

Listening to veterans' voices



CAPS Independent Advocacy Annual Report 2025

Contents

section	page number
welcome	1
individual advocacy for adults	2-5
children's hearings advocacy	6
individual advocacy feedback	7
collective advocacy east lothian and midlothian	8
east lothian drugs and alcohol	9
much more than a label	10
experiences of psychosis	11
experiences of trauma	12
minority ethnic advocacy	13
our mad history	14
art as advocacy	15-16
seen but not heard	17
lothian voices	18
edinburgh collective advocacy	19
LGBTQIA+	20
peer forum	21-22
collective advocacy for veterans	23
veterans in prison collective advocacy	24
testimonials in support of collective advocacy	25-27
summary financial information	28-29
who's who	30
contact us	31

Welcome

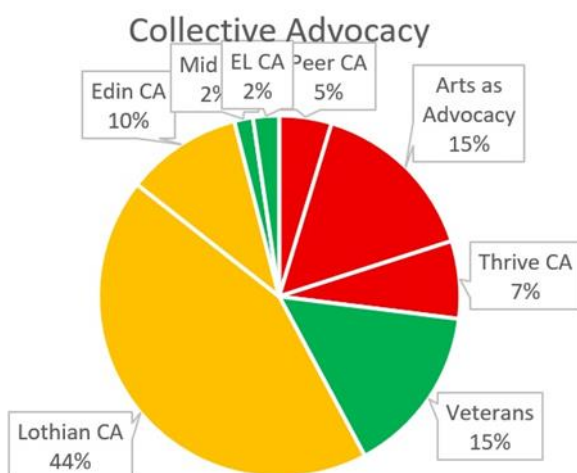


What a year it's been!

For me, 2025 started with a new hip and a big birthday, leaving CAPS in the very capable hands of the wider management team for a few weeks.

We held our first ever CAPS Conference “... In Our Shoes”, showcasing the many Collective Advocacy achievements with presentations and workshops. And then there were challenges

aplenty! A raging fire in the building next to our office at Eskmills in Musselburgh caused **water damage** and loss of amenities. Five months disruption in temporary office space was a very unsettling time for the staff team. Worse challenges lay ahead as emails from Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership threatened the very existence of Collective Advocacy at CAPS. All our Edinburgh and Lothian contracts were **ear marked for disinvestment** – and our fight back began!



CAPS' group members were shocked and angered at the unbelievable threat to 34 years of marginalised voices making a powerful local impact. People from across many of our different projects came together to form what became known as the “**Response Group**”. They gathered testimonials, (see [here](#)), wrote to MSPs and Councillors, gave press interviews and sent

an open letter to IJB members. Sadly, the Thrive funding for three projects (in red) ends 30 Nov 2025.

Thank you so much to everyone who supported us during this very difficult challenge. And thank you to the **People's Postcode Trust** for providing funding so the work can continue a bit longer until 31 March 2026. Read more about all our work inside.



Individual Advocacy (Adults)

Mental Health Advocacy

We provide Individual Advocacy to adults from East Lothian and Midlothian who use mental health services, to help resolve a wide range of issues affecting their lives. During this year, our team worked with individuals in the community and in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, where Midlothian and East Lothian acute in-patient beds are based.

Our Service this year (April 2024—March 2025)

379

People were supported to make their own choices in

531

Issues (311 in East Lothian, 220 in Midlothian)

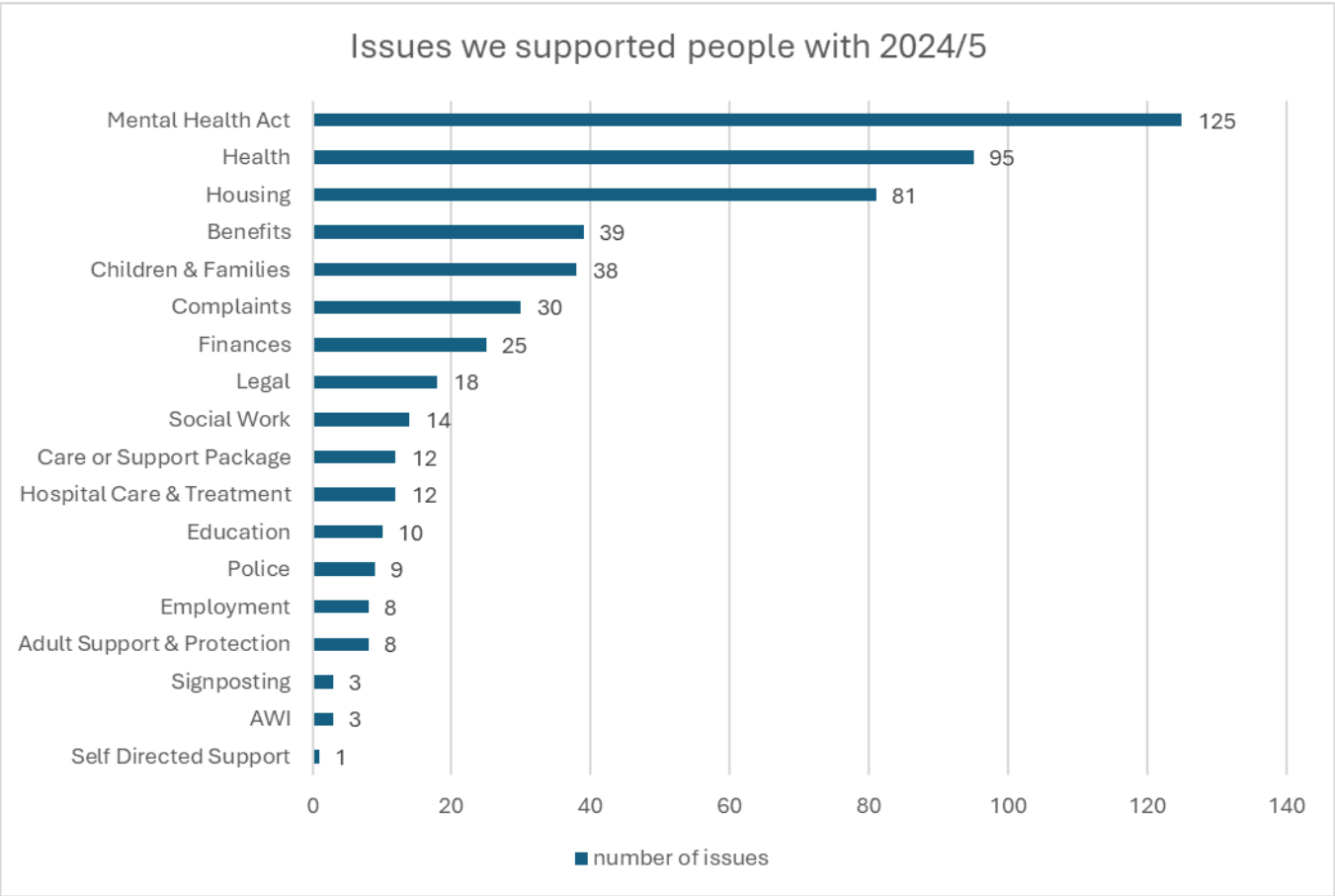
"Having [my advocacy worker] there at meetings made a difference to the way I was spoken to and maybe heard, I noticed that."

