

AOP Newsletter

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January 2011

Advocacy
for
OLDER
People

Serving Bedfordshire
and Luton

Tuesday-afternoon outreach service established in Houghton Regis

Central Bedfordshire Council has kindly provided AOP with office space at the Bedford Square Centre in Houghton Regis, thus enabling us to run an outreach service in the town every Tuesday afternoon. The move has come as a result of our increasing activity in the area.

AOP has become a member of the newly-formed Houghton Regis Older People's Network, a group of older people's services working together to determine the needs of older people in the area, and how it can collectively deliver services in response to that need. In addition, AOP has given presentations to Recycled Teenagers, a local older-people's group, and to local community matrons at Chiltern Vale Health Consortium.

The new office will now allow us to promote our service better in the area and to facilitate collaboration with other local groups also delivering services to older people in Houghton Regis. To arrange an appointment at the Houghton Regis office please telephone 01234-218880.



The Bedford Square Centre in Tithe Farm Road, Houghton Regis, the site of AOP's office.

Lloyds TSB funds work with vulnerable adults

AOP is very pleased to announce that  Lloyds TSB | Foundation for England and Wales Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales has agreed to fund our work safeguarding vulnerable adults.

AOP's involvement with adults who are victims of abuse of all kinds has increased, and our aim now is to respond to this demand by providing specialist, trustworthy and independent support for vulnerable older people. This funding will allow AOP to increase capacity by recruiting a Safeguarding Worker and a specialist team of Advocates.

What Advocacy for Older People does

AOP is an independent charity providing a free and confidential advocacy service to older people in Bedfordshire and Luton. We support older people in their own homes, in residential care, in hospitals and in specialist units.

We assist people to resolve all sorts of problems such as health, housing, finance, abuse, dementia and care provision. We ensure that their wishes are paramount; that they make their own choices; and that they retain their independence and control of their lives.

Our Advocates are volunteers, trained and supported by us, who are committed to helping older people in their local communities.

NHS Bedfordshire provides funding for mental-health work

AOP has secured additional funding from NHS Bedfordshire for the recruitment of a Team Leader for the charity's specialist Mental Health Group of Advocates.

The Department of Health's National Dementia Strategy, published in 2009, is raising awareness of the needs of people with dementia and specifies how these services should be delivered in order to ensure that these people have the best possible quality of life.

AOP's work assisting people with mental health problems in specialist units and in the community has been expanding for some time, but now we will be able to improve these services.

In response to this funding, Laide Granvaud has been appointed as Team Leader in Mental Health Work. She was already working with AOP delivering advocacy services to specialist units.



AOP's Mental Health Team of Advocates: Laide Granvaud (centre) with two of AOP's existing mental-health Advocates.


Bedfordshire

From a volunteer's perspective

Liz Findlay, one of AOP's newest recruits, explains what it's like to become an Advocate.



After having been a scientist for 22 years I came to the conclusion that I wanted a change of direction, and when the opportunity of voluntary redundancy was offered, it gave me the push I needed. As I was unsure which direction to take, I chose to do voluntary work first as a way of trying different roles in order to assess my strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and to gain new skills.

When I visited the Volunteer Centre in Bedford they suggested Advocacy for Older People, whose headquarters were just over the road. I confess that I wasn't sure what an advocate was, but the charity came highly recommended for its level of support and training, and the adviser told me that it fitted well with my desire for a position that offered variety and the opportunities to learn new skills and to help people help themselves.

The induction training was very thorough but was delivered in a fun and friendly way, and it was really useful to meet the two volunteers who came along to share their experiences with us. All the volunteers I have met have been lovely people – warm, interesting and very capable.

I have been volunteering for about five months now and have completed my first partnership. It feels good to know that I have made my client's life a little easier, and now it's time to help someone else. I have learned a lot about wills and have gained some confidence in my abilities. I wonder what I will learn from my next partnership?

