

Strategic Plan 2026–2030

CAPS
Independent Advocacy



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Vision

People who are experiencing disadvantage, can express their views and wishes and have these heard and respected in decisions about all aspects of their life.

Purpose

To provide disadvantaged individuals and groups with Independent Advocacy, both individual and collective, to enhance their voices. We will provide information, so people understand their rights and options. We will educate workers about how to provide better services by learning from lived experience.

**Human
rights**

**System
change**

**Tackling
stigma**

Independent Advocacy

Underpinned by lived experience, equality,
transparency and respect

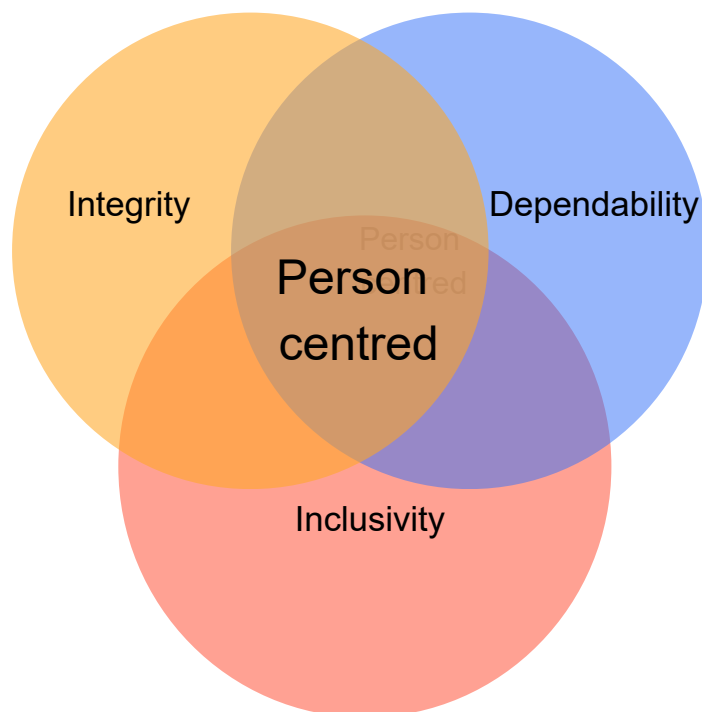
Values

CAPS has a long-established policy [Working to CAPS values](#). It is embodied by these three qualities:

Integrity – honest, trustworthy and consistent

Dependability – reliable in actions, words and responsibilities

Inclusivity – creating spaces where people feel valued, respected and safe.



Oor Mad History Ten Years On

Human Rights Mad activist
Lived experience Validation
Improving lives Changing policy
Collective Advocacy
Community Recognition
Redressing power imbalances
Diversity Stronger together
Empowered Peer work
Breaking down stigma
Grassroots Passion Justice
Shared understanding
Service redesign Speaking out
Real changes Raising awareness
Challenging preconceptions
Truth to power Connectedness
Safe space Determination
Seat at the table Experience led
Volunteering Trauma Informed
Breaking down stigma
Sense of purpose

