

**Beth Johnson Foundation**  
**Advocacy Support Programme**  
**Evaluation Report**

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## Executive Summary

We Research It Ltd and Mercian Research Associates were commissioned in June 2010 to conduct an evaluation of the Advocacy Support Programme (ASP) run by the Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF). BJJ wanted to understand what impact the ASP has had in meeting its core aims, and to investigate whether the ASP should be expanded beyond its existing presence in four English regions.

Documents were analysed and telephone interviews carried out with 20 ASP members and 16 non-members. All data was cross-analysed before findings were produced. The seven key findings were:

1. Rotate ASP meeting venues within regions. This suggestion came directly from ASP members, to help reduce people's travelling time, which is a barrier to attendance.
2. Re-think the ASP's buddying system and online support, which are not currently working well.
3. Work towards a common understanding of types of supervision among ASP members. Illustrative definitions of management supervision, advocacy casework supervision, and clinical supervision are provided in this report as a starting point for discussion.
4. Develop training for ASP members, to equip them to provide high quality external supervision. This evaluation identified a sizeable gap in the market for high quality external supervision for paid and unpaid advocacy professionals. Network members would be well placed to provide this, and it would generate income as well as raising standards.
5. Work to reduce the level of the ASP's dependence on the National Development Manager. While the National Development Manager is evidently a massive asset to the ASP, the level of the ASP's dependence on her is also a potential threat to the programme. If the National Development Manager is unable to continue her work, or if the project is not sustained by further funding after the three years' pilot funding, then the advances in peer support already gained by the pilot could be lost.
6. Seek further funding to support the ASP's development.
7. Expand the ASP into other English regions. No regional support networks were identified in any other English region, while need for support across authority borders was identified in all regions.

This evaluation has found that the ASP is doing excellent work. The aims and objectives for the programme will need to be reviewed in light of the findings of this evaluation. There is also much helpful related work being done elsewhere, such as the development of a quality framework for advocacy, the national Advocacy Qualification, and the recent publication of the *Manifesto for Independent Advocacy Services in England and Wales*. However, we believe more steps are necessary. Through our learning from this research, and with high quality provision of advocacy for service users always in mind, we have reached the view that advocacy needs a clear professional identity

supported by a national professional body and a code of ethics. High quality supervision should be mandatory for advocates at all levels, as it is for therapeutic professionals and social workers. It is beyond the scope of the evaluation to offer this as a key finding, but we would strongly suggest that it is something every advocacy organisation should be working towards.

## Introduction and Methodology

In June 2010, the Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF) commissioned We Research It Ltd and Mercian Research Associates to conduct an evaluation of the Advocacy Support Programme (ASP).

BJF identified a lack of support for managers and other senior staff within advocacy projects. They obtained three years of funding from section 64 to explore a peer support model for these staff in various regions of England. This evaluation took place between the end of the ASP's second year and the start of its third, when it was working in four regions – the North West, West Midlands, East Midlands (incorporating part of Yorkshire and the Humber) and the North East – and had a total network of 46 members.

BJF wanted to understand what impact the ASP has had in meeting its core aims of developing and supporting more appropriate supervision and support models for advocacy staff. In particular they asked for evidence on:

- What has worked and what has not worked
- Is this dependent on people's role and the nature of their organisation?
- What is people's understanding of supervision in the context of the project?
- How has the peer support model contributed to meeting these supervision and support needs?
- Who has been involved?
- Size of organisation involved and client group
- Has the manager of the project role influenced the project?
- Has the peer support model been extra or maintenance to projects involved?

The researchers worked with the ASP National Development Manager from BJJF to devise a suitable method for conducting the research. This included a document analysis and telephone interviews with ASP members and non-members. The document analysis encompassed ASP documents and non-ASP documents. These are listed in appendix 2.

Telephone interviews were carried out with 20 ASP members and 16 non-members. The regions where the members and non-members' projects are based are listed in appendix 3. The telephone interview questions for ASP members are in appendix 4, and those for non-members are in appendix 5.

Documents were summarised, both sets of interview data were coded and analysed using dedicated computer software, and all data was cross-analysed to produce the findings in this report.

## Illustrative Definitions

The following definitions are illustrative and provided as a starting point for discussion for creating a common understanding within the network.

### **Advocacy**

The Advocacy Charter, 2002, states that, ‘Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. Advocates work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.’

The above definition is broadly useful. However, ‘advocacy’ is a term that has different meanings for different people. Through this research, we have identified two main types of advocacy. The first is informal advocacy, such as that which may be given alongside information or advice by well-trained or experienced workers to empower people and encourage them to use their voices. The second is formal advocacy, usually provided by an independent advocacy service, where it is a (paid or unpaid) professional advocate’s role to ensure that someone’s voice is heard, either by speaking for them or by supporting them to speak for themselves.

Advocacy, whether formal or informal, is not a discrete function. The boundaries between advocacy and other functions are often blurred. For example, information, advice and advocacy are often confused<sup>1</sup>, and in some situations it is not possible to offer one without offering – or being asked for – another. Advocacy can also be closely linked with lobbying and campaigning, where an organisation identifies the need for this from the messages it is receiving from clients via advocates.

### **Supervision**

Supervision, also, has different meanings for different people. Through this research, we have identified several different structures for supervision. Informal supervision is provided on an ad hoc basis at times of need, usually by a manager with an open-door policy or by a colleague or trustee who is readily available by phone or email. Formal supervision is a scheduled face-to-face meeting, which usually includes an agenda or form to be filled in, and takes place at regular intervals.

There is also a clear distinction between internal and external supervision, internal supervision being from someone else in the same organisation (usually a manager) and external supervision being from someone outside that organisation. Peer supervision is provided by someone in a similar role, and may be internal or external, one-way, reciprocal, or group.

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<sup>1</sup> Information, advice and advocacy for older people. Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2005.

Within these structures, there are two main types of supervision: management supervision and advocacy casework supervision. These may be provided by the same person or by two different people. Management supervision deals with such things as management of the staff member's workload, training needs, TOIL/annual leave entitlement, and any issues the staff member chooses to raise that may be affecting their work e.g. health problems or a dispute with a colleague. Advocacy casework supervision involves going through the staff member's cases and discussing any current problems or dilemmas with a view to finding solutions or ways forward.

A third type of supervision is clinical supervision<sup>2</sup>. This is the kind of supervision used by practitioners such as counsellors, psychotherapists and psychoanalysts. These practitioners are required by their professional bodies to use clinical supervision<sup>3</sup>. The focus of clinical supervision is on the quality of the relationship between practitioner and client, as manifested through the experienced emotions of the practitioner and the perceived emotions of the client. Technical terms will be used in discussion, drawn from the theoretical model underpinning the work. For example, a Rogerian/person-centred practitioner will use terms like 'core conditions', 'congruence', and 'unconditional positive regard'. A practitioner working within another model, such as psychodynamic, Gestalt, or existential, will use different terms.

Advocates do not receive clinical supervision. There are no professional bodies requiring the use of supervision in advocacy, as there are in the therapeutic professions described above (and in social work<sup>4</sup>). Also, although some parts of casework supervision may focus on the quality of the relationship between advocate and client, this is not attached to a particular theoretical model.

Advocates should receive both management supervision and advocacy casework supervision. The work that advocates do often has a large emotional component, both for advocates and for their clients. Casework supervision needs to take this into account, and both advocates and their casework supervisors need to be emotionally literate and able to help manage the emotions of others.

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<sup>2</sup> Many thanks to Su Connan MBACP of Su Connan Counselling Services at <http://www.suconnancounselling.co.uk/> for her help in clarifying our thinking, and for directing us to relevant resources on clinical supervision.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy: Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (2007).

<sup>4</sup> The Code of Ethics for Social Work. British Association of Social Workers (2002).

## Summary of Findings

The findings from this evaluation are given in detail in appendix 1 of this report. As that appendix is long and complex, the findings are summarised here for readers' convenience.

As stated in the Introduction above, BJJ wanted to understand what impact the ASP has had in meeting its core aims of developing and supporting more appropriate supervision and support models for advocacy staff. In particular they asked for evidence on:

- What has worked and what has not worked
- Is this dependent on people's role and the nature of their organisation?
- What is people's understanding of supervision in the context of the project?
- How has the peer support model contributed to meeting these supervision and support needs?
- Who has been involved?
- Size of organisation involved and client group
- Has the manager of the project role influenced the project?
- Has the peer support model been extra or maintenance to projects involved?

### **ASP objectives**

The first ASP annual report (March 2009) shows that the programme had five objectives for year one:

1. To promote a peer support model in two regional areas, working with 20 managers and other senior staff.
2. To work directly with developing projects, offering guidance to improve practice and raise standards.
3. To develop two special interest groups organically from within the regional meetings.
4. To collate and publish case studies.
5. In partnership with OPAAL to develop a range of web based resources to support local projects.

