

CAPS Collective Advocacy Evaluation 2024

Celebrating Voices, Connection, and Change

This year's evaluation celebrates the experiences of people involved in Collective Advocacy at CAPS Independent Advocacy. Through a mix of surveys and a creative Evaluation Day, people shared their thoughts on what being part of CAPS means to them - and how we can grow together in the future.

What is Collective Advocacy?

Collective Advocacy brings people together who have lived experience of mental health issues to speak up and create positive change. It's about working as equals, having our voices heard, and making sure decision-makers listen.

This report helps shape how we do that.

At CAPS, our outcomes framework helps keep us rooted in what is important to the people we work alongside. It guides all our work, within the individual, collective and children and young people's advocacy teams, so that people feel heard, respected, and truly involved in shaping what happens in their lives and communities.

Here are the six CAPS' outcomes we aim to achieve in everything we do:

- 1. People will be better informed about their rights and options**
- 2. People will be more able to express their views and tell others what's important to them**
- 3. People's views, wishes and lived experience will be better heard and taken into account**
- 4. People have more choice and control in situations that affect their lives, including how we work with them**
- 5. People will have increased access to services, including CAPS**
- 6. People are more able to redress power imbalances and challenge stigma and discrimination**

The report also contributes to the SIAA (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance) National Framework, by showing how Collective Advocacy leads to empowerment, self-advocacy, participation, and influencing change - all key values in the national vision for independent advocacy: <https://bit.ly/406zqu2>

How Did We Listen?

We used two main ways:

- **Survey:** 29 people shared their views online or on paper. We asked about access, group experience, impact, and ideas for the future. The survey included simple Yes/No/Unsure questions alongside space for people to write additional comments. This helped us gather both clear indicators of how people felt about their experience, as well as meaningful feedback, shared in people's own words, that offered real insight into what matters to them.
- **Evaluation Day:** 7 people joined staff to reflect creatively using the “Evaluation Tree” - adding reflections as coloured flowers, leaves, and birds.



What We Heard

Getting Involved

- 76% said yes to “was it easy to get involved with Collective Advocacy?” (14% unsure)
- Most people felt warmly welcomed by staff and appreciated quick, helpful responses.
- There was growing interest in evening and weekend meetings to support broader access.

‘CAPS’ staff were very prompt in responding to my queries and positive about involving me’

Group Experience

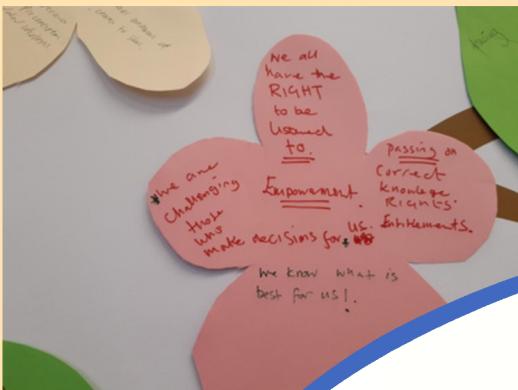
- 90% said yes to “did you feel listened to and respected by staff and fellow group members?” (7% unsure)
- 89% agreed with the statement “there are different ways to have your say in groups” (11% unsure)
- 83% said yes to “did you receive enough information about how to take part?” (10% unsure)
- 83% said yes to “did the advocacy worker listen to and try to accommodate your needs?” (10% unsure)
- People described groups as empowering, confidence-building spaces that help them reconnect with others and feel valued.
- As one participant put it, **“It gave me a place where I belong.”**



‘I think it’s a brilliant initiative and I thoroughly enjoy being involved. It’s so valuable to come together with others to discuss important issues and how we might be able to change things for the better.’

Impact and Growth

- 76% said yes to “do you consider yourself to be better informed and more knowledgeable about your rights, mental health services, and community support after being involved in collective advocacy?” (11% unsure)
- 64% said yes to “did you have opportunities to share your views with decision-makers?” (25% unsure)
- 62% said yes to “it was easier to raise shared issues together as a group?” (21% unsure)
- **“Being listened to is powerful.”** was a key theme that came up again and again.



‘CAPS’ Collective Advocacy projects are so important. They literally changed my life for the better. I know this isn’t their primary goal but it’s a very welcome side effect.’