The annual general meeting



Above: The High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, Daniel Hanbury (left), with Gail Shanahan, AOP's Service Manager, and Trustee Charles Lousada. Right: Gail with Councillor Robin Hines, the Mayor of Houghton Regis.



Despite the damp October weather, AOP's AGM for 2010 was extremely well attended by Advocates, volunteers, Members, clients, Trustees, funders and invited guests.

The highlight of the day was a series of case-study presentations by three Advocates who outlined some of the issues their clients had experienced; the responding support and assistance the Advocates were able to give; and how their intervention contributed in some way to improving their clients' quality of life. These presentations provided a powerful insight into our work and how it can help older people, and were much appreciated by the guests. Additional reports from the Chairman and Service Manager provided an overview of the year and some funding news.

AOP's client numbers have continued to increase; because of this our services are reaching more people, and more agencies are aware of our existence. AOP continues to support the broadest range of clients: people with all kinds of physical and mental health problems; people in residential homes and other types of supported living; people in hospitals and specialist units; as well as many others who are not part of the health and social-care system.

The majority of the people we assist are either completely alone or have family and friends that are too far away to be able to help them. Whatever their key problem is, their situation is often made worse by their loneliness, anxiety or fear of what might happen to them. AOP will provide these people with an Advocate who



will care about them; will be solely there for them; will stay with them for as long as is required; and will help them resolve their problems.

While we are able to support older people with all kinds of problem in whatever type of community they live, there have also been important developments in specialist areas that

Julie Sowerby (left), an AOP Trustee, with Gail Thornley, AOP's Chairperson.



Above left: Councillor Carole Hegley (left), the Social Care and Health Portfolio Holder for Central Bedfordshire, with June Davies, AOP Service Administrator.



Above right: John Bruynseels, the Assistant Director of Services for Older People at Bedford Borough Council, with Heather Andrew, AOP's Client Service Manager.

have caused us to draw up plans for how the service will respond. In particular, the advent of the National Dementia Strategy is raising the profile of the needs of people with dementia and aims to change and improve these services.

AOP's work in assisting people with mental health problems has been increasing for some time, but the delivery of the service will now be enhanced following the provision of funding by NHS Bedfordshire that has enabled the recruitment of a Mental Health Team Leader with a remit to expand and lead its specialist mental health team.

With AOP's work with victims of abuse also increasing, an announcement was made at the AGM that funding has been secured from Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales to enable a dedicated team of SOVA (safeguarding of vulnerable adults) workers to be created. It is not difficult to imagine how valuable it must be for an older person living in fear or despair, through being intimidated or hurt, to find that they can get help from someone trustworthy, independent and knowledgeable who is there just to help them.

Bearing in mind the challenges that are coming in relation to finances and funding, we do acknowledge and value our long-standing funding partnerships with Bedfordshire's local authorities and its Health Authority, and we will continue to work to secure additional, sustainable funding and support so that AOP can move forward with its work.

Given today's political and social drivers, the increasing help that older people need to be able to live independently, remain within their communities and have more choice and control in their lives, can only make AOP's work more relevant and necessary. This is what advocacy is all about, so we are preparing ourselves for a greater workload and hopefully more financial support.

Advocacy for Older People would like to thank all those who attended the AGM, as well as all those who continue to support and contribute to the organisation.

Training and support programme for 2010

AOP's training and support programme this year consisted of key topics relevant to policy developments in services for older people. These included:

- a presentation on the Personalisation Agenda by Central Bedfordshire Council;
- a visit to Aragon Housing's assistive-technology flat;
- an awareness course on the safeguarding of vulnerable adults provided by Bedford Borough Council;
- an insightful day's training on dementia awareness by Margaret-Anne Tibbs;
- a presentation by Woodfines Solicitors on the Mental Capacity Act, Powers of Attorney and Court of Protection; and
- two sessions of partnership feedback presented by Advocates.