"When you're going through a mental health crisis it's really hard to know these things [about your rights] so having the advocacy worker there was so, so helpful – thank you!"

"I wouldn't be here and as strong without your help through those really bad times. I'll always be indebted to CAPS and [my advocacy worker] for giving me the strength to speak."

What we've been working on

We can support people to navigate a wide range of different issues. Here are the things people approached us for assistance with this year:



People said:

"[CAPS' independence] is really important. It was the first time I felt like someone was totally on my side."

"CAPS gave me the backbone, helped me to realise I could fight it, and really stood out a million."

"He explained if I couldn't understand something, or got other people to explain it."

"I didn't feel so alone in what I was going through. I felt like I had someone I could go to, to help me voice what I needed."

Drug and Alcohol Advocacy

We also work with adults in East Lothian and Midlothian who want our support to have their voices heard due to being affected by drug or alcohol use. Someone coming to CAPS Drug & Alcohol Advocacy service does not also need to identify as having a mental health issue.

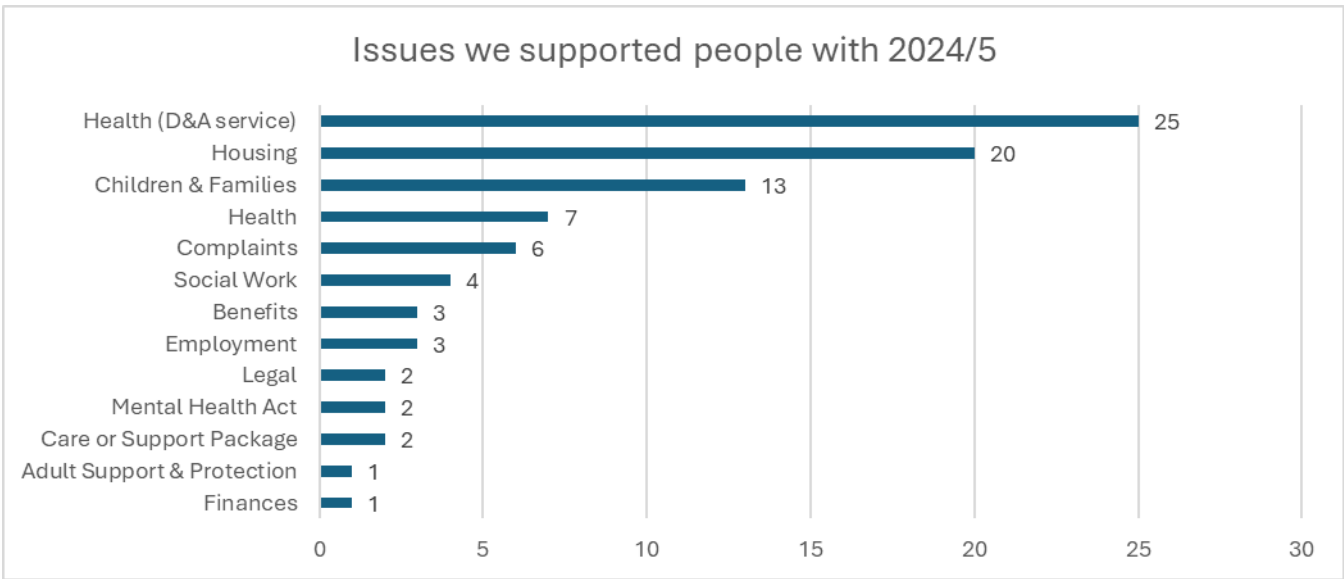
The reporting year for our Drug & Alcohol Advocacy project is different to our Mental Health Advocacy work, so the below figures cover the third year of the service from July 2024 - June 2025.

Our Service this year

76
29
89
88

People were supported to make their own choices in

Issues (29 in East Lothian, 60 in Midlothian)



“It made me feel so much better. I felt I had somebody who actually cared and listened to me.”

“Definitely [CAPS made a difference], they wouldn’t look at me before [my advocacy worker] got involved. They didn’t treat me like a person.”

LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ Individual Advocacy

We are also funded by the Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund in Midlothian to provide a dedicated Individual Advocacy service to the LGBTQIA+ community—unique in Scotland. The service also expanded into East Lothian this year thanks to the Communities, Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund there. The service is growing and continuing to develop in both areas.