Connections and Community

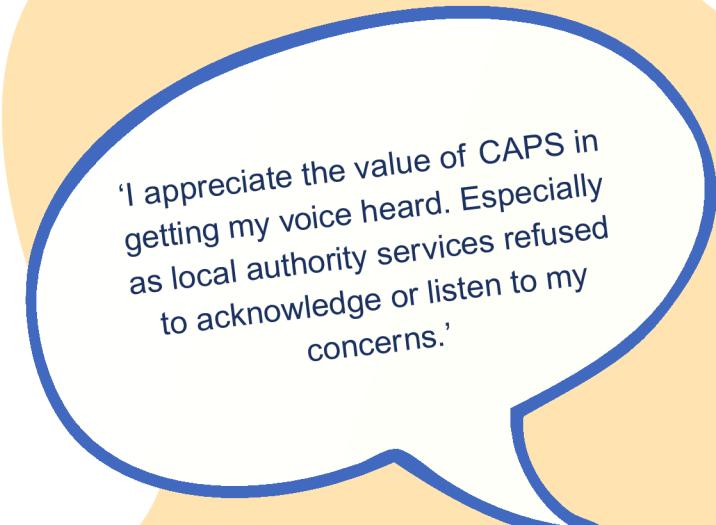
- 72% said yes to “does being part of a group makes you feel more connected to others and your community?” (18% unsure)
- People spoke about feeling part of a community, some even described it as life changing.
- Many gained new knowledge, friendships, and a renewed sense of purpose.



‘Great way to get connected to people and stay active’

Challenging Stigma and Making Change

- 74% said yes to “do you believe that the advocacy work you are involved in helps challenge stigma, discrimination, and power imbalances?” (23% unsure)
- Participants shared stories of contributing to projects, speaking at public events, and influencing services.



‘I appreciate the value of CAPS in getting my voice heard. Especially as local authority services refused to acknowledge or listen to my concerns.’

Looking Forward: Ideas for the Future

We heard exciting ideas for growth:

- **More visibility:** Podcasts, videos, social media, and online promotion to help reach more people.
- **Flexible options:** Meetings in the evenings or weekends, more online ways to get involved.
- **Creative projects:** Art, writing, workshops, and peer-led ideas to keep things fresh and inclusive.
- **Stronger links:** Working more collaboratively with third sector partners, local councils, and funders.
- **Wider recognition of lived experience by others:** Valuing the insight and leadership of people with lived experience as essential, not optional.



‘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’

Highlights from the Evaluation Tree

- “Meeting staff and the group becomes a nurturing environment.”
- “Feeling like I can make a difference as well as increased feelings of self-worth and not being alone.”
- “Collective advocacy is an aid to tell all.”
- “Invest in us and you might save money in the long run.”

Feedback Day
Explore and Reflect

Thursday 30th May 11am to 3pm

A day for people who have been involved in Collective Advocacy at CAPS - join us for discussions, arts and crafts and a free lunch!

CAPS
Independent Advocacy

Future

Present

Past

If you want to give feedback another way see our survey at the QR code:

At Norton Park, 57 Albion Rd, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY to register get in touch with Azra on azra@capsadvocacy.org 07436 102 762

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'It feels less isolating to be in a group and that is why I chose to attend and join. It feels more empowering too. It also connects people with others in a supportive space. It is also confidential and really inclusive. It practices a really good format for service users to engage and co-design. But crucially it represents and amplifies voices in a professional and organised collective way.'

This evaluation highlights the many ways people's experiences of Collective Advocacy at CAPS reflect the six outcomes we aim for in all our work.

People told us they are better informed about their rights and options and feel more confident expressing their views. Their voices, wishes and lived experience are being heard and taken seriously, both within CAPS and by wider decision-makers.

People described having more choice and control in how they take part, and highlighted the importance of flexible, inclusive ways to get involved. The findings also show that people have better access to services, information and support, and that being part of collective advocacy is helping them challenge stigma and redress power imbalances. These outcomes aren't just words, they are reflected in the real, everyday impact people tell us about.

How this evaluation supports the SIAA framework

The findings show a strong alignment of CAPS' work with the SIAA's key principles:

- **Participation:** People were actively involved in shaping the service and sharing ideas.
- **Empowerment:** Many described increased confidence, independence, and voice.
- **Inclusion:** Collective Advocacy is clearly helping reduce isolation and build community.
- **Change:** From influencing policy to co-producing events, participants are making a real impact.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who took part.

Your voices matter.

This report celebrates all we have achieved together and sets a hopeful path for the future.

Let's keep growing, listening, and speaking up together.





Independent Advocacy

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