

# CAPS Collective Advocacy achievements over the years

CAPS has been operating for 34 years. Our Collective Advocacy provision is the most comprehensive in Scotland. As a grass-roots organisation CAPS grew out of the earliest days of the mental health 'user' movement back in the eighties. To this day CAPS' Collective Advocacy has defended marginalised people's human rights in the mental health system.

The depth of our work and our reputation as a trusted independent organisation who works with people in a trauma informed, non-judgemental way means that our advocacy projects act as a safety net for people from marginalised groups. We support people who often have no other safe place to turn when they find themselves at risk.

**Oor Mad History** started back in 2009 – gathering and preserving the history of the collective advocacy and the mental health service user movement in Lothian. Two books have been published in 2010 and 2021. You can find these on the CAPS website along with all the resources mentioned in the document.

The first ever Undergraduate course based on lived experience of mental health in Britain, called **Mad People's History and Identity**, free of charge to people with lived experience, was started by CAPS in conjunction with Queen Margaret University in 2014. This has now developed into CAPS own "**Understanding Oor Mad History**" course in partnership with the University of Edinburgh, where the course is based on the archive of materials held trust for the project, in Lothian Health Services Archive.

Our first NHS Lothian SLA started in 2009 with the **Personality Disorder** project, who started work to produce a toolkit written by people with that condition, to educate and inform service providers across Lothian.

Over the years the group has been involved directly in helping progress the work to provide day services for people with Personality Disorder, which is not yet realised. Our project offers a space for people with this identity when no others exist!

**Eating Disorders** is another misunderstood mental health condition about which people wanted to create resources and information for GPs and for people who felt alone and isolated, thinking they were the only people feeling this way about eating. In 2015 NHS Lothian funded this work. The **Seen But Not Heard** collective advocacy group made two films, the second in conjunction with CAMHS and aimed at young adults. They also created a lived experience booklet called “**Eating Disorders can leave you in pieces**”. They delivered sessions to older students in schools and to University students. The group has contributed lived experience to the rewriting of two “Overcoming...” books in the ten years as well as being involved in the redesign of Lothian Eating Disorders services – reorganising the way the Cullen Centre and the ANITT team worked together.

Our Thrive projects arose because of the identified need to hear the voices of the most marginalised and under-represented people in Edinburgh including **men with Eating Disorders**, people from **Minority Ethnic backgrounds** and the **LGBTQIA+ community**. Each year hundreds of marginalised individuals and groups across Edinburgh have their voices heard publicly using the arts, through **Arts As Advocacy** and the **Out of Sight Out of Mind exhibition**. These are unique and powerful projects that offer a multitude of benefits for the people that use them.

As well as ensuring that services respond to people’s needs, the direct effects of Collective Advocacy on participants’ health and wellbeing satisfy several of the **IJB’s priorities**. For instance: people are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live in good health for longer; people who use health and social care services have their dignity respected; health and social care services contribute to reducing health inequalities.

Another important part of what Collective Advocacy participants do is ‘**education as advocacy**’ where people with mental health issues educate health and social care professionals and students about what it’s like to have conditions such as personality disorder or psychosis or experiences of trauma, among others. **CAPS’ free training** delivered by people with mental health issues reaches students, clinicians, support workers, social workers, police and many more professions.

For sixteen years, CAPS has been helping NHS Lothian and the City of Edinburgh to understand what services are needed and to deliver better services that meet people’s needs, with a more educated and compassionate workforce who have learned directly through the experience of people who really know what it’s like to have a mental health condition.

**Please support our campaign to continue this important work!**  
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