



Annual report
2019/20

Registered Charity No. 1152778

Company No. 5741949

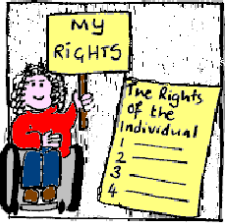


Alison's Statement



Alison Wood is Vocal's Chair of trustees. Alison reported the following:

Vocal's purpose is:



"The relief of persons with speech and communication difficulties by providing a service to assist those persons to realise their full potential and obtain their full rights as a citizen."



At the 2019 AGM Margaret Cushen, Janet Regan, Edward Jackson and Alison Wood were asked to be trustees for Vocal. They all said yes and will continue to be trustees for the year 2019-20.



The trustees meet regularly to talk about Vocal, discuss plans and set goals for the year.



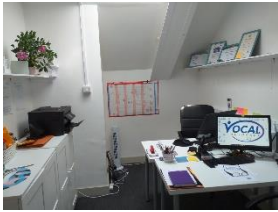
In 2019/20 Vocal achieved many of its aims. Vocal continues to give top rate advocacy for people with learning disabilities.



All advocates who work for Vocal either have or are working towards getting the advocacy qualification.



Vocal continues to be an active member of Devon Advocacy Consortium. By working with Devon Advocacy Consortium Vocal can support more people. Our staff also get training and support through the Consortium.



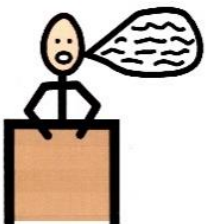
2019/20 was an eventful year for Vocal. In Spring there was a fire near to the Vocal office. The office was damaged by smoke so we moved to a smaller temporary office. The old office is now repaired, and we will be moving back in September 2020.



In March 2020 the coronavirus arrived and we have had to make changes to the way we work. We have been working from home and using Zoom, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp to keep in touch with people and to do our work safely.



In 2019/20 there have been some staff changes. Adele Rennells stopped being our administrator so that she had more time to focus on advocacy work. Ruth Melbourne joined Vocal and is now the administrator. Nicky Bonfield joined us in May 2019 as an advocate and left in February 2020. We welcomed Laura Lees in January 2020. Laura will be doing general advocacy as well as working with our members.



Vocal will continue to support people to speak up for themselves and be heard when decisions are being made about their lives.

Alison Wood
Chair of Trustees

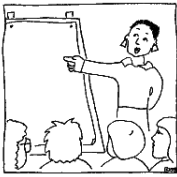
Who Does Vocal Help and How Do They Help People?



Vocal provides an independent service for people who have a learning disability and/or communication difficulty. Vocal can help people who live in the south and west of Devon (including Torbay).

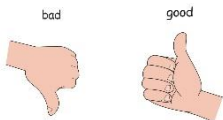


Here to help

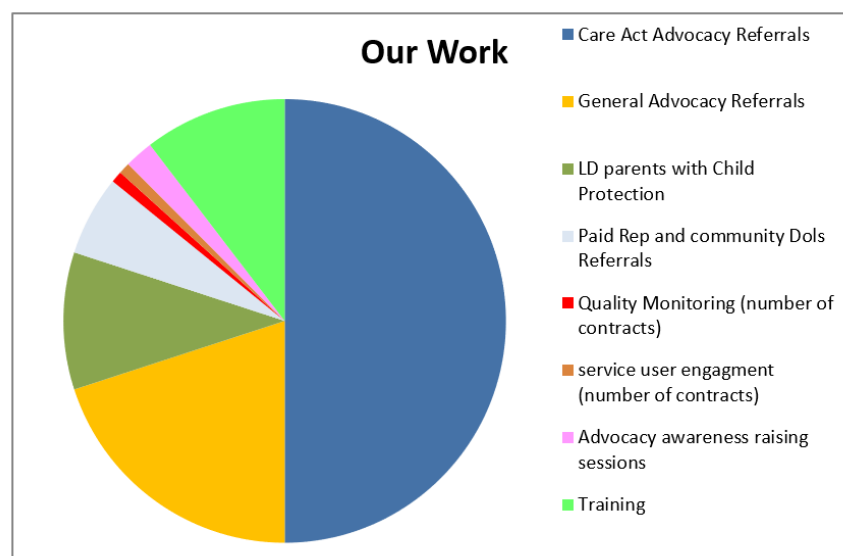


Vocal can help with the following things:

- advocacy
- support planning and person-centred planning
- training
- service user engagement
- quality monitoring - finding out what is good and bad
- Paid Rep service for people who have a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard in place



The chart below shows the different kinds of work that Vocal did in 2019/2020.