Principles

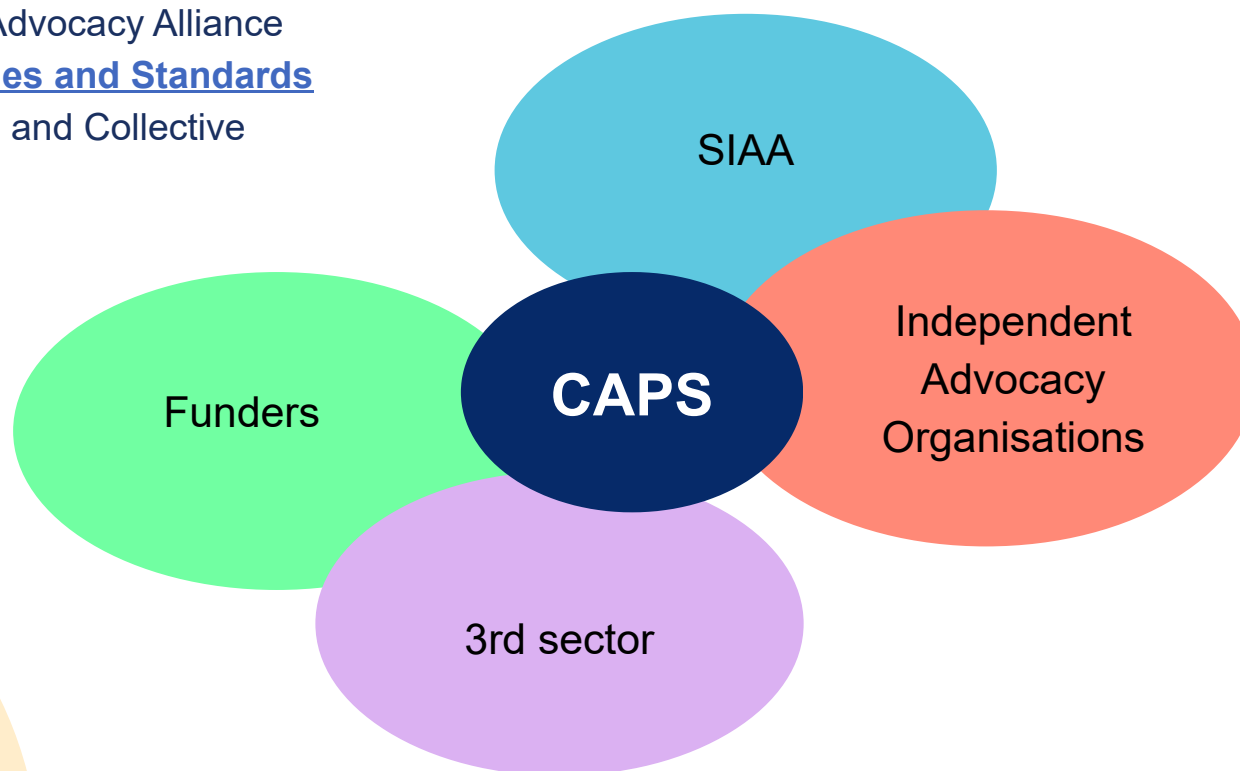
- We are loyal to the people we support and stand by their views and wishes.
- We ensure that people's voices are listened to and their views taken into account.
- We stand up to injustice, discrimination and disempowerment.
- We promote and protect our independence
- We include and respect everyone as equals (i.e. regardless of ethnic origin, disability, background, gender, sexuality, religious beliefs).
- We aim to avoid conflict of interest and are open and honest about any possible conflicts of interest so these can be mitigated where possible.
- We respect people's privacy and ensure confidentiality is maintained.
- We use our resources efficiently to ensure best value for our funders.
- We measure our performance against Independent Advocacy outcomes to evidence the impact of our work.
- We learn and improve through feedback, to provide the best possible experience for our advocacy partners.
- We monitor any risks facing the organisation and take mitigating actions.

Position

CAPS Independent Advocacy became a Scottish Incorporated Charitable Organisation (SCIO) - SC021772 in 2016. The original organisation (the Consultation and Advocacy Promotion Service) was first established in 1991.

CAPS is a full member of the governing membership body – the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA). We adhere to the [Principles and Standards](#) and provide high quality Individual and Collective Advocacy in Lothian.

We collaborate with other Independent Advocacy providers in Lothian as well as being part of a larger network of Scotland-wide advocacy organisations. Locally we work alongside other third sector organisations and are active members of the Third Sector Interface organisations for East Lothian, Midlothian and Edinburgh.



Objectives

At this point in CAPS' history after 35 years of growth and development from a grassroots user movement, we are facing challenging times of change and uncertainty in Independent Advocacy. We aim to turn these challenges into opportunities to restructure and reshape the organisation over the next four years, with our overarching aim of providing high-quality Independent Advocacy to disadvantaged people at the forefront of our work.

We will:

1. Preserve and promote the importance of **Independence**.
2. **Work smarter** to create organisational efficiencies and improvements.
3. **Diversify** the means and methods of providing Independent Advocacy.





Collaboration and inclusion

To achieve these objectives:

- we will work collaboratively with advocacy partners, members of staff and other stakeholders.
- where beneficial, we will work in partnership with like-minded organisations, always maintaining our Independence.
- we will use surveys and gather data and information to inform the most appropriate choices and actions.
- we will develop and improve our policies and procedures.
- qualitative and quantitative data will evidence the impact of, and the necessity for, the Independent Advocacy we provide.