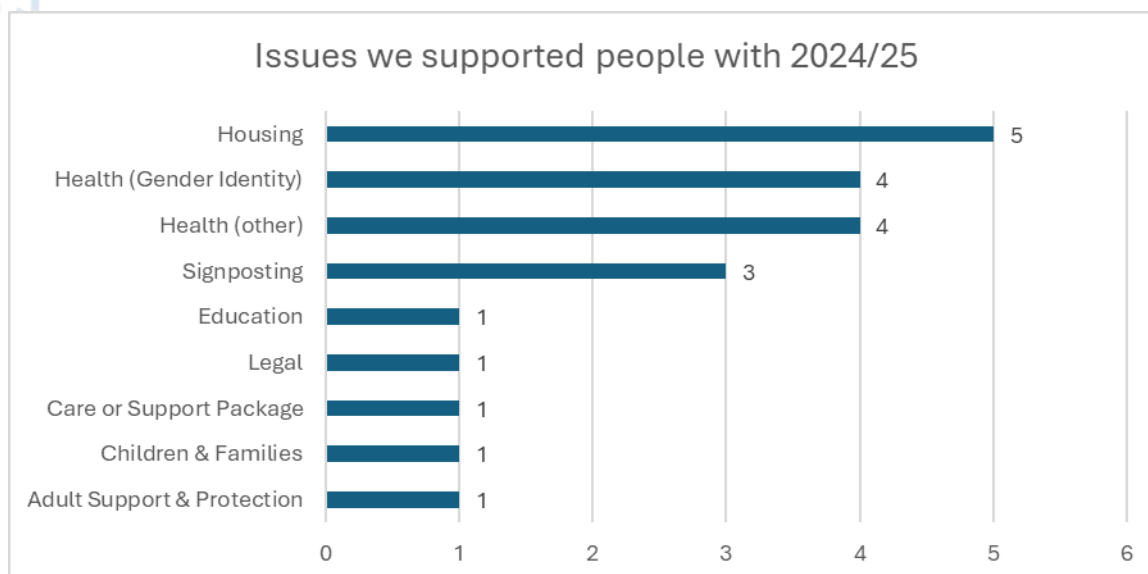
Our Service this year

14

People were supported to make their own choices in

21

Issues (8 in East Lothian, 13 in Midlothian)



We are very pleased that this unique advocacy work has been funded for a third year. It has also been funded to expand into Edinburgh by the Communities, Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund in that area—more info in next year's report!



Children's Hearings Advocacy

CAPS Independent Advocacy is funded by the Scottish Government to provide advocacy to children and young people aged 5-18 at Children's Hearings in East Lothian and Midlothian.

Here's a breakdown of what our work looked like between April 2024 and March 2025:



We received **97** referrals and worked with **75** different children and young people to help them have their voices heard at **84** Children's Hearings.



We worked with children and young people from five to 17 years old. Most young people we worked with were **nine** or **eleven** years old.



This year we worked with **39** boys and **36** girls. **29** children and young people were from East Lothian and **42** were from Midlothian.

"A good job helping me."

"[My advocacy worker] has been really kind and helpful to me."

"I was sad at the meeting and [my advocacy worker] helped."

"She said everything right."

IA Feedback

As well as asking our Advocacy Partners, we also invited a variety of agencies to tell us about their experience of CAPS' involvement. We received **14** responses.

- **100%** said CAPS' involvement had been helpful for people they worked with
- **100%** said CAPS' involvement had been helpful to the work they did
- **93%** rated the speed of our response Very Good or Good, 7% did not answer

Comments included:

"It is good to have an advocacy worker to listen and be a voice. It is good working in collaboration with advocacy"

"I think that it is an essential service and I will be in touch to get some leaflets and find out more!"

"Really good, sound, and grounded help."

"If a person can come supported by the advocacy worker it is easier to present all advice options to a client."

"Dependable, sensible and approachable."

"Unfortunately, Advocacy services across the country have been put under financial pressure annually and this has affected services [...] CAPS continue to provide an excellent service despite the likely pressures."

Midlothian & East Lothian

Midlothian



We are pleased to say that the Midlothian lived experience consultation group has been funded for another year after a successful pilot in 2024/25. This year the group has focused on writing a report and presentation on the core mental health standards, helping create

Midlothian's Independent Advocacy Strategy and giving feedback on service information for Midspace and a psychological therapies leaflet.

"There is a strength in this connection and sharing, that has an effect on my wellbeing that simply put medication cannot ever give me. Coming to the lived experience panel I can always speak up and have a voice, even on my most difficult days."

East Lothian

We have a monthly Collective Advocacy group in Haddington for people with experiences of mental health issues.

The group have given their views on East Lothian consultations this year such as

"I couldn't have got where I am now without the 3rd sector, that's why I want to save it. If you don't use it, you lose it!"

the East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership consultation on improving outcomes for people in East Lothian and developing their priorities for the next five years, 2025—2030.

Group members are keen to create a booklet using their lived experience perspectives on topics such as how services can be more trauma informed, and person centred.

East Lothian drugs & alcohol Collective Advocacy



CAPS now have two regular Collective Advocacy groups in East Lothian for people who use drugs or alcohol, one in Dunbar and one in Musselburgh. We have been looking at people's experiences of using services and supporting members to have their views heard and to feedback on issues in services that impact them.

Members of the Dunbar group gave their thoughts on recovery, which CAPS and a group member then presented at the Ridge recovery festival in

September 2025. It went really well and was a great day.

Both groups are keen to create a booklet (or potentially a workshop) about their lived experiences of using services and how they could be improved. Some of the topics they'd like to look at are stigma, discrimination and recovery.

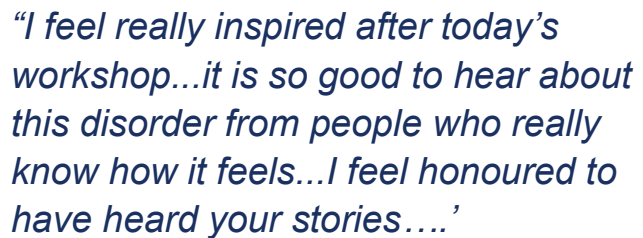
A working group was set up in October 2025 with CAPS, Access to Industry, and staff from substance use services with a plan to create a photography group and a lived experience led zine. Hopefully the zine will also be a platform to highlight the work the Collective Advocacy groups are doing and give information on other drug and alcohol services too.

"I am finding the advocacy group really helpful. I feel as though the things I have spoken about aren't easy to speak about, but I do feel comfortable in the group to share my past experiences and ideas.

I feel I can be honest and not try to dress things up. I was really fearful the first week about talking about my past experiences and sharing, but I didn't feel judged."

