DUNFERMLINE ADVOCACY

Impact Report 2025-26

Chairperson's Report

This past year has been one in which I have been enormously proud of Dunfermline Advocacy and of the people who make its work possible.

Demand for advocacy across our region remains significant and the complexity of support required continues to increase. It is an important area of work and one in which our relatively small team continues to achieve an extraordinary amount. Throughout the year, our staff and volunteers have supported people to understand their rights, belong in their community and participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives. The many stories that we collect of those successes speak both to growing need and to the much-valued work of our volunteers.

Volunteer recruitment continues to be challenging, and this is something we need to keep working hard at. However, advocacy remains a rather unique volunteering opportunity and one that we certainly believe offers a very clear connection between the investment of time and the good that comes from it. It asks people to listen carefully, build trust and stand alongside someone who may be navigating difficult or unfamiliar circumstances, without taking over or speaking for them.

Indeed, it is not always the easiest form of volunteering to explain in a sentence, but for the right person it can be enormously rewarding. Our volunteers bring time, judgement, patience and humanity to the organisation, and I remain extremely grateful to everyone who chooses to give us those things. We hope to welcome many more caring and civic-minded people in the years to come.

There have also been some particularly welcome opportunities during the year to raise the profile of advocacy and to strengthen the partnerships which make our work possible. Fife Advocacy Week, our work with NHS Fife and the visit connected with our commitment to the Real Living Wage all helped to bring attention to the importance of advocacy and to the contribution Dunfermline Advocacy makes locally.

I am also proud that we continue to work in partnership with the Scottish Government. Over recent years Dunfermline Advocacy has continued our work championing Citizen Advocacy at a national level. We greatly value its continued investment in citizen advocacy, not simply as a service for individuals at particular moments of difficulty, but as a model which contributes more broadly to social wellbeing and to protecting and including all members of our communities.

As I always note, supporting the organisation through its governance is an excellent experience, not least because Dunfermline Advocacy benefits from an exemplary staff team for which the entire Board of Trustees is very grateful.

I would like to thank Rachel and the staff team for the expertise, energy and care they continue to bring to the organisation.

We saw some changes to the Board of Trustees during the year, with existing Trustee Leanne Shedden taking over as Treasurer, and at last year's AGM we welcomed a familiar face when retired staff member Barbara McKenzie joined the Board. I thank my fellow trustees for their continued support and stewardship.

Most importantly, I want to thank the people who use our services and place their trust in us, and the volunteers for the contribution they make throughout the year- combined efforts are something for which the entire team is very thankful and very proud.

Johnathan Doran

Johnathan Doran, DA Chair

Treasurer's Report

I have been Dunfermline Advocacy's Treasurer since last year's AGM at the end of November 2025.

Having spent a year shadowing Anne beforehand, I felt well prepared to take on the role, and I am grateful for all her support. Tricia and Rachel's day-to-day work and support have also made the transition into the role a smooth one.

The full Annual Report & Unaudited Financial Statements (our accounts) are available on our website. The accounts for 2025-26 show a deficit before pension adjustments of £21,498, compared to a surplus of £35,335 last year.

Our income for 2025-26 was lower than the previous year at £147,994 (2024-25: £206,805). This was due to successful applications for new sources of grant funding in 2024-25, notably the People's Postcode Lottery and Fife Voluntary Action, which we have been using to support vulnerable people throughout 2025-26.

Our costs remained fairly static in 2025-26 at £169,284 (2024-25: £171,470). Staff costs continue to be our biggest individual outlay, but our staff are also our greatest asset, and I am pleased to say that we were able to give a small cost-of-living increase during 2025-26. In April 2025 we became accredited Real Living Wage employers, reflecting our ongoing commitment to Fair Work First initiatives for our small staff team.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our main funders, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership, for their continued support, including a small uplift in our grant for 2025-26. Thanks also to Fife Council for their support through their Subsidised Lease Policy, providing a 90% reduction in rent for our office.