1. Preserve and promote the importance of Independence

We will do this by:

- Using SIAA's definition of Independence in our CAPS communications
- Ensuring that SIAA's definition of Independence is highlighted and recommended in all consultations and engagement sessions we participate in, relating to Independent Advocacy.
- Using our whole name in all communications to stress that we are Independent.
- Participating in the creation of local Independent Advocacy strategies and the implementation of local Independent Advocacy plans, in conjunction with Health and Social Care Partnership leads.
- CAPS will work closely with SIAA and strengthen our relationship with them by participating in joint initiatives such as meetings with Scottish Government officials, events, formal communications.
- Increase our communications with local MSP's and Councillors, using every available opportunity to highlight the Independent Advocacy work that CAPS has done, e.g. performance reports, lived experience reports and research.
- Work collaboratively with other Independent Advocacy organisations across Scotland in the pursuance of a new entity called Independent Advocacy Scotland, which would be able to take on new national independent advocacy services.
- Organise and host events such as webinars, workshops, conference days about CAPS Independent Advocacy work.
- Accurately preserve the history of mental health activism and advocacy by continuing with the digitisation of the Oor Mad History archive and building on our links with the Lothian Health Services Archive.
- Enhance and increase our social media and website interactions, growing the awareness of people about Independent Advocacy.

2. Work smarter to create organisational efficiencies and improvements

We will do this by:

- Analysing the effectiveness of our Collective Advocacy projects and focusing our resources where they can have the most impact for our group members.
- Using staff time as efficiently as possible, moving to more of a team approach in Collective Advocacy.
- Reviewing and analysing organisational overheads, changing providers or systems, where possible, to reduce expenditure.
- Investigating how automation could create efficiencies in administrative processes, for staff members and the organisation.
- Researching, learning and adopting safe, responsible use of Artificial Intelligence to improve efficiency while staying true to CAPS values.
- Gathering the data we need in a more efficient way, improving evaluation systems so we can better evidence the compliance and impact of our work.
- Ensuring maximum performance on our existing contracts by involving the staff team in continual improvement discussions.
- Increased understanding between teams of each other's roles and involving staff and advocacy partners in identifying ways to improve outcomes for people.
- Considering the environmental impact of our working systems, creating a team of Green champions to reduce costs as well as our carbon footprint.

3. Diversify the means and methods of providing Independent Advocacy

We will do this by:

- Adopting a proactive, visible approach to accepting donations, legacies etc with information on our website.
- Creating Crowd Funding campaigns to source additional funds for specific activities or events.
- Identifying areas of need for Independent Advocacy which is non-statutory and applying for external funding to deliver this e.g. LGBTQIA+, homelessness, poverty, migrants etc.
- Explore supplementing income through new ways of working, for example by offering chargeable experience-led workshops directly to beneficiaries such as university students, third sector workers, public sector organisations who want to improve their understanding of the needs of people with mental health issues.
- Generating income from the unique skills and expertise of our workforce e.g. consultancy work.
- Offering CAPS services to other areas of Scotland if possibilities exist.
- Exploring the feasibility of setting up a Community Interest Company to generate unrestricted funds for CAPS.
- Actively researching and applying for external funds which meet the strategic aims of the organisation, using the skills and knowledge of the senior management team.
- Developing skills in alternative fund-raising methods through investment in training for managers and the Support for Advocacy team.
- Involving staff, Management Committee and group members in gathering ideas about ways we might diversify through team meetings, events and workshops.
- Embracing consortium opportunities and instigating or responding to collaboration requests, subject to maintaining our independence.

BEYOND DIAGNOSIS



Context

This strategy is owned by CAPS Management Committee and was approved on 4 June 2026. It was prepared by the CEO following workshops with the Management Committee, aided by external consultant input and then consultation with staff members about their vision for 2030.

Led by the CEO, all CAPS staff are responsible for delivering the strategy and progress will be regularly reported to the CAPS Management Committee, whose role is to oversee, challenge and support.

An implementation plan will be created and reviewed at 6 monthly intervals to ensure that the work we are doing links to this strategic plan. An annual Strategy Progress report will be produced in April 2027, April 2028, April 2029 and April 2030 documenting the actions taken and the success and challenges faced during each year as we work towards our Vision for 2030.

The Independent Advocacy landscape

This is a time of opportunities and threats for Independent Advocacy in Scotland. Locally, Health and Social Care Partnerships have decreasing funds available while the need and demand for advocacy increases. Static or reduced funding makes it difficult to increase staff salaries in line with the cost of living. More pressures are faced by the organisation with increases to the Real Living Wage, increased Employer National Insurance contributions, rising business costs and more demanding contractual terms. Longer term contracts publicly commissioned can offer stability but could also pose an immense threat to continuation of service provision, jobs and stability for advocacy partners.

Forthcoming legislation promises of the right to access Independent Advocacy for more groups of people without clarity as to how this will be possible or who will provide the funding required. National contracts to a single provider may be preferred. The Scottish Government are considering recommendations about reforms to the Mental Health Act, including identifying and addressing gaps in Independent Advocacy. Find more detail in their [response to the Scottish Mental Health Law Review](#).





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