Much More Than A Label

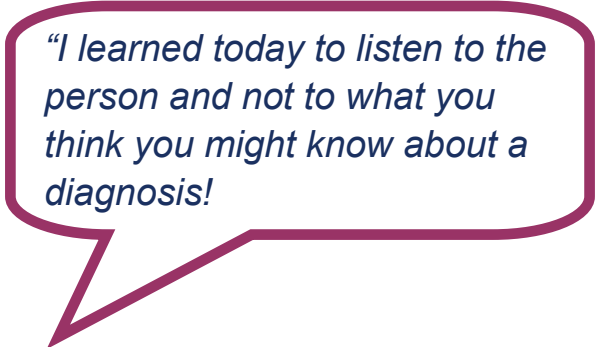
This year, *Much More Than a Label* (MMTAL), has been busy delivering their workshop about their experiences of Borderline Personality Disorder/Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder. The group has done workshops with nurses, social workers, psychologists, support workers and people from lots of different backgrounds who wanted to learn more about personality disorders. The group also worked on updating the NHS resource for and by people with BPD it had previously published, and this process is still underway.



"I feel really inspired after today's workshop...it is so good to hear about this disorder from people who really know how it feels...I feel honoured to have heard your stories...."

The group felt they have all had experiences of finding it hard to find support services that worked for them, so they decided to take action! The group wanted to hear what professionals and other people with BPD/EUPD felt, so they designed two surveys to try and find out more about the topic of services in Edinburgh, and the consultation is being launched. The group has also been working on gathering evidence and opinions on what good services for people with BPD/EUPD could look like, and will be taking the findings of their consultations and research to the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership.

MMTAL also attended the Scottish Personality Disorder Conference in Dundee and met with the Scottish Human Rights Consortium and Healthcare Improvement Scotland to share thoughts about services for people with BPD/EUPD in Scotland. The group hopes to get lots of responses for its surveys, and is excited to be welcoming new members.

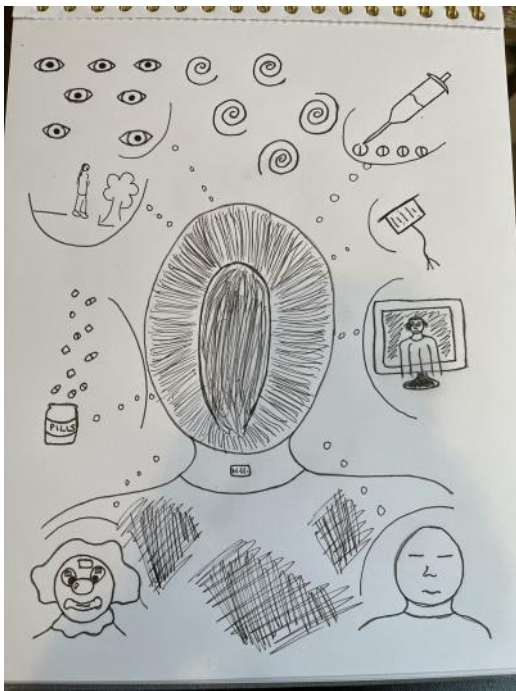


"I learned today to listen to the person and not to what you think you might know about a diagnosis!"

Experiences of Psychosis

It has been a busy year for the Experiences of Psychosis group! This year, the group has delivered their workshop sessions to a huge variety of audiences. This has included the Edinburgh Crisis Centre, Penumbra, clinical psychology

students at the University of Edinburgh, and nurses at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. The group have shared their experiences with people from all walks of life, and the demand for their workshop continues to grow!



The group welcomed visitors from CONNECT, a study investigating if using devices to track symptoms can help predict relapses. One of our members is doing great work in partnership with CONNECT to help inform their study with information from peoples' experiences.

The group has also produced lots of creative work

around psychosis this year, including poems and visual art. Lots of this work is used in their workshop sessions, and the group made a handout of some of their poetry and art for people who attend, so they can take it away with them and use it at work and at home to have deeper discussions about psychosis. Recently, the group have started working with a filmmaker who is interested in developing a film with them about psychosis. This will involve lots of creative sessions, which the group is looking forward to!

"More people need to do this workshop! I learned so much...its the best training I have attended on psychosis...I wont forget what I learned here!"

Experiences of Trauma group

This year, the Experiences of Trauma Collective Advocacy group delivered their Here and Now workshop to external audiences for the first time, following two

“The training was very good and aligns closely with the NTTP Transforming Connections Level 2 Trauma Training. The focus on the voice of lived experience brought a new depth to the training.” - Workshop Participant

supportive “critical friends” sessions. The workshop was designed to model trauma-informed values in action, bringing together a range of lived experiences to shift the conversation about trauma, from one focused on illness and deficits, to one that recognises the strength, insight and resilience people bring.

The workshop received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the audience, who were mostly professionals in helping and caring roles.

The group is planning to run another workshop session later this year. Recently, the group also took part in the Midlothian Trauma-Informed and Trauma-Skilled trainings. They

“[The workshop] has given me a lot of food for thought on how I interact with people who have experienced trauma, and any assumption I make” - Workshop Participant

found the experience valuable and are looking forward to continuing conversations with the Trauma-Informed Practice Lead about how insights from people with lived experience of trauma can help shape and inform the future development of these trainings.

Minority Ethnic Advocacy

This year, the Minority Ethnic Collective Advocacy group continued running their workshops. In March 2025, they held an open session of the Insights into Minority Ethnic Mental Health workshop, and in May, they presented a shorter version at the CAPS conference day.

This workshop shone a light on important issues affecting people from minority ethnic backgrounds, including racial discrimination in the UK, the everyday realities faced by minority ethnic communities, and the impact of stigma. These discussions helped deepen understanding and highlighted the importance of listening to lived experience when tackling inequality.

The group developed a workshop exploring the experiences of minority ethnic communities when using GPs and primary care services. To shape the content, they designed a survey to gather the voices of people from across Edinburgh. A tailored session was delivered to one of the Edinburgh GP practices where the feedback highlighted the overwhelming need for the workshop.