I would also like to thank our other grant funders, namely the Henry Smith Charity, Fife Voluntary Action and the People's Postcode Lottery Trust, along with The Dunfermline Round Table for their generous donation of £500.

Finally, I would like to thank our Independent Examiner, Thomson Cooper, for producing the accounts and examining the charity's records.

L. Shedden.

Leanne Shedden, Treasurer

Real Living Wage Accreditation

We were delighted to become an accredited Real Living Wage employer in April 2025.

We welcomed Cabinet Secretary Shirley-Anne Sommerville to the office in November ahead of Living Wage Week to talk about our work an the importance of being accredited Living Wage employers.

Fife Advocacy Week

Fife Advocacy Forum

Supporting & Developing Advocacy Across Fife

The second Fife Advocacy Week took place at the end of October, with no fewer than 16 events across Fife to raise awareness of all types of Independent Advocacy that are available.

We were pleased to host an event in partnership with Include Me and Equal Voice to showcase Citizen Advocacy in Fife.

Activity in 2025

During 2025 we supported 197 vulnerable people in West Fife, a 3% increase from the previous year, continuing to be at almost 50% higher than before the pandemic.

We supported a total of 73 Citizen Advocacy Partnerships– 56 long-term Partnerships, and 17 short-term Partners supported through our pool of 16 short-term Advocates. In addition we worked with 98 people to determine their advocacy and other support needs and signposted or referred them to more appropriate services for their needs. We also supported a further 26 people whom we planned to match with a volunteer but had not yet made a match.

Long-Term Citizen Advocacy

During 2025, our Citizen Advocates and Development Team have provided vital support to individuals facing a wide range of challenges, as highlighted below.

PRACTICAL & COMMUNITY

- Exploring sheltered housing options
- Support with digital access
- Liaising with others about debt
- Access to Fife transport
- Finding and building new hobbies
- Moving accommodation and sharing views
- Finding suitable volunteering opportunities
- Accessing clothing grants and clothing bank
- Rebuilding after house fire
- Support with online UC processes

LEGAL & STATUTORY PROCESSES

- Guardianship review and lapse
- Advocacy through a legal charge
- Hospital detention and guardianship application
- Representation at children's hearing
- Legal status relating to parental rights and domestic abuse
- Understanding legal and school emails when English is not first language
- Support through Scotland's Redress Scheme
- Support through Adult Protection referral
- Support at Social Work meetings