Vocal is the only advocacy charity in the South West trained by the RIX centre in London. The RIX Centre trained us to use technology like to help people communicate. We now use these skills in all of Vocal's work.

Independent Advocacy



The main work that Vocal does is to help people to make decisions about their lives and to get their voice heard.



The Care Act was introduced in 2015. Since then Vocal has been asked to provide both statutory and generic advocacy work for people.



Statutory advocacy means that by law there are some things that people must get help with, for example a review of a person's care and support plan.



Most of our work comes from South Devon and Torbay Care Trust and Devon County Council, via the Devon Advocacy Consortium. We also have a contract with Torbay Council to provide advocacy for parents who have a learning disability living in Torbay.



Funding from spot contracts, donations and fundraising has allowed Vocal to provide generic advocacy work to people in South Devon and Torbay.



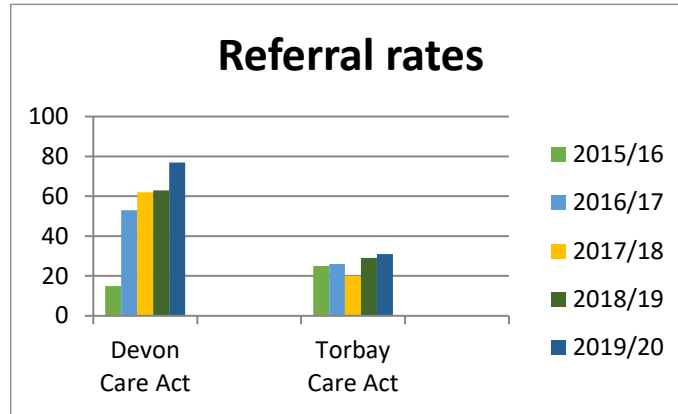
The introduction of the Care Act 2015 has changed the way in which we have to record our work. We must record how many general and how many statutory advocacy issues we take on separately.

Here is more detailed information about the work Vocal has been doing:

Statutory or Care Act Advocacy



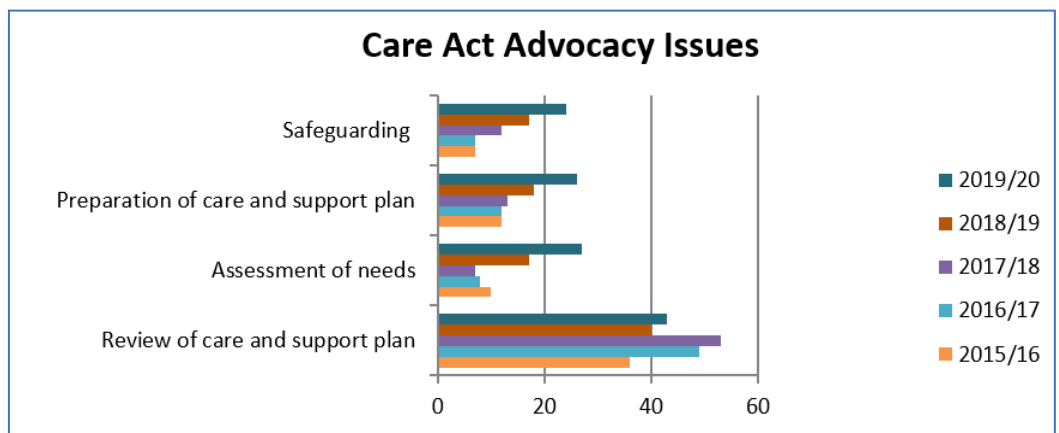
Care Act advocacy has now been funded for 5 years. As people learn about the Care Act the number of people asking Vocal to help has gone up.



