ensure that our services are easy to find online. This may include improving our websites, featuring on other websites, improving SEO and being active on social media accounts. People are also likely to ask friends and family, needing we need to make sure that we promote our service to the public, not just the specific people who are most likely to access our services. Other common options included public sector services. Because of this, we should ensure those who work in the sector are aware of our services and feel confident in signposting. (4)

- Both NAP and NCAN were mentioned. While neither organisation provides advocacy, they both have advocacy organisations in their steering boards/ partnerships, and regularly signpost to these. Some organisations were mentioned which do not explicitly provide advocacy services. It would be beneficial to approach these to discover if they do offer advocacy, and if so, if they are willing to promote this, and if not, what their reasons are. As Equal Lives appears to be the most well-known advocacy provider, they may need to do more to promote other providers. (5)
- We will continue to promote our services to ensure people know who can access them and how. Where we cannot reach people directly, it is helpful to reach friends or family who can signpost. We need to ensure an accessible online presence and close relationship with other organisations. We need to be making it clear to funders that our services should not be so pushed that we can only accept people in crisis. Everyone who would like advocacy support, should be able to access it. (7, 13)
- Many of the requests for systemic advocacy issues align with our current priorities. Other issues will be discussed within the partnership and, where relevant, worked towards. There is also overlap with service gaps in the sector. Where we can work towards filling these gaps, we will, and where we cannot, we can advocate for funding increases. (8, 9)
- Advocacy services must regularly request feedback from clients and use this information to improve the service. (16)

SOURCES

- https://npproduction.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/NPC-State-of-the-Sector-2024-Ready-for-a-reset.pdf?_gl=1*175h854*_ga*MTg1NDAyNTkuMTczMzIxMzAzOQ..*_ga_5Q3PNDTP66*MTczMzIxMzAzOS4xLjAuMTczMzIxMzAzOS42MC4wLjA
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- <https://reachvolunteering.org.uk/guide/what-voluntary-sector>
- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>