AOP chosen for DoH Personalisation Project

AOP has been chosen, along with several other independent advocacy services for older people, to take part in the Making It Personal Project, a two-year national scheme funded by the Department of Health. The aim of the project is to create a model of best practice for advocacy services when supporting older people. The Personalisation Agenda sets out a new system of social care support where the person in need is allowed to decide what type of support they will receive; this is known as Self-Directed Support.

Personnel changes

AOP bade a sad farewell to two Trustees last year.

The first was **Carole Isles**, who made a huge contribution to AOP, initially as an Advocate, then as a committee member and latterly as the organisation's Chairperson. The second was **Paddy Willmer**, who was a Trustee for eight years and more recently acted as the organisation's Secretary. We would like to wish each of them every happiness in their new home.



Carole Isles and Paddy Willmer.

However, we would like to extend a warm welcome to **Ann Davies**, the newest addition to the Board of Trustees. In her career Ann has worked in personnel and human resources in the public sector, more recently as a self-employed consultant.

Two new staff members have joined the Bedford office. **Jo Vyvyan** will provide client-support services; she previously worked with Woodenhill, a social enterprise supporting young people through theatre and workshops.

Laide Granvaud has taken up the new role of Mental Health Project Worker (see page 1). She first joined AOP on placement as a student social worker before working with the specialist support team delivering advocacy services to older people with mental and physical health problems at Orchid Lawns and Potton House Care Homes.

AOP organises Arlesey Information-for-Older-People Day



In April, AOP organised an exhibition of information at Arlesey Village Hall. Over 40 local, older people attended and availed themselves of a one-stop gathering of 17 organisations working together to offer information and practical help to older people in their locality. It also gave us the opportunity to network with other organisations providing valuable services to older people. Exhibitors included Carers in Bedfordshire, the Pension Service, Bedfordshire Police, Age Concern, Bedfordshire Credit Unions, Bedfordshire Adult Skills & Community Learning, Active Bedfordshire and many more.

BBC Three Counties Radio sent Gareth Lloyd to interview all the exhibitors as part of its Who Cares? campaign about older people's issues, and the station transmitted live slots from the event to its afternoon show over a two-hour period. With the BBC's help we raised awareness across Herts, Beds and Bucks about services that are available to older people.

Heather Andrew, AOP's Client Service Manager, said: "It can be difficult for older people to know where to find the services they need. Helping older people to find the right information and support is a large part of advocacy work, and with this event we brought local and county-wide services to the people in their own community."



Above: Gareth Lloyd of BBC Three Counties Radio interviews Ruth Featherstone, AOP Advocate and Chairperson of the Older People's Reference Group. Below, from left: Heather Andrew, Client Service Manager, Danni Tuohy, Student Social Worker, and Teresa Boyle, Development Worker, all with AOP.



Become a Member of AOP!

Have a say in the development of our service by becoming a Member! We will keep you up-to-date with developments within the organisation through our newsletter, and you will also receive invitations to our special events throughout the year.

Our members are important to us; their participation and support helps us to help older people in need. For a membership form contact June Davies on 01234-218880. The cost is £5 for individuals.

Advocacy for Older People

3 Union St, Bedford MK40 2SF
Web site: <http://basop.info>

Service Manager **Gail Shanahan**
Client Service Manager

Heather Andrew

Mental Health Team Leader

Laide Granvaud

Client Support Worker

Marjorie Bosman

Client Administrative Assistant

Jo Vyvyan

Service Administrator

June Davies

Development Worker

Teresa Boyle

Finance Assistant **Tara Charlton**

Student Social Worker

Christopher Burraway

To contact all staff members

and Advocates: **tel: 01234-21880**

e-mail: admin@basop.info

Mission statement

Our mission is to enable older people to retain their independence, rights and dignity, have their wishes heard, make their own choices and control their lives.

We aim to be available and responsive to any older person who needs our help. By accessing services, information and advice, providing support and acting as advocate, we ensure that their wishes are paramount.

We promote opportunities for older people to be socially included and involved in local communities to maintain a good quality of life.

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