HEALTH & WELLBEING

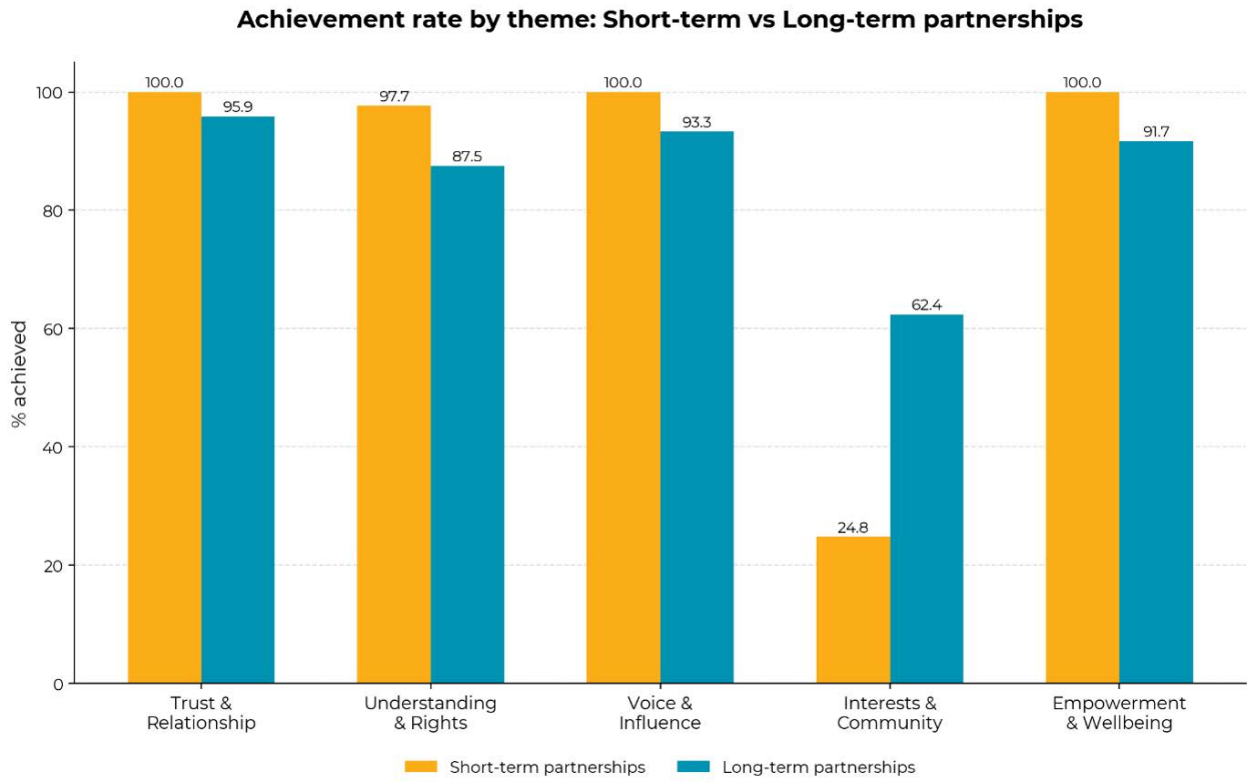
- Accessing healthcare related to gender
- Support through bereavement and goals
- Safeguarding people who are non-verbal
- Planning for winter mental health
- Understanding and choosing cancer treatment
- Representing treatment and welfare wishes
- Liaising with LD nurses
- Mental health views, ADHD assessment
- Communicating end-of-life care wishes
- Accessing community with sight impairment

Impact in 2025

As mentioned in last year's report, Dunfermline Advocacy has started to assess the success of Citizen Advocacy partnerships through the outcomes journey developed alongside Fife Advocacy Forum. This looks at 19 outcomes over time, to understand how an advocacy partnership develops and succeeds. Below you can see the success of meetings these outcomes, which have been themed into 5 categories.

Overall, a very successful first year using this reporting model, with most categories highlighting the value of Citizen Advocacy. We have seen a dip in outcomes around 'Interests & Community' which is explained by both an increase in other areas of advocacy need and a significant decline in transport and formal services that would support advocacy partners to access the community.