The second ASP annual report (March 2010) shows that there were six further objectives for that year:

1. Launching a further advocacy peer support regional meeting.
2. Ongoing development of systems for peer support.
3. Ongoing work with developing project.
4. Case studies published on line.
5. Two special interest areas chosen.
6. Ongoing resource pack to be developed.

Most of these objectives have been met, some more than met:

- The peer support model is now working in four regional areas: East Midlands, West Midlands, North West and North East
- There has been work with three developing projects, in Liverpool, London and Northumbria; work with the latter is ongoing
- Two special interest areas have been chosen: 'good practice in relation to supervision and confidentiality' and 'how do we gain a broader understanding of advocacy?'
- The first special interest group met in June 2010 and the second met in September 2010
- Eight case studies have been collated and published on line
- Web based resources for support have been developed via Facebook and Yahoo, as requested by ASP members, although these are not actually being used
- A resource pack is being developed from the input of the special interest groups

The objectives for the programme will need to be reviewed in light of the findings of this evaluation.

**What has worked and what has not worked and is this dependent on people's role and the nature of their organisation?**

What has worked well

When asked what worked well, the aspects of the programme mentioned most often were peer support (13 ASP members) and the newsletter (7 ASP members). Regarding the newsletter, one member stated:

*The newsletter works well, it's good to get a kind of overview of discussions your own group had and outcomes e.g. from the special interest group, and it reports on different regions and overviews of their meetings so it's good to get a flavour of what's happening elsewhere in other parts of the country. (ASP member)*

It seems clear from the findings of this research that the ASP is helping to develop and support more appropriate supervision and support models for advocacy staff. The quarterly regional meetings, the special interest groups and the newsletter have worked particularly well. Five people said they had only been to one, or no, ASP meetings. Reasons varied: lack of interest, absence from work, distance, time, cost. People who had been to two meetings or more all described them as valuable. One member stated:

*I've learnt so much from other people, their experiences and opinions, and having the opportunity to discuss things I've dealt with, and having their views on that. Being able to get together with other people from across the region has been really useful and that's definitely worked very well. (ASP member)*

The interviews for this research were held shortly after the first special interest group meeting in York, focusing on supervision, which was attended by 30 ASP members. Twenty-two evaluation forms were received and were overwhelmingly positive. Interviewees who had been to the group also gave positive reports of the meeting, and a couple who hadn't been able to attend expressed regret. One member stated:

*Special interest group very focussed on confidentiality and supervision. I think it works from the point of view of within the quarterly discussions we had about those two subjects and problems and to then turn that into special interest group in York and do something about it, to me is saying it's not just a talking shop, but it's doing something about it. (ASP member)*

Work with developing projects also appears to be highly valued. As stated above, in the first year, one of the five objectives for the ASP was to work directly with developing projects, offering guidance to improve practice and raise standards. The programme identified three potential developing projects, has worked with all three, and will continue to work with one of them throughout the lifetime of the pilot. The current co-ordinator of this project has stated how beneficial the ASP project has been and continues to be, in particular around giving support and advocacy expertise, as well as being part of the network where she can access support from other network members.

#### What has not worked well

When asked what has not worked so well, the most mentioned were the Facebook group (4 ASP members), meetings too far away (3 ASP members) and meetings too infrequent (3 ASP members). No ASP member spoke about the buddying system with much enthusiasm. There is evidence that some network members are providing support for each other outside the formal meetings, but no evidence from this research that this is happening as part of the buddying system. Support for each other appears to be happening naturally as people meet and get to know each other as part of informal peer support. One member stated:

*Because I've met one or two people now in the region I feel I could contact and talk it through, having met them in meetings, I feel I could approach them now, I haven't needed to, but feel I could. (ASP member)*

#### People's role and the nature of their organisation

What has worked and what has not worked does not seem to be dependent on people's roles and the nature of their organisations. However, there does seem to be a difference in need between members who are responsible for the supervision and support of advocates but do not practise advocacy themselves, and those who do practise as advocates. Ten of the 20 ASP members interviewed mentioned that they have a caseload, so it could be reasonably assumed that around half of the network's membership currently practise advocacy. One person commented on the evaluation form for the special interest group meeting in York that 'As an advocate and not a

manager it was difficult.’ An interviewee suggested that ASP meetings could be improved by dividing them to suit different attendees, e.g. advocates at one time and managers at another.

Five ASP members and three non-members spoke about the diversity of advocacy organisations and the differing needs of those organisations and their employees. Non-members spoke of the difference between generic and specialised advocacy projects, and the different needs of advocates and organisations working with different client groups e.g. communities of ethnicity. ASP members spoke of the challenges to managing the network posed by the diversity of its members. One member stated:

*What’s apparent is there’s so many diverse ways of delivering advocacy. It poses a difficulty, because for example I was talking with someone at a meeting and only realised after the meeting she didn’t use volunteers and she thought no one did. (ASP member)*

### **What is people’s understanding of supervision in the context of the project?**

People’s understanding of supervision in the context of the ASP is varied. In general, people have a good structural understanding of supervision as internal or external, formal or informal. However, people’s understanding of types of supervision is less reliable. In particular, there is confusion between management supervision, advocacy casework supervision, and clinical supervision. The researchers have provided illustrative definitions of supervision earlier in this report.

Each interviewee seemed to have a fairly good understanding of supervision and support in their own terms. However, people’s understandings differed from each other. This is partly because the terminology is poorly defined, so one person will speak of casework supervision, another of practice supervision and a third of clinical supervision, but they all mean broadly the same thing. It is also about people’s different perceptions of what supervision is and should be. For example, two interviewees said their ideal supervision would be external, while a third said theirs would be internal. Also, one person said their supervision would be improved by being face to face, while another said their supervision would be improved by being via phone or email. These kinds of differences could be partly a result of interviewees’ different working environments, but there are a number of other such examples in the research data which, taken together, indicate a level of confusion within the network.

### **How has the peer support model contributed to meeting these supervision and support needs?**

#### **Supervision and support needs**

People’s needs for supervision and support are not always met. Six ASP members and six non-members were able to say unequivocally that their

needs for supervision and support were fully met. Other responses varied from 'most needs met' to 'no needs met'. Much of the supervision received is inadequate, and/or the support patchy. One member stated:

*I was extremely well managed but my manager didn't understand advocacy and in these larger organisations people like me are a cog in a wheel and while being line managed well, there was a lack of understanding about advocacy and that is very stressful at times. (ASP member)*

ASP members' experiences of supervision and support were very varied and their ideals are also varied. The ideals mentioned most often were: supervision at a regular protected time, e.g. monthly; and supervision from someone who knows about advocacy/has worked as an advocate.

Non-members were asked about this, and ten were able to identify one or more aspects of their supervision that didn't work so well. The aspects mentioned most often were: supervision that is rushed or postponed due to time pressure, and supervisor's lack of awareness of what an advocate actually does. The aspects that work well about their supervision which non-members mentioned most often were: accessible supervision that's there when it's needed; a combination of formal and ad hoc supervision; and trustworthy supervision. Non-members gave a number of ideas about how their supervision could be improved. The ideas mentioned most often were: anything would be an improvement, and external supervision.

A full analysis of the type of supervision and support received, ideal supervision and support, what works and what doesn't work with current supervision, how supervision could be improved and external supervision can be found in appendix 1, pages 30–33.

Five ASP members and one non-member mentioned that they had received formal external supervision. The document analysis suggests that the lack of and need for external supervision has been discussed extensively at ASP meetings over the last two years. In the course of conducting this research, one ASP member and two non-members mentioned that providing external supervision for people in other organisations was a way of generating income for their own organisation. Options for this have also been discussed at ASP meetings, although there were concerns around confidentiality and accountability, and nobody seemed to be very clear about the model of supervision that would be employed.

### Peer support

ASP members view peer support as a central plank of the programme's success. Six of the ASP members interviewed said the network had had little or no effect on their needs for supervision and support, in most cases because they already had adequate supervision and support in place. Five of the six have regular supervision, the sixth describes it as 'a bit spasmodic' but adequate. Five of the six, including the one who says it is 'a bit spasmodic', have supervision from more than one source, and three of them have external

as well as internal supervision. Half of them don't attend meetings: two have only been to one meeting each, and a third hasn't been to any. The other three do come to meetings. Two of those feel they contribute more than they get, and one doesn't; they are all happy with this.

Other ASP members identified specific effects of the network on their needs for supervision and support. The responses are summarised below, with the number of people who mentioned each point given in brackets. (Some people mentioned more than one point.)