Earlier this year, members of the minority ethnic group joined with CAPS' LGBTQIA+ group to co-deliver a workshop on intersectionality as part of the CAPS Oor Mad History course. More recently, this workshop was also delivered as a tailored session with Penumbra.

"It informed me and others on how we can be better informed and listen on topics relating to minority ethnic Mental Health" - Workshop Participant

Unfortunately, EIJB made a decision to not continue their funding for the group and the valuable work we have been doing. However, funding from People's Postcode Lottery has allowed us to take our work forward till March.

Oor Mad History

The Oor Mad History project has had a very productive year! In February, we ran the first Understanding Oor Mad History in partnership with the Lothian Health Services Archive at The University of Edinburgh.

"It was a warm, inclusive course that I would recommend as a whole"

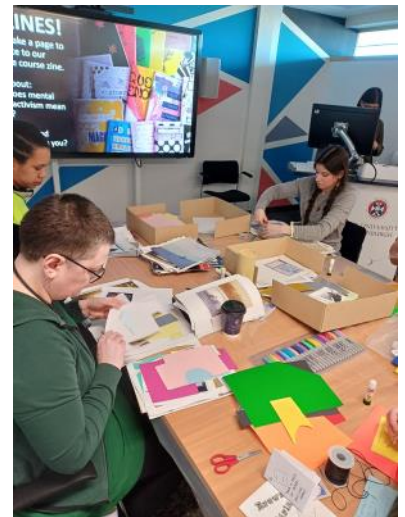
Participants fed back that they enjoyed the focus on lived experience, discussion and community building: **"I learned more about myself from**

hearing from people who had similar experiences." We are pleased that the course will be running for a second time in January 2026!

We also held our first Discovery Session in partnership with the University of Edinburgh. This exhibition featured participants' research and viewpoints on archival materials. It was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the power of lived experience expertise, to add to research, policy, and advocacy. We had a fantastic turnout, with

around 40 people attending and participants fed back how empowering they had found the experience, with one person saying, **"I really enjoyed taking part. A lot of people came and everyone was supportive and friendly."**

We are still populating the Oor Mad History archive. Members of the group have been sorting, scanning, and writing descriptions for the website. We are looking forward to finally sharing this rich digital resource of knowledge soon!

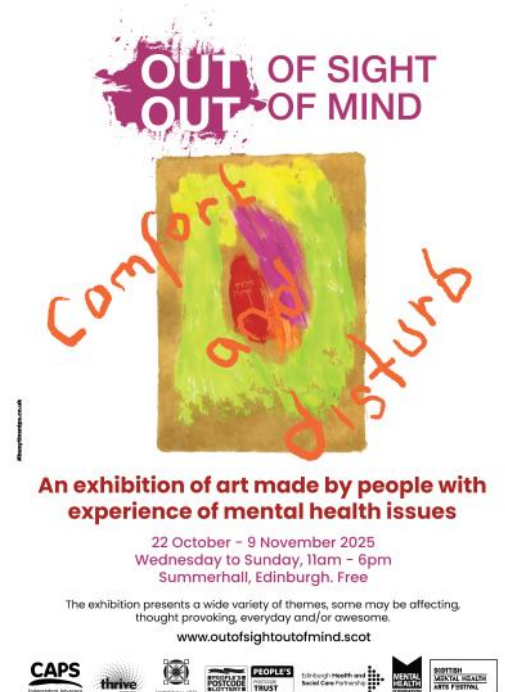


The group is holding a workshop on 3rd December at Norton Park focusing on Mad Studies and the legacy of Oor Mad History.

We are also planning to run a workshop as part of a Mad conference in Glasgow in summer 2026– watch this space!

Art as Advocacy

The one-of-a-kind, **Out of Sight Out of Mind** exhibition, came back for a 13th year and **bigger than ever!** Artworks made by 394 people with mental health issues were shown at Summerhall in Edinburgh, from 21 Oct—9 Nov 2025. Not just an exhibition – a ‘celebration of the human experience’, in different voices, media and colours. Some took inspiration from Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival theme **Comfort and Disturb**. Inspired by a famous Cesar A Cruz quote about art as activism, the idea that “art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable”.



In addition, 91 canvases were submitted to a ‘Comfort & Disturb Canvas Installation’; an area was created where visitors could sit and talk, and take time to answer: ‘What does it mean to you?’; three tours were led by the group.

In numbers: 394 exhibitors. 38 artwork materials grants, supporting 148 exhibitors. 19 participating organisations. 12 regular Planning Group members. 26 additional exhibition volunteers. The final tally of exhibition visitors is **2647 - the highest yet!**

Out of Sight Out of Mind Events:

May: OOSOOM Afternoon Tea—Meet up and find out more about taking part

July: Comfort & Disturb canvas session—Make art together for the exhibition

September: OOSOOM Volunteer session—Find out more about volunteering

October: OOSOOM Exhibition Launch—Celebrate!

November: Audio Descriptive Tour—by the Planning Group and See with Me, Fruitmarket Galleries

November: OOSOOM Uncovered—Exhibitors and visitors discuss the artworks

Art as Advocacy



The OOSOOM Planning Group's Year:

As well as planning, PR, curating etc, they visited 'Women in Revolt' at National Galleries; helped create a talk about OOSOOM as a work of advocacy, which was presented to University of Edinburgh Social Work students and at CAPS

conference; they were active in responding to 'the cuts': inputting to reporting, speaking to media and ensuring OOSOOM 2025 shone as brightly as ever!

Read what the exhibition means to many people and see lots of photos on the website: www.outofsightoutofmind.scot

March 2025: Charlotte Mitchell: A Memoir Book Launch

In her book, a community activist who has mental health issues, long term health conditions and disabilities told the story of the challenges in their life, with the aim of educating and inspiring others. The free of charge book was launched at an event, and distributed throughout Edinburgh and beyond. The pdf can be downloaded via this blog post that Charlotte wrote: [Book Launch Success!](#)

[Charlotte Mitchell: A Memoir - CAPS](#)



Seen But Not Heard

This year has been an exciting one for the Seen But Not Heard group, who continue to use lived experience to challenge stigma and influence how eating disorders are understood in Edinburgh and the Lothians.