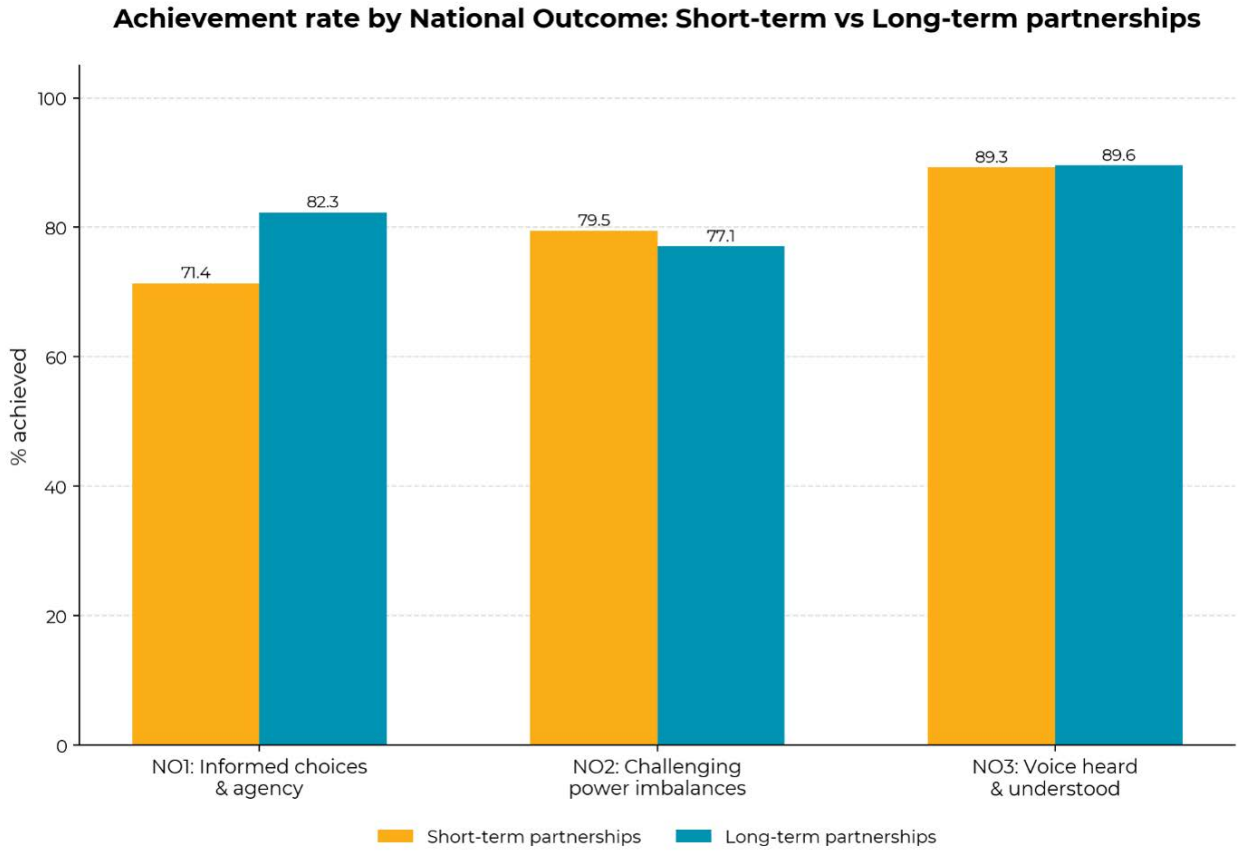
Outcomes Achieved 2025



What isn't shown in this data, is prevention, the hard to prove result of having a long-term Citizen Advocate available in someone's life. It is difficult to measure the types of issues that someone doesn't need to deal with, because they have an advocate, but we hear it in the narratives of our partners:

"I would be lost, you know, I wouldn't be getting out, I would have no voice. You guys give me a voice because you see results"

This year, as we seek to understand the best way to effectively demonstrate our work using the outcomes journey, we have looked at categorising outcomes by SIAA's National Outcomes for Independent Advocacy as shown below. The story of one long-term partnership also highlights how Citizen Advocacy is supporting people to achieve the national outcomes.



From 2026/27, outcomes will be tracked at 3-month reviews throughout the year, giving a much richer view of progression over time, and the opportunity to recognise when a partnership has sustained an outcome across multiple reviews rather than achieved it in any particular year. This will give a more accurate representation of what has genuinely been achieved by the partnership, and we'd expect future reports to show this progression even more clearly.

Short-Term Citizen Advocacy

Our Development Worker Hannah supports the Short-Term Citizen Advocacy project, and in 2025 our pool of Short-Term Citizen Advocates have supported people in a variety of situations listed above. In 2025 Hannah and the pool of 16 Short-Term Citizen Advocates supported supported 17 people. One of our Short-term Advocates talked about their experience of being an Advocate for 2 people as part of the Short-Term resource over a two year period. Read some of this interview at the end of our Impact Report.