- Provided direct support (6)
- Raised awareness of different ways of giving and receiving supervision (4)
- Raised awareness of lack of consistent supervision for advocacy professionals (4)
- Raised awareness of others' needs for supervision (4)
- Raised awareness of own needs for supervision and support (4)
- Improved own practice in giving supervision to others (2)
- Enabled information-sharing
- Enabled learning about good practice

One member stated:

*There were times when I was really struggling but going to the support group really got me back on track and kept me going. It was like a group supervision as well, and it was like a counselling session as well, so it had many elements that I particularly could make best use of. (ASP member)*

This research shows ASP members do value ongoing support/supervision from a network. Non-members who do not have access to a network, and do not receive adequate supervision and support either from their organisation or externally, seem to muddle along.

*Because you don't get it, you just manage without it. You take it home, live with it, try to work it through in your time in your own way, there's nowhere to offload when you want a good old moan, or if you've got a particular problem there's nowhere to go with it and that's quite difficult. (non-member)*

Support networks are being created in non-ASP regions (albeit local, not regional, networks) which indicates that advocates do need this kind of support.

Five of the ASP members interviewed said they didn't think they'd made any contribution to other ASP members' supervision and support. Ten said they had contributed by listening and responding to issues raised at ASP meetings. Three had contributed by belonging to the programme's steering group, two by providing individual support to network members outside ASP meetings, and one by referring other advocates to the programme.

No member identified negative impacts on their organisation as a result of being a member of the ASP. Six ASP members identified one or more positive impacts on their organisation, and one identified positive impacts on other organisations. The main impacts mentioned were: informing strategic development, changing ways we supervise staff, providing new ideas and sharing good practice.

### **Who has been involved, size of organisation involved and client group**

Most of the people involved with the ASP have been senior staff within advocacy projects, such as managers, directors and co-ordinators, although the ASP also includes some lone advocates. The size of organisations involved in the ASP varies enormously, from tiny independent advocacy organisations with just one member of staff, to big organisations, with hundreds of staff and volunteers, housing an advocacy team.

Eight of the 20 ASP members interviewed said they worked entirely with older people, and six said they worked mostly with older people. Only one member did not work with older people at all. The other main client areas mentioned by ASP member interviewees included mental health, learning disability, dementia, physical/sensory disabilities and general health. (Each of these other main client areas can of course include working with older people.)

### **Has the manager of the project role influenced the project?**

The ASP National Development Manager has had an enormous amount of positive influence on the programme as a whole and on several of its members as individuals. As well as organising and co-ordinating the network, the National Development Manager also provides support for some of its members, either in person or by putting them in touch with others. One member stated:

*I got really stressed and Betty happened to visit me at that time and it was a lifesaver and from that point I decided I had to flag to the steering group I couldn't go on like this and over the last few months it's been much easier. I just didn't realise, it was her concern that made me realise I had to do something, you can't run on empty for ever, things are hugely improved. (ASP member)*

### **Has the peer support model been extra or maintenance to projects involved?**

Eight ASP members said that the programme was an extra burden on their time, and for most this meant that they missed ASP meetings occasionally or regularly. One member stated:

*I've missed a couple of meetings, that's the down side of being busy, real life interferes. (ASP member)*

Conversely, ten ASP members said the programme wasn't a time burden, either because they could easily absorb it into their day job, or because it was a high priority for them, or both. One member stated:

*I have learnt from earlier on, being on my own, that I need to care for myself as well, especially because we work in the field of mental health, I'm very conscious of my own mental health and I cannot give that up for anything so I have to make the time to go to the meetings because I know how they impact on me. So I make the time, and I put it as a priority. Looking after myself is as important as looking after anybody else. (ASP member)*

### **Non-members**

The sixteen non-members interviewed had a similar profile to the ASP members in terms of role, organisation and client groups. They also had a similarly varied understanding of supervision. Experience of supervision and support was broadly similar. It seems that ASP members may make more use of external supervision than non-members, but the numbers are very low so no firm conclusions should be drawn from this research alone.

Fourteen non-members belonged to an advocacy network within their local authority area. Six found this difficult because of competitiveness and mistrust, two were neutral, and six found their local network to be positive and helpful.

## Key Findings and Discussion

### Key Finding 1: Rotate ASP meeting venues within regions.

ASP members felt that the peer support, newsletter, quarterly regional meetings and special interest groups had worked particularly well. Although most members did not discuss the developing projects as they were not of relevance to them, those involved with the developing projects felt that the ASP involvement was highly valued. When asked what had not worked so well, three ASP members stated that the meetings were too far away and three stated that they were too infrequent. ASP members had a number of ideas about how the network could be improved. Tighter focus/structure at regional meetings and rotating meetings around different venues were the ideas mentioned most often (4 ASP members each).

Four ASP members and eight non-members mentioned cost as a barrier to supervision and support. Two ASP members and one non-member mentioned the cost of travelling for peer supervision. The subject that interviewees discussed most often was time. Of the 36 people who took part in interviews, 31 spoke about time. This issue was also raised in several of the documents analysed. Most interviewees spoke in terms of lack of time: big workloads, increasing demand for services, pressures on part-time workers, and so on. For example, one member stated that not only were the meetings too far away, but they also lacked the time to attend.

*To be honest I find it really hard to fit in my diary because from here it's quite a trek and it takes a whole day out and my diary is extremely busy, if something has to go it's always those support meetings. (ASP member)*

Meetings are highly valued by most members, but travel time and costs are clearly a barrier to attendance. Four ASP members suggested rotation of venues as a way to improve the network. Appendix 6 shows that overall, ASP meetings receive as many apologies as attendances, and meetings in the North West receive one-third more apologies than attendances. So, for example, venues for meetings in the North West could include Liverpool and Preston as well as Manchester. However, before definite decisions are made about alternative venues, it would be useful to review records of attendances and apologies, and the ASP member list, for each region to enable the most appropriate venues to be selected. It may be that this will lead to more frequent meetings at different venues in one or more regions, with a more consistent membership, e.g. the West Midlands could have meetings in both Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent.

### Key Finding 2: Re-think the ASP's buddying system and online support.

While these are both good ideas, they are not currently working well, and indications from this evaluation are that they are unlikely to be widely used in their current forms. The findings suggest that the buddying system may

become more widely used if it is more structured and promoted. However, informal peer support through the ASP seems to be working well, which may also be why the formal buddying system is not being used. Two ASP members said they had offered to act as a buddy but nobody had taken them up on it. Four people thought that for the buddying system to really work, it would need more development, promotion and structure. Two members thought buddying might be particularly useful for those who are new in post. Two people indicated that buddying might develop as relationships between people in the network developed. Buddying of this nature is informal and is more usefully defined as peer support, than formal buddying. One member stated:

*Buddying comes by making alliances really with people you get to know, through informality, and we don't know each other well enough yet. (ASP member)*

The existing online support is not well used, and is probably not worth continuing with. A Facebook group was set up for ASP members, in response to requests from the membership. However, only a handful of people have joined the group, and they are not using it. The most common reasons given for not using the group were: lack of time, not on Facebook in the first place and not allowed to access Facebook at work. Some form of online support may become useful in future, perhaps through the BJF website, but any online support needs to be well resourced, accessible, user-friendly and technically supported.

### Key Finding 3: Work towards a common understanding of types of supervision among ASP members.

People's understanding of supervision in the context of the ASP is varied. The confusion is within the network, because individuals' understandings are different. This is partly about terminology and partly about perceptions of the form ideal supervision should take. We recommend using the illustrative definitions of management supervision, advocacy casework supervision, and clinical supervision, provided in this report, as a starting point for discussion for creating a common understanding within the network.

### Key Finding 4: Develop training for ASP members, to equip them to provide high quality external supervision.

The document analysis shows that access to external supervision is regarded as good practice in advocacy<sup>5</sup>. This research has identified cost as a major barrier to accessing external supervision, both for managers of advocacy services (or equivalent) and for the staff they supervise. This research has also identified a sizeable gap in the market for high quality external supervision for paid and unpaid advocacy professionals. Network members are well placed to provide this, and it would generate income for

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<sup>5</sup> Independent specialist advocacy in England and Wales: recommendations for good practice. University of Durham, 2002.

their organisations as well as raising standards in the advocacy profession, and fill an identified gap in the provision of supervision for advocacy. Supervision is not always available within the organisations where advocates work. Some advocates receive management supervision but not advocacy casework supervision because there is a lack of knowledge within the organisation. One member stated:

*My line manager gives me formal supervision but she is not an advocate.*  
(ASP member)

Another advocate stated that they also receive management supervision, but not practice supervision. (In this comment, the term 'practice supervision' is used to mean the same as what we have called 'advocacy casework supervision', see key finding 3 above).

*I receive supervision from the chief executive, and that's sort of mainly around strategic issues and development of the project. That is not practice supervision because he's not in a position to provide that, his background is not in advocacy or related services. It's useful but it's not practice supervision.*  
(non-member)

This is ambitious and would depend on the implementation of key finding 5 below. It may also have funding implications, see key finding 6 below.