The chart above shows a rise in the number of people who are referred each year in Devon from 2015 to 2020. This is mainly because more people are aware that it is a legal requirement to ask an advocate to help.



In Torbay referral rates have not gone up so much. The next chart shows what problems or issues people ask for help with.

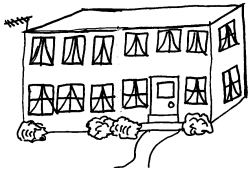




Lots of people need help to review their care and support plans. You can also see on the chart that people asked for support with other things, including safeguarding.

Paid Representatives

Vocal have been working as paid representatives for a number of people living in Devon and Torbay. The people they support have high needs and cannot always make decisions for themselves. Vocal visits these people in their care home and checks that they are receiving good care. If not Vocal challenge this for them.

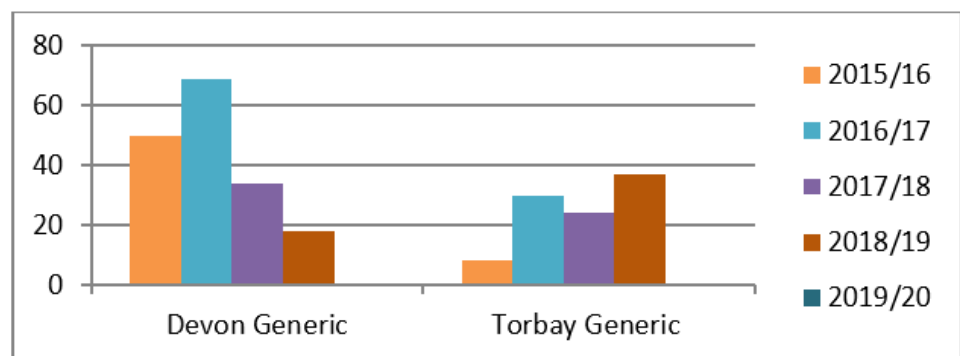


Generic Advocacy

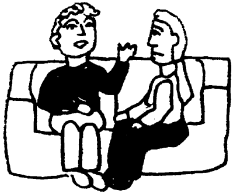
If someone needs an advocate and they are not eligible for one under the Care Act or Mental Capacity Act we can provide a generic advocacy service. Vocal does fundraising to help pay for this. Most of our generic advocacy is provided by our team of volunteers. We would not be able to do so much generic advocacy without the support of volunteers.



Referral Rates



The chart above shows that the number of generic referrals we are getting in Devon is going down. This is because we are getting more people coming to us for help with Care Act issues.



There are also fewer places where people with a learning disability can meet to talk. This makes it more difficult for us to tell people about Vocal and our generic advocacy service.



We do not feel that the referral rates shown in the graph reflect the true need of our service. Vocal have appointed a part time advocate to raise awareness of our service and to provide generic advocacy.



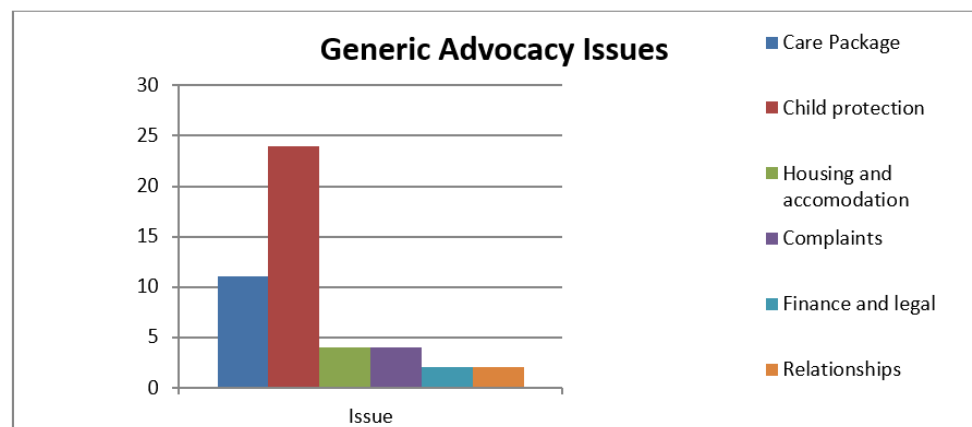
In Torbay we are getting more people asking for help with general advocacy issues. This is because the local authority has worked hard to tell people about advocacy.