A highlight this year was the publication of the group's powerful piece on recovery, *'Frustrating the Recovery Narrative: Living Well with an Eating Disorder'*, in the International Journal of Mad Studies. The article challenges narrow ideas of recovery and celebrates the many ways people can live well while managing an

eating disorder. The group are proud to be reaching a wider audience and sparking new conversations.

The group continued work on the rewrite of the *Overcoming Binge Eating* book, developed with clinicians and authors to bring lived experience to the forefront.

"Very helpful to hear from lived experience of eating disorders to understand more about what it's like for people or possible clients I will work with."

The group identified a gap in the fitness industry, responding by delivering two workshops to gyms in Edinburgh. These sessions opened up important conversations about body image, exercise, and supporting clients in recovery safely and sensitively.

They also facilitated a session with the counselling team at the LGBT Health and Wellbeing Centre and took part in an Eating Disorder Awareness Week event at the University of Edinburgh, sharing their experiences alongside researchers and professionals.

Looking ahead, the group are excited to continue developing their workshops, with plans for further sessions with gyms and a return to Queen Margaret University in November. Their commitment to using lived experience for education and advocacy continues to inspire understanding and real change.

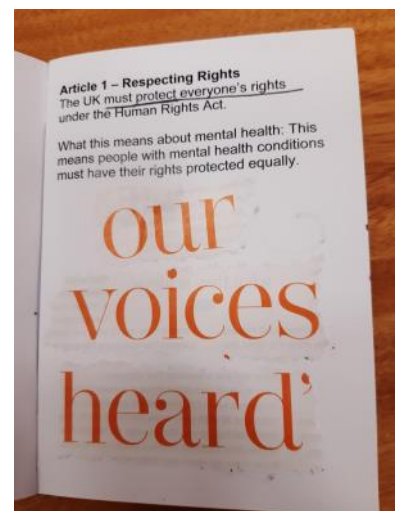
Lothian Voices



Last year's People's Conference in November 2024 focused on lived experience involvement. On the day we facilitated the opportunity for people to record their ideas and experiences, which the group are hoping to make available for the public to hear in Edinburgh libraries. The group would also like to invite other services to make use of these recordings along with the People's Conference report in training for staff etc, to understand more of what people want from future lived experience involvement work.

This year's People's Conference was held in September and focused on Human Rights. We had a great turnout with 27 people attending on the day. We had a wonderful day filled with discussion and information sharing!

A group member led a session on de-mystifying human rights, there was a presentation from the SIAA, looking at human rights and advocacy and some great workshops in the afternoon, with important discussion on how we can protect our human rights. Look out on CAPS' website and social media for more information and outcomes from the day!



Lothian Voices group members continue to attend the cross-party group on health inequalities and respond to Lothian wide mental health related consultations.

Edinburgh Collective Advocacy



This year Edinburgh Collective Advocacy has included work on several different projects. At the beginning of the year the Community Voices group opened their survey about community drop-in spaces, which had over 100 responses. The report on this survey will be a useful resource when advocating for better provision of community spaces in Edinburgh. When asked about drop-ins, people said:

“It’s a way of meeting others in my community and helping with my anxiety issues”. They described drop-ins as: ***“a life line to their communities”***, another person said they provide: ***“community spirit that you rely upon for the rest of the week until the next session”***.

People involved in many of our groups told us they would like to come together to do something positive about potential cuts to Collective Advocacy. The Collective Advocacy Response Group was formed by people involved in Collective Advocacy, as part of Edinburgh Collective Advocacy. The group worked together to carry out dynamic and impactful work, driven by their own views. In their open letter to the EIJB, the group described how CAPS Collective Advocacy groups are important to them because they... ***“uphold people’s agency, dignity, and human rights”***. The Response Group had an undeniable impact when advocating for their views. They took Collective Advocacy into their own hands and their voices were heard! The group have decided to continue working together within Edinburgh Collective Advocacy, now focusing on the upcoming recommissioning process and other similar topics to ensure lived experience voices are included. The group are enthusiastic and say ***“we will continue to come together to discuss our ideas and views”***. At the People’s Conference one member summed up the group’s feeling: ***“Now we just have to keep going!”***

LGBTQIA+

The LGBTQIA+ Collective Advocacy group have had another inspiring year, using lived experience to open up conversations, challenge stigma and strengthen community across Edinburgh and the Lothians.

A highlight of the year was the group's intersectionality workshop on workplace discrimination, co-delivered with the Minority Ethnic Collective Advocacy group. The session created a space for important conversations about inclusion, identity and equality at work. The workshop was very well received. Participants spoke



about how valuable it was to have a safe space to explore these issues together.

In June, the group hosted a stall at Pride, celebrating visibility and community while sharing information about Independent Advocacy. It was a joyful and vibrant day full of colour, conversation and connection, helping to raise awareness of

LGBTQIA+ voices and how advocacy can make a difference.

The group were invited to deliver a workshop to mental health nurses at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. The session explored how stigma can still impact LGBTQIA+ people when accessing mental health support, and how small, practical changes can help make services more inclusive.

The group were deeply saddened by the recent news to end their funding. They expressed concern about how changes to local services may affect people's access to advocacy and support. They remain committed to ensuring that LGBTQIA+ perspectives are heard within these important discussions.

Looking ahead, the group plan to continue and expand their workplace discrimination workshop, making it more widely available to workplaces, services and community groups across the Lothians. By sharing their lived experiences, they aim to challenge stigma, celebrate diversity and promote equality.

Peer Forum

Peers have their own **lived experience** of mental health difficulties and use these in an **intentional** way to **support** others. The Peer Forum has been a Collective Advocacy group for peer workers and volunteers. This group will be ending after November this year but over the last year we have been meeting monthly to discuss what matters to peers and what can be improved.

Main topics at the Forum

Peers have voiced concerns around the lack of spaces where peers can:

- **Meet** and socialise
- **Learn** from each other
- **Support** each other

'I first came to the Forum to meet other peers. There are not enough peer spaces, we need to create them'

This is important as some peers do not have other peer colleagues and work in isolation. Similarly, peers who have contact with other peers are more **supported, connected, and confident**. In fact, peers identified that the support they provide is learnt hands-on and it is passed on from more experienced peers to those new to the field.