#### Key Finding 5: Work to reduce the level of the ASP's dependence on the National Development Manager.

This recommendation may seem counter-intuitive as the National Development Manager is clearly such an enormous asset to the ASP as a whole and to many of its individual members. However, this is also a threat, because if for any reason the National Development Manager became unable to work, the ASP would fall into disarray. Also, there is at present no certainty of further funding for the National Development Manager post past the end of this final year of the programme. In this instance the network would not be sustainable. To ensure that all the work of the pilot is not lost if funding does not continue after the final year, as a minimum, the National Development Manager should reduce the amount of one-to-one support she provides, and focus on putting people in touch with each other for peer support. She should also identify and brief deputy chairs/facilitators for ASP meetings and special interest groups who can step in if at any time she is unable to attend.

Five ASP members expressed concern about the sustainability of the network. One member stated:

*I know it's a time bounded programme, that makes me have concerns about what happens after really because it's been useful especially the quarterly meetings, it would be good for it to continue. Especially as we mentioned around support and supervision there's some co-ordinators where that's the closest they got to any, so without that they're going back to a world of getting no guidance and support. It's valuable input for people.* (ASP member)

Key Finding 6: Seek further funding to support the ASP.

Funding should be sought to continue the post of National Development Manager beyond the end of this final year of the programme, as the network will not survive, let alone develop, without dedicated central co-ordination. As a pilot project, this evaluation has demonstrated that there is a need for advocacy support across the country and most areas of the programme are working well. One member stated:

*Sometimes projects like that start and they run out of funding or whatever, and for me that is really sad because you raise people's expectations and all of a sudden you dash them, you might as well not have started it, so if it is beneficial and useful to people then everything should be done to keep it going because I would see no reason why you bring it up and people are making best use of it, it's helping them and helping to improve services, and all of a sudden, for the sake of funding, they pull the plug and people are left with nothing. (ASP member)*

It would also be useful to seek funding for members' travel expenses, as this would remove one of the barriers to attending meetings and events. It may also be helpful to seek funding for the development of training to enable members to provide high quality external supervision, as set out in key finding 4 above.

Key Finding 7: Expand the ASP into other English regions.

This research interviewed people from all regions not covered by the ASP, but did not identify regional support networks in any of them. Non-members expressed clear needs for supervision and support. In some cases local networks are helping to meet these needs, but in other cases competitiveness and mistrust makes this difficult. Regional support will help to overcome this. Time will be a barrier in any region, so we recommend rotating venues from the start.

## Conclusion

The ASP is doing excellent work. However, there is much more that needs to be done, both in the regions it already covers and in those where it doesn't yet operate. This evaluation includes specific key findings that are designed to support the programme in the next phase of its development. ASP is a pilot project with funding over three years. As a pilot project it is expected that minor glitches will be identified. One of the main purposes of this evaluation was to evidence the need for the programme and whether the core ideas are functional and feasible, as well as to identify findings to support future development. In the case of this programme, it was also to identify whether there was a need for the programme to be rolled out into the other regions.

This evaluation has shown that most aspects of the ASP are working well, with the exception of the buddying and Facebook group. ASP members have demonstrated that there is a clear need for peer support because many currently have inadequate support and supervision. The findings also show that the ASP is helping to provide that support and meet some of the members' supervision needs. Non-members also identified a need for peer support, although in local areas of some regions there are advocacy networks, some of which are working well and some not so well.

Most of the objectives of the ASP have been met and some have been more than met. The objectives for the programme will need to be reviewed in light of the findings of this evaluation.

Our research has focused on the needs of senior advocacy professionals, but throughout our work we have also been very conscious of the needs of the clients of their organisations. The whole point of the exercise, for us, is to improve the quality of advocacy delivered to service users.

The recently published *Manifesto for Independent Advocacy Services in England and Wales* (Action for Advocacy/Advocacy Consortium UK, March 2010) says 'Good quality and accessible training, support and supervision are crucial to effective independent advocacy provision. The independent advocacy sector takes these issues very seriously, and has a proud history of providing excellent support to advocates.' The findings of this evaluation offer some contradiction to that statement. Also, the *Manifesto* doesn't mention the needs of senior advocacy professionals.

The work being done on a national Advocacy Qualification and the development of a quality framework for advocacy are steps in the right direction. However, we believe more steps are necessary. Through our learning from this research, and with high quality provision of advocacy always in mind, we have reached the view that advocacy needs a clear professional identity supported by a national professional body and a code of ethics. High quality supervision should be mandatory for advocates at all levels, as it is for therapeutic professionals and social workers. It is beyond

the scope of the evaluation to offer this as a key finding, but we would strongly suggest that it is something every advocacy organisation should be working towards.

## Appendix 1 – Findings in Detail

The data collected for this evaluation was extensive and complex. It was not possible to separate all the findings into ‘ASP members’ and ‘non-ASP members’ without a great deal of repetition. We have therefore presented the detailed findings here under topic headings. Some headings were drawn from BJJ’s areas of interest, some from the interview questions, and some from issues that arose in the data. Within each heading, we have clarified the extent to which the topic relates to ASP members, non-members, or both.

### **Roles of interviewees**

Two of the ASP members had the job title of ‘advocate’ and one of the non-members didn’t give a job title. All the others had titles indicating seniority with terms such as co-ordinator, manager or director.

### **Size of organisations**

The size of advocacy organisations represented by all the interviewees varied enormously, from tiny independent advocacy organisations with just one member of staff, to big organisations, with hundreds of staff and volunteers, housing an advocacy team.

### **Client groups**

Of the 36 interviewees, 16 said they worked entirely with older people (eight ASP members and eight non-members). There was some difference of opinion about who ‘older people’ were: it seems that ‘older’ can start at age 50, 55, 60 or 65.

Some people worked mostly with older people, but would work with younger people from a particular client group or groups, as the following quotes show:

*People aged 55 can use the service, we are flexible though, if we had someone younger we wouldn’t turn them away. (ASP member)*

*We work with all people over 60, although we do accept people in their 50s if the issue they’re presenting is an ageing issue or dementia. Some of the BME communities age earlier, we’re very aware if we don’t help them they won’t get any help until they get to 60. (non-member)*

*We work with people aged 65 or over, or of any age living with dementia. (non-member)*

One ASP member said they didn’t work with older people at all, two worked with people of all ages, two said older people made up a small proportion of their clients, and one said older people made up less than half of their clients. For the other six ASP members, older people made up the majority of their

client group. One non-member worked with people of all ages and one said older people made up a small proportion of their clients. For the other six non-members, older people made up the majority of their client group.

Other client areas included:

- Mental health (8 ASP members, 3 non-members)
- Learning disability (6 ASP members, 4 non-members)
- Dementia (3 ASP members, 4 non-members)
- IMCA (2 ASP members, 5 non-members)
- BME groups (2 ASP members, 3 non-members)
- Physical/sensory disability (5 ASP members)
- General health (4 ASP members)
- Care home residents (2 ASP members, one non-member)
- IMHA (one ASP member, 2 non-members)
- Housing (one ASP member, one non-member)
- Autism (one ASP member)
- Brain injury (one ASP member)
- Deaf and hard of hearing people (one ASP member)
- Personalisation/individual budgets (one ASP member)
- Social care (one ASP member)
- Stroke (one non-member)

### **How people became involved with the ASP**

Sixteen of the ASP members interviewed mentioned personal contact from the National Development Manager as a direct cause of their involvement. Three others said they became involved as a result of information emailed or sent to their organisation.

### **When people joined the ASP**

Sixteen of the ASP members interviewed joined at, or very near, the start of the programme. The others joined more recently; two of those specifically mentioned that they joined when they did because of an organisational or role change which made membership appropriate where it hadn't been before.

### **What works well about the ASP**

ASP members had a lot to say about what works well. Responses are summarised below, with the number of people who mentioned each point given in brackets. (Some people mentioned more than one point.)

- Peer support (13)
- Newsletter (7)
- Raises awareness of issues/information-sharing (6)
- Special interest group (York meeting 18.6.10) (6)
- The quarterly regional meetings (5)

- The National Development Manager's personal qualities, knowledge and skills (2)
- Informal approach (2)
- Personal/individual support from the National Development Manager (2)
- Safe, confidential environment for discussion (2)
- Emails
- Email contacts for other advocacy professionals
- Support for smaller organisations
- The steering group

NB: all but three of the interviews for this research were carried out shortly after the York meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010, which may have influenced the number of people who mentioned that meeting.

### **What doesn't work so well about the ASP**

ASP members identified specific aspects of the ASP that in their view don't work so well. These are summarised below, with the number of people who mentioned each point given in brackets. (Some people mentioned more than one point.)