Advocacy for Parents with a Learning Disability



Vocal has a contract with Torbay Children's Services to support parents with a learning disability whose children are involved with child protection procedures. There has been a big demand for this service. This has contributed to the increase in the number of referrals in Torbay.

The graph below shows the issues that people asked for help with.



Most of our generic advocacy work is to support parents with a learning disability with child protection issues.

Feedback



At the end of each piece of generic advocacy work we ask for feedback. Here are some examples:

- 'I have spoken with XX and he is really pleased with the support he has received - Provider
- Thank you XX, I don't know what I would have done without your support - Client
- XX has offered great support to XX - he has an excellent approach to his work - Provider.
- XX provided excellent support for XX and it was a great comfort to her. XX took time to get to know the client, to understand the home and how she likes to live. - Home Manager.



good



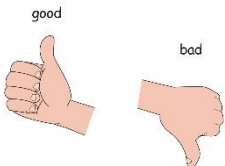
Quality Assurance and Service User Engagement

Quality Assurance



Vocal checks the quality of some services provided for people with learning disabilities. Vocal do 'spot checks'.

This means that someone from Vocal goes to visit somewhere, like a residential home, and spends time talking to the people living there and the staff. They find out about all the good things about the home and if there are any negative or bad points.



A local provider said this about the quality assurance work that we do:

'It has been great having an independent person to visit us, it has enhanced our own quality assurance. We have been



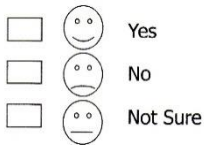
able to give Vocal key areas to focus on and provide feedback. They are very professional and have been able to develop a good rapport with our service users and staff.'

Service User Engagement



Some local providers ask Vocal to help the people they support to say what they think and want.

This is done in different ways:



- Support people to complete a survey
- Support people to have a house or group meeting
- Support people to attend meetings with the organisation who provides their care



A local provider said this about the service user engagement work that we do:



'It can be difficult for people with a learning disability to make their voices heard. To support people in a way that is truly person centred, without acceding to the wishes of other interested parties, is an important service that Vocal provide.'

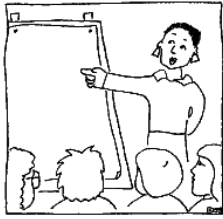
Advocacy Awareness Training



We like to tell people about Vocal and what advocacy is. By doing this we raise awareness. We do this in several ways:

- We attend local council meetings
- We attend local events like Blue Light days
- We go to conferences
- We give talks to local groups





Vocal also provides advocacy awareness training. We run courses for care staff and service users. The course is usually for half a day. We help people to understand what advocacy is and how to make a referral. We have found that it works well if we train care staff and service users together.

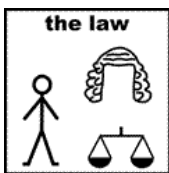


Our trainers are all people who are experienced in advocacy. They may work for Vocal as an advocate or they may have been helped by one of our advocates and now work as a volunteer for Vocal.

hospital



We attended a training event at a local hospital where 2 of our member volunteers talked about what it is like to go into hospital if you have a learning disability.



We have also provided training to a local legal firm to help them support their clients in the best way possible - the firm work with parents who have a learning disability.

Multi Media Advocacy



Vocal is trained by the RIX Centre in London to teach service users and providers how to use different types of technology to help people to express their ideas and views.

We ask for feedback after our training sessions. Here are some examples of feedback we have received:



- 'Having experts by experience deliver the training is really valuable and insightful.'
- 'Everything was covered very well.'
- 'The trainers use a variety of teaching methods which make the sessions interesting and varied.'