SHORT-TERM ISSUES

- Supporting parent with a child in care
- Challenging GP services
- Challenging service providers
- Support through financial abuse discovery
- Support with debt
- Support with Benefit assessment
- Support with Housing services
- Support with challenging housing problems with housing provider
- Challenging social work assessment
- Support to connect with local area and appropriate support services

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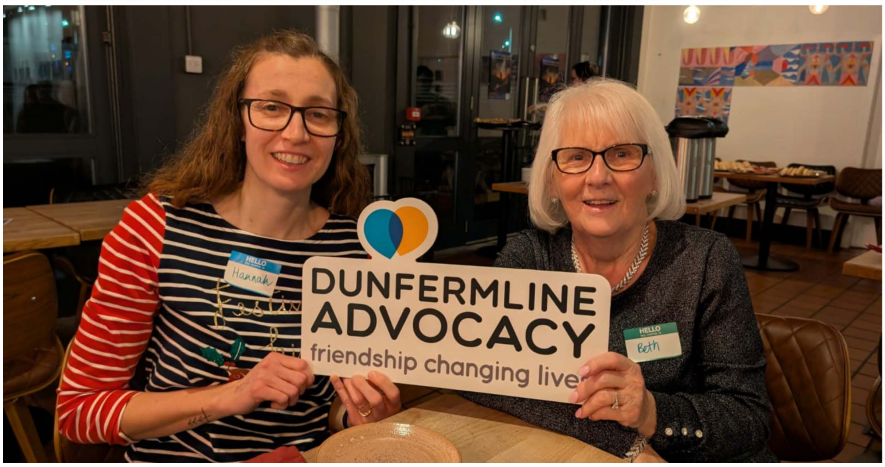

Corporate Support

We are grateful for the support given by local branches of larger businesses. This year in particular we thank our local Asda stores – Asda Dunfermline, Asda St Leonards and Asda Rosyth. Being able to host several stalls a year across their stores plays a vital and valuable role in our volunteer recruitment plan, and also helps raise general awareness of Dunfermline Advocacy with the public.

Technip FMC have a base in Pitreavie, Dunfermline, and have been supporting us in a variety of ways for several years – from their staff community committee, which has awarded several grants along with pantomime tickets for partnerships. This support has been accessed through one of our volunteer Citizen Advocates, who has championed us at his workplace over many years. In 2025, we had four volunteers through their I-Volunteer scheme, who supported us with a much-needed garden tidy and some internal maintenance.

National Advocacy Outcomes: Equal Access to Treatment in a Long-Term Citizen Advocacy Partnership

People with very limited verbal communication are among those most at risk of being marginalised within health and care systems, often experiencing poorer health outcomes and reduced access to routine treatment because assumptions about distress or capacity close down options before they are properly explored. This case shows independent advocacy's national outcomes in practice.

In a partnership now in its second decade, the advocate has remained the one consistent presence through bereavement, ageing, and repeated change among paid staff and guardians. Her partner has very limited verbal communication and is subject to welfare guardianship – advocacy here is necessarily non-instructed: the advocate cannot be 'told' what to do by her partner, but works from years of accumulated knowledge of what matters to her partner to be able to represent her interests.

When her partner's eyesight began deteriorating, the impact showed not in words but in withdrawal – reduced activity, low mood, declining mobility. The advocate recognised this and pressed for reassessment. Cataracts were identified, but initial responses focused on the stress surgery might cause and doubts about her ability to understand aftercare – concerns that, unchallenged, could easily have closed the matter. This is where National Outcome 2 was realised directly: when someone is unable to take personal action, their advocate ensures their rights are upheld. The advocate held firm that her partner had an equal right to be considered for treatment, and that obstacles should be explored, not treated as a reason to stop.

She encouraged professionals to problem-solve constructively – gathering information, reviewing assessments, identifying the support needed to make treatment possible. This reflects National Outcome 3: ensuring her partner's needs and wishes, though unspoken, were genuinely understood and taken into account by everyone at the table. The result was a collaborative decision by advocate, guardian and staff – evidence of National Outcome 1 in action: increased agency, even where the decision could not be made or expressed by her directly.