- Facebook group (4)
- Meetings too far away (3)
- Meetings too infrequent (3)
- Different people at every meeting (2)
- Poor attendance at meetings (2)
- Technical problems with online support (2)
- Yahoo forum (2)
- Buddying
- Discussion subjects not relevant to job/role
- Informal peer support may compromise confidentiality
- Lack of obvious focus on older people
- Meetings on dates people can't make
- Poor communication
- Too many people at meetings – hard to focus
- Travel to meetings too expensive

### **ASP regional meetings**

Five people said they had only been to one, or no, ASP meetings. Reasons varied: lack of interest, absence from work, distance, time, cost. People who had been to two meetings or more all described them as valuable.

*Quarterly meetings are helpful and it as I say allows time out to meet up with people managing organisations in the same field, so been helpful and useful and I'd like to see it continue. I think the way it's organised and run as informally, so don't feel that you're constrained in rigid agenda and it allows time for people to have discussions that are relevant and important and the environment in meetings is safe and that's important because it allows to*

*share info that's going to be treated respectfully and confidentially. (ASP member)*

*I went to two or three meetings, I met a woman working in a branch of Age Concern and I didn't even know they had an advocacy there, you meet people and get referrals from having met people and they know I exist so it is really important, in a huge rural area like ours, seeing people and them seeing you, to get a potential client they think 'I know I can refer to her'. (ASP member)*

*It was useful, because it wasn't just talking about issues you're facing but how you yourself felt, self reflective thing. When I have supervision it is very formal and you don't have time to do that, it was someone who was managing me. In a sense it [ASP meeting] was like a counselling session. Then when you know the person you work with there's things you can't really say to them but I don't mind saying it to people who don't work for my organisation. (ASP member)*

### **Special interest groups**

All but three of the interviews for this research were held shortly after the first special interest group meeting in York, focusing on supervision, which was attended by 30 ASP members. Twenty-two evaluation forms were received and were overwhelmingly positive. The venue, facilities, and knowledge café format were regarded as 'excellent' by 15 people and 'good' by 7, while the chair and speakers were regarded as 'excellent' by 11 people and 'good' by 11. Twenty-six extra comments were made, most of which were positive. Examples include:

- Both speakers were thought-provoking
- Extremely supportive environment
- Found it all helpful and would attend anything similar again. Thanks
- Good day, more please
- Good to talk in depth in a small group situation that changed
- Great day thank you thoughtfully put together time to reflect on practice and what you can do better. A sincere thank you Betty for organising this event
- Many thanks – a very enjoyable informative day – look forward to the next
- Very relaxed and friendly environment but still not always easy to interject. But still got loads out of hearing from others. People have a lot to say!!

Interviewees who had been to the group also gave positive reports of the meeting, and a couple who hadn't been able to attend expressed regret.

*I like the idea of the special interest groups because we can say what's important and it can be taken on further to people who might have the power or authority to do something about it. (ASP member)*

*I couldn't get to the meeting in York last week, I was quite sad about that. (ASP member)*

## **Newsletter**

When specifically asked what worked well about the ASP, seven people mentioned the newsletter and when asked specifically about the newsletter nine ASP members said they valued it, four particularly mentioning the value of learning about what is happening in other areas and/or meetings they didn't attend. Four ASP members said they didn't read it, two of whom didn't receive the newsletter and one wasn't sure.

*I always enjoy the newsletter, Betty summarises well and diplomatically. (ASP member)*

*The newsletter, that's really helpful, obviously information, possible events and hearing from other areas. I brought it in to show my other advocate who is doing the advocacy certificate. (ASP member)*

*I've never received newsletters and I think that would be a really good forum, if you get something like that by post or email it triggers you to remember you're actually involved with that group. If you don't hear anything it goes to the back of your mind, with all advocacy services everyone's busy, if you don't get a constant information feed you do forget. (ASP member)*

## **Facebook**

A Facebook group was set up for ASP members, in response to requests from the membership. However, only a handful of people have joined the group, and they are not using it. Some people gave reasons why they weren't using it:

- Lack of time (3)
- Not on Facebook in the first place (3)
- Not allowed to access Facebook at work (2)
- Didn't know about the Facebook group
- Not technologically minded
- Use Facebook for personal contact – makes work and home too mixed up

## **Developing projects**

In the first year, one of the five objectives for the ASP was to work directly with developing projects, offering guidance to improve practice and raise standards, ascertain possible training gaps and needs. In the second year one of the six objectives of the ASP was ongoing work with the developing project in Northumbria. The ASP worked with three developing projects in the first year and one in the second. Work with the projects included:

- Liverpool Advocacy was attempting to source possible funders for a dementia advocacy project. The ASP supported the project at a conference by giving two presentations around dementia and dementia

advocacy. The National Development Manager made three visits to the project. Liverpool Advocacy did not receive funding, so work with the project ceased.

- A mental health advocacy project based in London approached the ASP for support. The ASP supported the project via four visits to the project manager, an observation visit to the advocate on the wards and a supporting letter for the project to the funders. The advocate highlighted how she felt isolated in regards to advocating for older people due to the fact that nobody in her organisation worked with older people. The ASP National Development Manager clearly observed the need for a different approach when advocating for older people.
- The project was asked to support a newly developing older people's advocacy project based in Northumbria. The advocacy project originally had two staff on a job-share basis, but due to staff leaving and illness, the project only has one member of staff, who feels isolated and in need of support. She currently does not receive supervision. The National Development Manager initially did some training with both members of staff and also with the current co-ordinator. The training consisted of advocacy training via the in-house module at BJB and ongoing training via support, supervision and observational visits. The National Development Manager visits the project every three months and has also carried out an evaluation of the first year of the project. The current co-ordinator of this project has stated how beneficial the ASP has been and continues to be, in particular around giving support and advocacy expertise, as well as being part of the network where she can access support from other network members.

### **The National Development Manager**

ASP members were asked for their views on what influence the National Development Manager had, if any, on the network. Two people, both of whom had had only minimal involvement with the network, made neutral comments. Two people offered minor criticism of the National Development Manager's group leading style as more facilitative than directive, although for others this was a point to praise. All the other comments made were entirely positive. A small sample of these are given below.

*She's the one who facilitated and coordinated the whole programme, her organisational skills are impeccable in terms of preparing people for meetings and co-ordinating on the day. I like the way she facilitates meetings, she allows people to have relevant discussions and she does a lot of work pulling it together, so she is vital to provide participants with an overview. It's vital there's someone at the centre to co-ordinate and organise and she does a good job there. (ASP member)*

*It's very beneficial that Betty is an experienced advocate. She is also very open to ideas, not the kind of person who thinks I've been doing this 20 years and I know best... Betty is willing for the project to develop organically and she is happy for it to be influenced and developed by those in the group as*

*well as keeping us on the straight and narrow and that's not always an easy task. (ASP member)*

*I think Betty worked very hard in bringing people together from different areas and keeping the momentum going. She has allowed people to take ownership of the project, meetings have not been her agenda, it's our agenda and looking at our needs, she fed back from other meetings and she has lots of experience and that's important and she knows what she is talking about and dilemmas of advocates and providing the service. She is the right personality to do it. (ASP member)*

As well as organising and co-ordinating the network, the National Development Manager also provides support for some of its members, either in person or by putting them in touch with others.

*At my lowest ebb I got an email from someone, Betty had met with this woman and there was this fantastic email that said 'if there's anything you want to ask feel free' and I emailed back and said 'thanks' and it's that sort of thing, and I haven't asked anything but just knowing she is there. Betty has been the one who is helping people network and because of her personality she is very easy to talk to and that has made it personal and she is very good in a personal way. (ASP member)*

### **Effect of the ASP on organisation**

Six ASP members identified one or more positive impacts on their organisation, and one identified positive impacts on other organisations. These included:

- Informing strategic development (3)
- Changing ways we supervise staff (2)
- Providing new ideas (2)
- Sharing good practice (2)
- Particularly useful for organisations who are just setting up an advocacy service
- Stating our involvement can be good for bidding/tendering

No ASP member identified a negative impact on any organisation.

### **Relationship between what works/doesn't work and role or organisation**

ASP members were asked whether they could identify any relationship between what works, or doesn't work, well about the network, and people's roles and the nature of their organisations.

In terms of organisations, there seemed to be no clear relationship, apparently because advocacy organisations are so diverse in nature. This was generally seen as a positive aspect of the network, although the attendant management difficulties were acknowledged.

*Time is given to everybody and the fact that you can learn from big organisations, from one-person organisations, from no-person organisations, for me it's really fascinating to listen to other people and their experiences and to learn from them as well as them learning from you. (ASP member)*

*You can't please all of the people all of the time, it's got to be individual and flexible so the people who can benefit from it can get the path they want and take more active roles in the part of the project that's useful for them, rather than feeling like they have to do everything because they're part of the project. (ASP member)*

In terms of roles, the key relationship identified was between members who are responsible for the supervision and support of advocates but do not practise advocacy themselves, and those who do practise as advocates. Four people spoke about this, one suggesting that meetings should be divided so that practice-related topics could be discussed by those who are practising themselves. Another suggested that there was work to be done with managers and chairs who don't understand advocacy.