Specific peer support where managers and non-peers are not present is crucial as peers often feel misunderstood and constrained by hierarchical structures and what they feel comfortable sharing. The idea of **peer supervisors, senior peers**

and **peer managers** have also been discussed.

A lot of the work we have done focused on **stigma** and **misconceptions** of peers and what they do, as peers think that this is one of the main reasons the support they need is not available. In fact, often

'I dislike the idea of 'fixing' people. I want to walk alongside them, this is what being a peer is. But this is not always possible due to how services work.'

peers noted that when there is support is not the **right type of support**.

Peer Forum (cont)

Outcomes

It has been exciting to see a member of the Peer Forum successfully highlight the lack of peer spaces in their own organisation and then to take charge of creating them! At the same time, the group have worked on the creation of a report to provide a resource to **de-stigmatise** peer support. The report collated the discussions that peers had since December 2023, with **topics**, **themes**, and clear **actions** that organisations can implement in the future. It will be distributed to organisations across Edinburgh who employ peers to help them better understand the needs of peers and to provide the supports that peers need and want. It is also available on our website.

Another positive outcome of the Peer Forum has been the level of influence of the voices and ideas from the group into the work of the wider Peer Community of Practice and their activities over the last year.

The future of Peers in Edinburgh

“..... We need support and learning opportunities. We are not tick boxes. The way organisations treat us has to change. Hopefully the report will inform this change’

The funding for the Peer Community of Practice, is coming to an end in November 2025. We hope that the report we worked on will **influence the decisions** taken by organisations who employ peers, stir organisations to take

action, and fight discrimination and misconception of the peer role. The work that has been done by the Peer Forum in the past years will remain available through CAPS on our website and will be added to the **Oor Mad History archive**. We hope that this way, when funding for peers is secured again in the future, and a new Peer Community flourishes in Edinburgh, the work we have done will inform and leave **a legacy to continue supporting peers in Edinburgh**.

Veterans Collective Advocacy

Our Veterans' Collective Advocacy project has a new worker, Steven Cockburn, this year and he has been busy! Back in May he hit the road visiting various projects and breakfast clubs throughout Scotland. We want to offer as many ways for veterans to get involved in the project, so we have broken down the geography into four areas and in the first six months of the year Steven has concentrated his efforts in two of these areas:

- Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Central Belt
- The North East and the Highlands

In the first half of the year Steven has linked with veterans organisations in these areas, talked to established groups of veterans and promoted the first of three events to offer the opportunity for veterans to come together in person, bringing their lived experience of life as a veteran in Scotland and telling us what's important to them.



We held the first event in August in Glasgow at the Pearce Institute in Glasgow, home of Community Veterans Support (CVS). 42 veterans in total attended. Messages from the day included a mix of messages about what is important to veterans as well as what still needs work.

CAPS workers presented feedback from the event at a Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance event at Napier University and Joe, a veteran who attended the event in Glasgow, presented with CAPS at this event on his recent lived experience of navigating veterans services in Scotland.

In November we will hold the second event at Gordon Barracks in Aberdeen, and are about to launch a campaign looking to hear from veterans who don't currently engage with services and we are excited to be working with Scotland's football clubs to get the word out!

Veterans In Prison Collective Advocacy



CAPS Veterans Collective Advocacy expanded this year to include a one year project gathering the voices of Veterans in Scotland's Prisons.

The aim of the VIP (Veterans in Prison) project is to amplify the voices

of Scotland's prisons' veteran population, to hear about their journey through the justice system and to ensure that their voices are included in the work of Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance.

Our worker presented at the national Veterans In Custody Support Officers meeting in September. VICSOs are dedicated prison officers working with and supporting veterans in prison, and are often veterans themselves. This offered a great opportunity for our worker to promote the project and foster new relationships.



One of the highlights of the project so far has been our worker attending the Veterans cafés in both HMP Perth and HMP Grampian and the response from the veterans has been very positive.

A few key themes that have emerged for this population, include:

- Transitions—both from the military to civilian life and the possibly of leaving prison and what this transition may bring
- Stigma—the feeling of being othered for their veteran status

Next steps for the project are branching out to several other prisons that we have made contact with, including HMP Edinburgh and HMP Inverness.

Testimonials

In May 2025 CAPS was informed by the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership that they were proposing to withdraw their funding for all of our Collective Advocacy projects. A final decision was to be made by the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board (EIJB) at a meeting on 26th August 2025. So we sprang into action. Many Collective Advocacy group members joined with CAPS staff to stick up for Collective Advocacy and a campaign was started to defend these projects. The testimonials on these pages are just a sample of messages of support written by group members, people from other organisations and staff.

The EIJB decided not to cut funding immediately to all of our Collective Advocacy projects as initially proposed. However, they did cut funding to four projects. The rest are to see a recommissioning exercise to take place over the next year, so are still at risk. The four projects that unfortunately saw their funding removed are: Art as Advocacy; Collective Advocacy for people from Minority Ethnic backgrounds; LGBTQIA+ Collective Advocacy and the Peer Forum. The EIJB's decision represents a huge loss to Edinburgh's citizens. People's voices gathered during this time demonstrate the importance of Collective Advocacy in improving the lives of marginalised people. You can read some of their words on the following pages.

“Honestly, even the threat of losing OOSOOM — or any of CAPS or Thrive's services — has made me feel deeply anxious and unwell, especially alongside the looming cuts to disability benefits. OOSOOM has been a lifeline.”

Testimonials cont.

“This exhibition gives me a voice in a world where I often feel voiceless. It’s not just about creating or showing work — it’s about being heard. OOSOOM gives space to the kind of expression that can’t be forced into neat sentences or diagnoses. Here, I don’t need to explain myself in ways I can’t. Through art, I speak. Through this exhibition, I am understood.

“This exhibition doesn’t just support artists — it saves lives. It saved mine.”

“Meeting with government ministers and decision makers that are influential to power allows us to have our experiences, ideas and concerns shared directly from a lived experience perspective.”