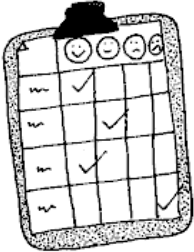


good

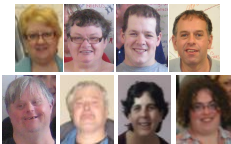


• 'We all found it informative and it was a good opportunity for each of us to reflect on our best practice.' Partner Legal practice

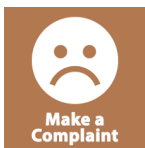
Measuring Our Own Quality Assurance



Vocal checks the quality of the service it provides. When we finish working with someone, we ask them to complete a satisfaction survey. All the feedback we have received so far tells us that people felt that we listened to them and treated them well.



Vocal is a user led organisation. People who have used our service are invited to become members. The members help us by giving feedback on our ideas and getting involved with writing our business plan.



If we get a complaint, we investigate it and look at how we can make our service better in the future.



Vocal held the Quality Performance Mark until March 2019. This mark or QPM shows that we provide a top advocacy service. We are working towards achieving this award again.

Managing Risk



We have policies and procedures in place to make sure that we all work safely. These policies and procedures are regularly reviewed.

Data Protection



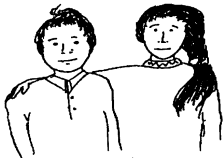
Vocal follows policies and procedures to make sure that we protect people's personal information. Personal information means things like addresses, date of birth, phone numbers. We follow the rules set out in the GDPR Guidelines that came out in May 2018.

Our Plans for Next Year



We will continue to make sure that we provide a high-quality service. We would also like to expand our service so that we can help more people.

Our plan includes:



- To work to achieve the Quality Performance Mark again
- To get more of our service users involved with Vocal's management
- To continue to support general advocacy work
- To make more people aware of our planning, training and quality monitoring work
- To look at the number of staff that we have and appoint new team members and volunteers if we need to
- To develop our Paid Rep service

Treasurer's Finance Review



We came into this financial year in a healthy position because we had a good surplus of money from 2018/19.



The fire near our office caused some smoke damage and Vocal had extra expenses because of this. However, we have been able to save money by spending one year in a temporary office. We are now back in our original office.



We were able to recruit a new advocate in February 2020 who will offer more 'general advocacy.'



Our database 'Bluedoor' is working well, it helps us to track our work and to see clearly what a difference our work is making to people's lives.



Volunteers continue to play an important part in Vocal's work. Volunteers help with advocacy, member support, administration and of course trustees. We would like to give a special thanks to all our volunteers. Vocal can do so much more with the help of volunteers.

Reserves Policy/Outlook



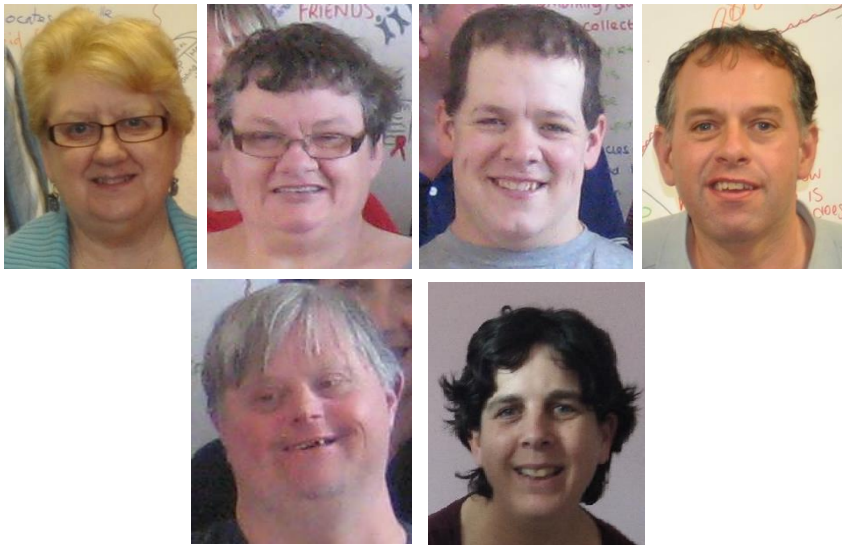
We had a good surplus this year. We need to be careful as our income may change at any time. We will keep some money in case of emergency.

Who are we?

Our Staff



Our Members



Our Trustees, Manager and Administrator