### **How the ASP could be improved**

ASP members had a number of ideas about how the network could be improved. Responses are summarised below, with the number of people who mentioned each point given in brackets. (Some people mentioned more than one point.)

- Rotate regional meetings around different venues (4)
- Tighter focus/structure at regional meetings (4)
- Advertise network on Beth Johnson Foundation website
- At regional meetings, have brief presentations by people about their own organisations
- Contribute to national lobbying re advocacy
- Divide regional meetings to suit different attendees, e.g. advocates at one time, managers/co-ordinators at another, chief execs at another
- Extend into other areas e.g. London
- Help members generate income by charging for supervision and support
- Help to co-ordinate/summarise information
- Include learning points from events in newsletter, not just issues discussed
- Keep broad range of options (meetings, online support, newsletter etc) so people can pick and choose, and differing needs are more likely to be met
- Look at good practice as well as problems/dilemmas
- Make buddying more structured, e.g. identify people newer to post and assign someone
- Make online support more accessible, user-friendly and with better technical support
- Members need to make the meetings a priority
- More online support e.g. chat, forum
- Social events
- Split into smaller groups for discussions

- Telephone conferencing

The document analysis suggests that the south-west of England might also be an area into which the ASP could usefully extend its services.

### **Sustainability**

Five ASP members expressed concern about the sustainability of the network.

*I know it's a time bounded programme, that makes me have concerns about what happens after really because it's been useful especially the quarterly meetings, it would be good for it to continue. Especially as we mentioned around support and supervision there's some co-ordinators where that's the closest they got to any, so without that they're going back to a world of getting no guidance and support. It's valuable input for people. (ASP member)*

*Like to see it develop more, good to see what is the next step, I think it's valuable but it needs to make its mark yet, to make sure it moves on from and get people involved. (ASP member)*

### **Local networks**

Nineteen interviewees, five of which were ASP members, spoke of local advocacy networks or partnerships in their local authority areas. Eight people, including two ASP members, mentioned difficulties experienced as a result of organisations in local networks having to compete against each other for funding.

*There's always a feeling in the city that we are in competition with each other and people don't want to talk to someone who may grab a tender from under their nose, that may or may not be true. (ASP member)*

*I think one of the issues we have locally is there's a lot of historical negativity towards other agencies in case they nick work, or they get more money than someone else, a lot of issues about who's providing what and how much money they get. (non-member)*

*In the past, I found that colleagues at a similar level in the county and elsewhere have been able to spend time talking and advising, we've done it for each other on an informal basis, sadly that isn't continuing now, not an actual falling out but people are more wary of talking to each other because we're all looking for the same sources of funding, it's a pity because it's broken down a very good informal network that we used to have. It's a pity when the real dog-eat-dog work enters the charity environment, but that's life. (non-member)*

In some areas people seem to be working through these difficulties.

*It's a strange issue, we are in competition, I cover east [name] district council area, so we are not working on each other's patches, if a tender comes up covering my area and another to the west and they turn it into an area we have to apply to, I will stick to my area and those in the west will cover those bits, so I'm not going to go and tender for those areas. We're very much dealing with relationship with the county council etc and not fighting against each other. (non-member)*

*We've got a consortium of advocates in [name of area], I chair that and we share best practice etc and there's lots of scope for support and supervision there. Not something that's ever been a problem. And we've had difficult issues, staff issues, funding, we've always been able to find support... We have client confidentiality but we operate transparent services, when you're going for the same pot of money it can be challenging but we generally have good relationships with other advocacy organisations, we share things. (non-member)*

And in other areas networks seem to be working well.

*We're quite lucky here, we have started to create an advocacy services network, we get together quarterly and all know each other quite well, so if I have a problem I can pick up the phone to another advocate. (ASP member)*

*We meet regularly, usually every couple of months, but have lots of contact by phone and email between. There are very experienced advocates in that group. They do provide a lot of input and support, it's really positive. (non-member)*

*In [name of area] we have an advocacy forum made up of all sorts of advocacy projects, we get together every two months and talk about issues and can flag things up to the council, there's always a council representative there. All the local advocacy organisations, you get lots of support from them and also telling each other about what's happening, but someone else will know how to deal with things, the local forum is very beneficial. Also with our local advocacy forum we also, because we flag things up then the council provides training in different ways. We've got a really strong local forum, if I had to rely nationally on support I probably would have been lost a little bit. (non-member)*

### **National networks**

Three ASP members and four non-members said national networks were important and useful for them. Three networks were specifically mentioned:

- OPAAL (Older People's Advocacy Alliance) (4 – two ASP members and two non-members)
- PASSION (Providers of Advocacy Services Support and Information Network of Age UK) (3 – one ASP member and two non-members)
- National dementia advocacy support network (non-member)

## **Supervision and support received**

Table 1 below shows the number of ASP members and non-members who receive different kinds of support and/or supervision. Some people receive more than one kind of support or supervision.

Table 1: Supervision and support received

<b>Type of supervision/support</b>	<b>Number</b>
ASP members receiving internal supervision	12
ASP members receiving external supervision	5
ASP members receiving internal support	12
ASP members receiving external support	11
ASP members receiving no support or supervision	1
Non-members receiving internal supervision	9
Non-members receiving external supervision	1
Non-members receiving internal support	9
Non-members receiving external support	7
Non-members receiving no support or supervision	1

Much of the supervision received is inadequate, and/or the support patchy.

*There wasn't anyone here to give supervision and support but we have other parts of [organisation] and I used to go in and ask them things and at least someone to talk to and they were really supportive in terms of friendship but in terms of what to do, obviously not. (ASP member)*

*Recently very little because the management structure changed and when the line manager I had retired and wasn't replaced. Support is very good if I have any problems and my new line manager's door is always open but as for supervision, no, no supervision. (ASP member)*

*My supervision consists of meeting with the Chair. I don't have proper supervision, I did when I first started. I dealt with someone from the volunteer bureau but she left and then we couldn't get anything else we could afford. (non-member)*

*We do have a general manager who offers me supervision, which realistically is three or four times a year... the supervision I receive is managerial not casework. There's no support for case work. (non-member)*

As a result, people's needs for supervision and support are not always met. Six ASP members and six non-members were able to say unequivocally that their needs for supervision and support were fully met. Other responses varied from most needs met to no needs met.

*To a very limited extent so that's why Betty has been so important. It's not deliberate, it wasn't that they didn't want me to have supervision and support,*

*just because of circumstances it didn't happen. I'm a tiny cog in a bigger mission and there was lots going on because contracts were being renegotiated with PCT etc so they had bigger fish to fry. (ASP member)*

*Not really at all. It's more target led and looking at issues, I can't have an honest conversation, it's about the structure of the organisation and that's the person who is supervising me. (non-member)*

*Probably not because things are getting more and more challenging, get abuse and get drawn in to things and need to talk to someone and there's no one who understands. (non-member)*

*It doesn't because the person managing me wasn't doing the work or had understanding of the work I was doing, but they were the only senior available. (non-member)*

Six ASP members and three non-members mentioned that they had experienced significant changes to their supervision and support arrangements in recent months or years. For five ASP members, the changes were positive, while for the other ASP member and the three non-members, they were negative.

### **Ideal supervision and support**

As ASP members' experiences of supervision and support were so varied, it is not surprising that their ideals are also varied. These are outlined below.