With the right support in hospital and at home, surgery went ahead. New staff who had never known her with clear sight were startled by the change. Her first word afterwards was simply "see."

This case demonstrates what safeguarding rights looks like where someone cannot act on their own behalf: a decision taken that reflects the full rights of the person, achieved only because an advocate refused to let difficulty become an ending point.

Chief Executive's Report

As Chief Executive of Dunfermline Advocacy, I am proud to present this year's Impact Report, reflecting on a year of resilience, commitment and impact.

In 2025 we supported an even greater number of vulnerable people across Fife, demonstrating the commitment of our small staff team, Board of Trustees and volunteer advocates. We achieved this despite a three-month worker gap in our Friendship Changing Lives project, and we were delighted to welcome Amy to the staff team in August.

Last year's report celebrated our longest-serving advocate, Beth Lapsley, who had reached the incredible milestone of 25 years as a Citizen Advocate. Throughout this time, Beth provided unwavering support, building a strong and meaningful relationship that made a real difference in her advocacy partner's life. I am sorry to report that Beth passed away in the summer of 2026, and she will be greatly missed by all of us here at Dunfermline Advocacy.

At the end of 2025 we were delighted to learn that we had been awarded a grant from the Scottish Government to run a one-year pilot under new legislation to provide advocacy for people accessing social care services. We began preparations early in 2026, and the project got underway in April, with Amy and Margaret leading the work. We look forward to reporting on this in next year's report.

As ever, I close by recording my thanks to everyone involved with Dunfermline Advocacy. At the centre of our work are our fantastic Citizen Advocates, who continue to give their time and commitment to support others in their local community. I also want to thank our Staff Team, and our Borad of Trustees both for their hard work but also their invaluable support to me over the past year.

Rachel Annand, Chief Executive

Interview with an Advocate

We recently interviewed one of our current Short Term Citizen Advocates, to get their insight into the role.

What has your experience been like as a Citizen Advocate on the short term project?

I had to check my calendar on this one because I was sure I had been a Citizen Advocate for over two years yet was equally sure that I had only two advocacy partners during this time. I was right – two advocacy partners in two years and there wasn't much of a time gap between either.

Complex cases? Nope. Discombobulated cases? Nope. Advocacy partner asking for the earth? Nope. No, they were just two vulnerable, disadvantaged adults who wished someone within their Local Authority to sit down and listen to their concerns and do something for them that was within their rights to request.

Safe to say that each case took almost a year to either resolve or move forward to an extent that would, in the end, make a positive difference to their circumstances. That is the reality of dealing with organisations running on scarce resources whether they be human, financial or both. And that is where I came in, supported by my Development Worker, to sit alongside them to support them through what were very drawn-out, emotionally charged processes and achieve either their desired outcome or an acceptance that whilst their desired outcome could not be achieved, there were other options that were available to them that would improve their situation.

In both cases my advocacy partners have, I hope, felt listened to, felt understood and felt empowered throughout… but that is for them to say, not me. But I truly hope, and I do believe, that they did.

What are the benefits of having one person support someone through an issue?

One person supporting another through an issue focuses entirely on the other person's issue or situation. This builds up familiarity and trust between the two and can make it easier for the other person to communicate and share difficult details. It is a continuity of service which can also help reduce the emotional anxiety which often accompanies the issues presented.

What would you say to anyone thinking of becoming a Citizen Advocate?

If you have a problem solving mind, enjoy seeking out paths within bureaucratic rules and procedures and truly wish to help empower people who are being disadvantaged despite their rights to the contrary, then Citizen Advocacy may well be for you.

How are you supported by your development worker?

Very much is the short answer. The slightly longer version would be that through my development worker, I gain reassurance, knowledge, supported guidance and advice. She respects my individuality and does not impose her own views upon me. She works with me and is a mentor to share my ideas and test my understanding with… and she does this very well!