“I feel better and more open about my illness thanks to Collective Advocacy. We are not a support group but learning from others’ experiences has made me accept mine more. I have learnt a lot through this group and found what I am here to do. To take something in my life which was so negative for me and use it in a positive way. It’s made me a happier person and a person with purpose.”

Testimonials cont.

“I need this group to feel listened to and able to talk about my issues as a person of colour, a racial minority and as an immigrant. I also learned and can ask for advice and support about procedures on how to access government services or make my voice and concerns heard”.

“I suffer depression anxiety and ocd and have accessed and hugely benefited from CAPS, particularly the arts advocacy and Oor Mad History training. These enabled me to overcome severe isolation and self destructive self harm behaviours and to connect with others and learn and heal. I’ve moved from a place of chaos and worthlessness to a situation where I now undertake several volunteer roles helping others and myself, which without help from CAPS and others would not have been possible.”

“CAPS’ Minority Ethnic Collective Advocacy group gives us a safe, welcoming, accessible, and trauma-informed space where we can use our lived experiences to make our lives and the lives of those who come after us better. “

summary financial information 2025

This summary financial information was drawn from our statutory accounts.

Copies of our statutory accounts are available on request from: **Glen Faulkner,**

Finance & Administration Manager phone: 0131 273 5116 e-mail:

glen@capsadvocacy.org. The law applicable to charities in Scotland requires the

Management Committee to prepare financial statements for each financial year

which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the

incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period.

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 31st March 2025

	Unrestricted 2025 £	Restricted 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
<u>Income from:</u>				
Donations & legacies	15	-	15	914
Charitable activities	-	813,692	813,692	898,482
Investment income	7,280	-	7,280	4,328
Other income	467	-	467	1,066
Total incoming resources	7,762	813,692	821,454	904,790
<u>Expenditure on:</u>				
Charitable activities				
Collective Advocacy	466	394,437	394,903	349,591
Individual Advocacy	-	482,912	482,912	499,729
Total expenditure	466	877,349	877,815	849,320
Net income/(expenditure)	7,296	(63,657)	(56,361)	55,470
Transfer between funds	(3,145)	3,145	-	-
Net movement in funds	4,151	(60,512)	(56,361)	55,470
Funds at 1 st April 2024 / 2023	110,484	487,592	598,076	542,606
Funds at 31st March 2025 / 2024	114,635	427,080	541,715	598,076

summary financial information

2025 *continued*

Balance Sheet at 31st March 2025

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Intangible assets (net book value)	703		929	
Tangible assets (net book value)	2,373		3,116	
<i>Total fixed assets</i>	<i>3,076</i>		<i>4,045</i>	
Current assets				
Debtors	3,552		44,851	
Prepayments	8,844		4,119	
Cash at bank & in hand	619,493		673,119	
<i>Total current assets</i>	<i>631,889</i>		<i>722,089</i>	
Liabilities				
Creditors (due within 1 year)		22,165		12,940
Accruals		27,452		53,420
Deferred income		41,334		58,867
Finance lease		920		831
<i>Net current assets</i>	<i>540,018</i>		<i>596,031</i>	
<i>Total assets less current liabilities</i>	<i>543,094</i>		<i>600,076</i>	
Creditors (due after more than 1 year)		1,379		-
<i>Net assets ex. pension liability</i>	<i>541,715</i>		<i>600,076</i>	
Pension scheme liability provision		-		2,000
Total net assets	541,715		598,076	
The funds of the charity				
Unrestricted – general	32,991		28,374	
Unrestricted – designated	81,644		82,110	
Restricted	427,080		487,592	
Total	541,715		598,076	

We received grant income from Thrive Edinburgh, the Edinburgh, East Lothian & Midlothian Health & Social Care Partnerships, the Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund in East Lothian & Midlothian, NHS Lothian, the Scottish Government, MELDAP and the Robertson Trust.

Who's Who

Management Committee

Brendan Rooney - Chair
Eilidh Coltman - Vice Chair
Tom Jordan - Treasurer
Lauren Stonebanks
Les Nicolson
Lynda Gray
Moira Nelson

Laurelle Edmunds stepped down from the Management Committee during the year, after 15 years of being a trustee — we thank her for all her support of CAPS.

Staff

Jane Crawford - Chief Executive Officer, Kyna Reeves - Individual Advocacy Manager, Ele Davidson - Collective Advocacy Manager, Pam van de Brug - Art as Advocacy Manager, Sarah Fox - Individual Advocacy Team Leader, Steph Davis - Children & Young People's Team Leader, Niamh Allen—Collective Advocacy Team Leader

Individual Advocacy Workers

Kirstie Cowley, Clive Baker, Kousar Javaid, George Kappler, Malin Brash, Romany Howarth, Flora Stokes, John Player (Drug and Alcohol), Victoria MacKenzie (Drug and Alcohol)

Children and Young People's Advocacy Workers

Aishu Madduri, Lauren Miller, Rachael Walker, Robyn Smith, Lara Wauchope

Collective Advocacy Workers

Angharad Blundell, Azra Khan, Irene Paolini, Amy Shields, Alex Kellas, Eli Jeyakumar, Steven Cockburn, Stephanie Morrison

Administrative

Glen Faulkner - Finance & Administration Manager, Catherine Street - Communications & Resources Manager

Rachel Hughes and Lily Walton left during the year

Contact Us

Address

Old Stables
Eskmills Park
Station Road
MUSSELBURGH
EH21 7PQ

Administration enquiries

phone: 0131 273 5116
e-mail: contact@capsadvocacy.org

Individual Advocacy

phone: 0131 273 5118
e-mail: advocate@capsadvocacy.org

Children and Young People's Advocacy

phone: 0131 273 5236
e-mail: ypadvocacy@capsadvocacy.org

Collective Advocacy

phone: 0131 273 5116
e-mail: collective@capsadvocacy.org

Please check the website for mobile numbers of Collective Advocacy staff

www.facebook.com/CAPSIndependentAdvocacy

X [@capsadvocacy](https://twitter.com/capsadvocacy)

www.capsadvocacy.org



CAPS Independent Advocacy is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Scottish Charity Number: SC021772