- At a regular protected time, e.g. monthly (4)
- From someone who knows about advocacy/has worked as an advocate (3)
- Confidential (2)
- External (2)
- Face to face, not by phone or email (2)
- Through group meetings with other advocacy professionals (2)
- Advocacy supervision separate from management supervision
- As professional as it is for counsellors or people working in social services
- External supervision to also be available for staff I supervise if needed/required by them
- Free guidance on legal or housing issues when necessary
- From someone approachable
- From someone trustworthy with some knowledge of the organisation
- From someone who knows more than the supervisee
- Focusing on issues beyond the organisation, e.g. in the local authority area, as well as those within it
- Internal because people from other organisations wouldn't understand
- Making supervision a priority
- Properly costed
- Reciprocal mentoring with another advocacy manager
- Sharing experiences of, and best practice in, supervision

- Space to share what advocates deal with in their day to day work
- Supervision from a fellow manager in a similar situation
- Support from someone who has had therapeutic training and understands the difficult relationship dynamics that can arise in advocacy work

### **What works best about your supervision**

Non-members were asked this question. Points made were:

- Accessible – there when it's needed (4)
- Combination of formal and ad hoc (2)
- Trustworthy (2)
- Any problem I have won't be news, they will know something about it
- Good relationship
- Can speak honestly
- Chance to offload
- Diverse range of experienced people to draw on
- Feedback is honest
- IMCA system on the Internet
- Knowing supervisor will act on issues raised
- Knowledgeable supervisor(s)
- Learning
- Monthly trustee meetings
- No micro-management
- No surprises
- Shared approach to managing difficulties
- Shared ownership of decisions
- Support from national organisation
- Time to talk

### **What doesn't work so well about your supervision**

Non-members were asked about this, and ten were able to identify one or more aspects of their supervision that didn't work so well. These included:

- Supervision that is rushed or postponed due to time pressure (3)
- Supervisor's lack of awareness of what an advocate actually does (3)
- Lack of funding (2)
- Adds to workload rather than assisting with workload
- Being supervised internally
- Lack of emotional support
- Lack of support from supervisor
- Too informal

### **How your supervision could be improved**

Non-members gave a number of ideas about how their supervision could be improved:

- Anything would be an improvement (4)
- External (4)
- Funding (2)
- By phone or online because I don't have time for face to face
- Case work based, perhaps from social services
- Face to face, not phone or email
- Informal supervision
- Internal
- Local network with training as a peer supervisory mechanism
- Peer support across services
- Regular protected time
- Standardised, systematic, quality system
- The opportunity to speak freely and get feedback
- Through meeting other advocates
- Through national support networks at accessible locations

### **Effect of external supervision or support**

Non-members were asked about the effect, if any, of external supervision or support on their overall needs for supervision and support. Nine non-members could identify one or more effects, mostly relating to support rather than supervision, and all but one positive. These included:

- Can use colleagues as a sounding board
- Enables understanding that other people/organisations face the same problems
- Good access to people I can ask
- Helpful to talk through decisions and get feedback
- Provides an additional layer to internal supervision and support
- Way to exchange best practice
- Way to find out how other organisations have overcome problems

*It was available from another provider who works in the next county, that was a phone supervision/support which doesn't really suit me, it's also provided by somebody who has made it very clear that they don't particularly like the organisation I work for, so that's a no-go, you're on a loser before you start.*  
(non-member)

### **Training**

Eight ASP members and seven non-members mentioned training, although no direct question was asked about this. However, it is not surprising that the subject came up, because training is closely linked to supervision. Formal supervision has an educative element<sup>6</sup>; six ASP members and one non-

<sup>6</sup> Smith MK (1996, 2005) The functions of supervision, in *the encyclopedia of informal education*. Last update: September 2009.  
[http://www.infed.org/biblio/functions\\_of\\_supervision.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/functions_of_supervision.htm)

member explicitly identified learning as a key part of supervision and support. Part of management supervision is to discuss and assess the training needs of the supervisee with a view to finding ways to meet those needs.

The training mentioned was different for each organisation, but included:

- Action for Advocacy day courses (2)
- City & Guilds national advocacy training (2)
- Dementia awareness training (2)
- Local authority training accessible to third sector advocacy professionals (2)
- Accredited training
- Advocacy training
- Dementia Advocacy Network training
- First aid
- Free training
- Induction training
- Long term training
- Mental health
- Reflective practice training
- Shadowing an advocate
- Training with OPAAL

One interviewee mentioned that their organisation acts as a commissioned training provider, which generates income.

### **Supervision and support given**

Seven ASP members and 14 non-members mentioned that they provide supervision and support to other people, usually staff and/or volunteers within their own organisation. This mostly encompasses formal supervision and informal support. Most people accept this as part of their job, although for some it is a burden and for others an opportunity to communicate and learn.

*I'd love someone else to do it but that's me being selfish. Because we're in an open plan system that's part of what we do. Some parts of advocacy can be intense, particularly dementia and mental health. Organisational support and case work is part of my role but managing ten other people's emotions is beyond me. (ASP member)*

*It's also an option to speak to your line manager and say how you'd like service or supervision improved, or to challenge their practice. It really is a two-way process and managers have a responsibility to encourage that two-way dialogue. When I run supervision, I ask my advocates regularly, is there anything I could do better, what do you need from me? Managers have to be prepared to hear things we might not like, but it's about what's best for the project and the people we're working with, rather than feeling criticized and feeling upset about it. (non-member)*

### **Contributions to other ASP members**

Five of the ASP members interviewed said they didn't think they'd made any contribution to other ASP members' supervision and support. Ten said they had contributed by listening and responding to issues raised at ASP meetings. Three had contributed by belonging to the programme's steering group, two by providing individual support to network members outside ASP meetings, and one by referring other advocates to the programme.

### **Contribution to other advocacy professionals**

Eight non-members said they made no contribution to the supervision and support of advocacy professionals outside their own organisation. Six said they did, all as part of formal or informal local networks.

### **Volunteers**

Two main types of volunteers were discussed in the interviews: those providing advocacy services, and those acting as trustees.

No specific question was asked about volunteers. However, 11 ASP members and 15 non-members mentioned that their service uses volunteers to provide advocacy services. Volunteers themselves need, and usually receive, good quality supervision and support.

*In our service we have a mentor for the volunteer advocates. (ASP member)*

*Particularly when you're working with volunteers, there's perhaps additional responsibility on a manager to make sure they get the guidance right. With volunteers you really need to look after them. (non-member)*

*We say it doesn't matter if it's a volunteer or paid advocate who provides your service, you'll get the same quality, and the paid advocates who support the volunteers have now brought supervision in line as well. They've been meeting with volunteer advocates and going through casework with them regularly, and they're now also recording it as supervision. (non-member)*

Two ASP members specifically said that they don't use volunteers, one saying that time was the main barrier.

All voluntary sector organisations are run by a committee of trustees, who are all unpaid volunteers<sup>7</sup>. In some cases trustees offer direct support and/or supervision to advocacy co-ordinators or managers, and this can work well.

*I've got a good management committee, the Vice Chair and Treasurer and Chair are very supportive so we can have a chat and that works very well. At*

<sup>7</sup> In certain circumstances, trustees may be paid, but this is very unusual. For more information, see section F of the Charity Commission Regulatory Report CC11 'Trustee Expenses and Payments' <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Publications/cc11.aspx>

*the management committee we talk about my role and how things are working for me. I feel well supported by the organisation and it doesn't feel like they are interfering with my day job. It's a nice relationship and makes the job more enjoyable. (ASP member)*

*I have an appraisal done every year, our Chair does that or the Treasurer. Ongoing supervision tends to be informal and I report regularly to the trustees, particularly the Chair. It can be whatever I choose it to be, sometimes emotional but tends to be managerial. I think it's good. (non-member)*

In other cases this doesn't work so well.

*Before [organisational change] the support and supervision was poor, I was supervised by a trustee. It was sporadic and very variable in terms of quality. In four years I had four different supervisors and knowledge was patchy. (ASP member)*

*I have a board of voluntary trustees, there's no supervision, I suppose if I asked I'd get some, although it took me three years to get a contract. (non-member)*

### **Differing needs**

Five ASP members and three non-members spoke about the diversity of advocacy organisations and the differing needs of those organisations and their employees. Non-members spoke of the difference between generic and specialised advocacy projects, and the different needs of advocates and organisations working with different client groups e.g. communities of ethnicity. ASP members spoke of the challenges to managing the network posed by the diversity of its members.

*We need to deliver what works for some, for some it's not part of their day job as it is mine, not everyone has that free rein. (ASP member)*

*You can't please all of the people all of the time, it's got to be individual and flexible so the people who can benefit from it can get the path they want and take more active roles in the part of the project that's useful for them, rather than feeling like they have to do everything because they're part of the project. (ASP member)*

*I think when you come to the support group, we know that there are different, we are from different organisations, and sometimes our needs are different and sometimes the issues that are discussed would be very new or very specific to particular organisations, so it's difficult to say 'this is OK and this is not OK' because you've got to accommodate the different advocacy projects and how different they all are. (ASP member)*

The document analysis shows that the newsletter from February 2010 highlighted this difficulty, and suggested that its implications had perhaps been underestimated.

## **Peer support**

Peer support is seen by ASP members as the most useful aspect of the network.

*I've found the peer support element useful in the project. Things like if I've got a waiting list and I talk to someone who has got a longer waiting list, that can be useful. We tend to beat ourselves up, but when I talk to others, and realise they have similar problems it's ok, it's ok to be human, it's not just me. (ASP member)*

*The project has been very supportive in the ability to talk to other advocates and concerns about areas of practice in a safe environment. I think it was because the group drew people from such a wide area, that felt comfortable talking to each other. (ASP member)*

Non-members also value peer support, whether from local networks or from internal or external colleagues.

*I've been in post one year and I've had a lot of support from them at meetings and informally between through phone and email and visits to their projects, they are open to me ringing them on practice advice particularly. That has been invaluable, if I hadn't got that network I would have felt much more isolated. (non-member)*

*With advocacy there's always the thing of being drawn into advice or help people make decisions, we all mutually support each other, I'm manager but I need that support myself, and I have one member of staff I can offload on myself, because that's the way we work being such a small organisation and she's been here longer than me. (non-member)*

The research offers indications that peer support between advocacy organisations may be difficult in some areas where local networks experience more competition than co-operation. In these areas, peer support across authority borders could be helpful, although time and travel costs may be prohibitive. The document analysis shows that concerns about time and money constraints for peer support meetings were in existence before the ASP began.

## **Online support**

Six ASP members and two non-members spoke about online support, all with a marked lack of enthusiasm. Four people mentioned that online support is potentially useful, but three of those pointed out that it needs to be accessible, user-friendly and technically supported if it is going to be of real value. Three people said they wouldn't use online support, and two said that it's no substitute for face-to-face support.

*I've never been able to access any of the things. I'm not on Facebook and don't want to go on it. I've never been able to access the online thing, she has a Yahoo thing and I've never been able to get on it. (ASP member)*

*You can do things over the Internet but it's not the same as meeting people at a forum, especially in advocacy. It's really important because it's all to do with relationships, cyber is not enough. (ASP member)*

*There's the opportunity to join forums on email, but I think it's not the same because you tend to only raise issues that are giving you trouble, and there isn't time to share. Some people are better at it than others, but there's not a general sharing; people will reply to a problem on an email, but it doesn't take it any further than that, it stays there. It's useful at the time, but doesn't build a fund of knowledge, it doesn't widen it, you're there to discuss the issue and that's it. A written answer is not the same for me as a human voice. (non-member)*

### **Cost**

Four ASP members and eight non-members mentioned cost as a barrier to supervision and support. Particular areas of concern were:

- Cost of professional external supervision (5 – two ASP members and three non-members)
- Cost of travelling for peer supervision (3 – two ASP members and one non-member)
- Cost of attending training/conferences (three non-members)
- Cost of professional guidance on legal matters (non-member)
- Cost of professional guidance on housing matters (non-member)

### **Time**

The subject that interviewees discussed most often was time. Of the 36 people who took part in interviews, 31 spoke about time. This issue was also raised in several of the documents analysed. Most interviewees spoke in terms of lack of time: big workloads, increasing demand for services, pressures on part-time workers, and so on. As one ASP member said,

*With all advocacy services everyone's busy.*

Ten ASP members and five non-members mentioned that they have a case load. (No direct question was asked about this, so it may not give the full picture.) Experience of this is varied.

*I do a little bit of advocacy to keep my hand in. (ASP member)*

*We do advocacy ourselves, too much our manager says. (ASP member)*

*I'm the manager, but I am the only trained advocate. (ASP member)*

*I have a case load, probably the highest. (non-member)*

*I try not to have a case load but I do when we get busy. (non-member)*

*I don't have a case load myself, my predecessor did and it didn't work. (non-member)*

Others spoke of the positive aspects of time. Another ASP member said,

*It's been useful to take time out to go to a meeting and give time to think and reflect, I don't always get time to do that.*

Eight ASP members said that the programme was an extra burden on their time, and for most this meant that they missed ASP meetings occasionally or regularly.

*Sometimes the meetings are a whole day and that's quite difficult to enable me to attend. (ASP member)*

*I think there's been an event in York recently, a whole day out, I can't afford that amount of time at the moment, it's a shame but a day out is too long. Meetings, chats, and phone calls can be absorbed into normal working hours. (ASP member)*

Conversely, ten ASP members said the programme wasn't a time burden, either because they could easily absorb it into their day job, or because it was a high priority for them, or both.

*It doesn't take a lot of time because it's not very often, it's not a big deal. We made sure we both don't go, so it's just me that goes, I report back so that doesn't put a strain on us, for the time it takes it's worth it. (ASP member)*

*I count it as part of my training and incorporate it. (ASP member)*

## **Appendix 2 – Documents Analysed**

- Notes from all ASP meetings
- All ASP newsletters
- ASP annual reports from March 2009 and March 2010
- All ASP steering group minutes
- Several internal BJB documents about the developing projects
- Member list
- 22 evaluation forms from special interest group meeting in York 18.6.10
- Eight case studies
- Independent annual evaluation of Northumbria Age Concern
- A Manifesto for Independent Advocacy Services in England and Wales
- Independent specialist advocacy in England and Wales: Recommendations for Good Practice. University of Durham, June 2002
- Information, Advice and Advocacy for Older People, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. 2005.

## **Appendix 3 – Telephone Interviewees**

### ASP members

North West – 4 members

East Midlands (also incorporates part of Yorkshire and the Humber) – 4 members

North East – 4 members

West Midlands – 4 members

### ASP other

Staff – 1 person

Steering group – 2 people

Advisor to ASP – 1 person

### Non-ASP members

South West – 4 people

London – 4 people

East England – 4 people

South East – 4 people

## **Appendix 4 – Telephone Interview Questions for ASP Members**

1. Please could you briefly describe your organisation: in particular its nature, size, and client group(s)?
2. What is your role within that organisation?
3. To what extent do you and/or your organization advocate for older people?
4. What kind of supervision and support did you receive from your organisation before joining the ASP? (probe for understanding of 'supervision' if necessary)
5. To what extent did this meet your needs for supervision and support?
6. How did you become involved with the ASP?
7. When did you join the ASP?
8. What effect, if any, has the ASP had on your needs for supervision and support?
9. What do you think are the reasons for that?
10. In what ways have you contributed, through the ASP, to other members' supervision and support?
11. Does belonging to the ASP create an extra time burden for you, or are you able to absorb the time within your day job?
12. Thinking about the ASP as a whole, what would you say works best about the programme?
13. What would you say doesn't work so well?
14. How do you think this could be improved?
15. Thinking now about the specific elements of the ASP – quarterly meetings, buddying, newsletter, Facebook group, developing projects, special interest groups and so on – do you have anything to add about what works well?
16. Do you have anything to add about what doesn't work so well and how that could be improved?
17. Thinking about what does, and what doesn't, work well within the ASP, how do you think this relates to people's roles and the nature of their organisations?
18. What influence, if any, do you think Betty Machin's involvement has had on the ASP?
19. Is there anything else you think we should know about the work of the ASP in general or your experience of it in particular?

## **Appendix 5 – Telephone Interview Questions for Non-Members**

1. Please could you briefly describe your organisation: in particular its nature, size, and client group(s)?
2. What is your role within that organisation?
3. To what extent do you and/or your organization advocate for older people?
4. What kind of supervision and support do you receive from your organisation? (probe for understanding of 'supervision' if necessary)
5. To what extent does this meet your needs for supervision and support?
6. Do you receive supervision and support from outside your organization? If so, what, and from where?
7. What effect, if any, has that had on your needs for supervision and support?
8. What do you think are the reasons for that?
9. Do you contribute to the supervision and support of other advocacy professionals? If so, how, and to whom? [NB: job titles, not names] Does that create an extra time burden for you, or are you able to absorb the time within your day job?
10. What works best about the supervision and support you receive?
11. What would you say doesn't work so well?
12. How do you think this could be improved?
13. How would you ideally like to receive supervision and support for the advocacy side of your work?
14. Is there anything else you think we should know about supervision and support for advocacy professionals in general, or your experience of it in particular?

## Appendix 6 – ASP Meetings

Date	Venue	Attends	Apols	Meeting type	Comments
25.9.08	Sheffield	9	3	Peer support	
26.9.08	Manchester	5	10	Peer support	
29.9.08	Birmingham	7	4	Peer support	
2.2.09	Birmingham	5	4	Peer support	Snow
3.2.09	Manchester	6	7	Peer support	
4.2.09	Sheffield	7	6	Peer support	
5.5.09	Birmingham	4	6	Peer support	Day after bank hol
13.5.09	Manchester	10	8	Peer support	
20.5.09	Sheffield	4	8	Peer support	
22.9.09	Manchester	5	10	Peer support	
29.9.09	Birmingham	5	3	Peer support	
7.10.09	Sheffield	7	6	Peer support	
23.10.09	Newcastle	7	3	Peer support	
13.1.10	Birmingham	4	7	Peer support	Snow
19.1.10	Manchester	4	10	Peer support	Snow
26.1.10	Sheffield	12	3	Peer support	
9.2.10	Durham	8	2	Peer support	
18.6.10	York	30	N/A	Special interest gp	

Sheffield average attendance: 8

Sheffield average apologies: 5

Manchester average attendance: 6

Manchester average apologies: 9

Birmingham average attendance: 5

Birmingham average apologies: 5

Average overall attendance at peer support meetings in Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham: 6

Average overall apologies for peer support meetings in Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham: 6

(Only two meetings held in the North East so far, so no averages yet available for that region)