

Self Advocacy in Action

Working together and helping others speak out



Our Business News

Issue 5

April 2014

What's New?

Hello and welcome to everyone.

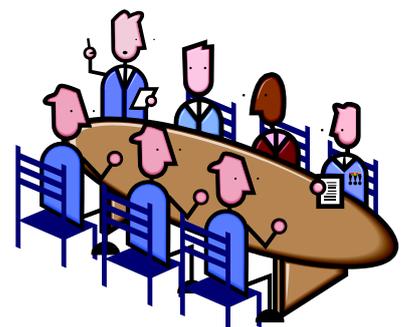
For this issue of our Business News, we have:

- An interview with Barry Johnson, who is the Chairperson of Self Advocacy in Action.
- Information about our new DVD newsletter for people with learning difficulties/ disabilities.
- Something about understanding Self Advocacy in Action.
- Information about 'pay as you go' sessions for people with learning difficulties/ disabilities.



We hope you will enjoy finding out what we have been doing. If you want to get in touch please see the back page for details about how to contact us.

Thank you,
Self Advocacy in Action Management Committee.



Interview with Barry Johnson



When did you join Self Advocacy in action?

I started as a waiting member [waiting for my application to be approved by the Management Committee] and was then voted in as a full member of Self Advocacy in Action about 6 years ago. I am now the Chairperson of the Management Committee.

What does self advocacy mean to you? Why is it important?

It helps me to speak up about the things I want to say. It has helped me to become more confident in myself and when I work with other people. It's important as it helps me speak up for

myself and others.

Which groups are you a member of?

I am a member of the Tuesday Group and the Management Committee of Self Advocacy in Action.

What do you get out of being a member?

I have fun, work hard and really enjoy what I do.



Anything else you want to tell us?

All the members of self Advocacy in Action work together as a team to make decisions. We have a laugh and we enjoy the help and support that we get from Just Services. I also enjoy going to colleges and schools to do talks (as part of the "Experts by Experience" programme) and promote Self Advocacy in Action.

Barry and Kerry giving a talk

DVD newsletter: a new type of news

We were lucky, last year, to get a small donation from Tesco Trust. This was to be able to create a DVD newsletter. We wanted to do this because people with learning disabilities have told us they would prefer this. All the people with learning disabilities that we talked to said they either had a computer or a DVD player that they could play this on. Andrew Welch, one of our members who goes to our Friday Group, has been very busy making some backing music for the DVD, which sounds great. He has used our new iPad for this and an app called Garage Band.



We are very excited about our first DVD newsletter and we will be posting it out to people with learning disabilities who would like a copy. If you know anyone, or any groups, who would like a copy please let us know. It is our first try so we know we will be able to improve on it too - we are learning all the time! This is something we have wanted to do for a long time and it is great to finally be saying that our first DVD newsletter is out.



Pay as you go



With all the cuts in social care, many people with learning disabilities now get very small Personal Budgets or none at all. We have talked about this at our Management Committee meetings and decided we need to do something to keep supporting people with learning disabilities to gain self advocacy and independence skills, as well as to be able to meet together to socialise and have fun. Last month we decided we would set up some 'pay as you go' sessions. We will run these from our base in Beaumont Leys and we will keep the cost as low as possible so that people with learning disabilities can afford it. The sessions will focus on supporting each other to speak up, working together with others, learning independence skills and doing fun things like games and crafts - these also focus on working as a team. People will be able to pay for each session they come along to and can come to lots or just a few; it's up to them.



We are going to be doing a few trial sessions over the next few months so let us know if you know people with learning disabilities who might like to come along.

Just another Service Provider?

In the 'new world' of Personal Budgets, which aims to bring choice to people who are entitled to social care services, Self Advocacy in Action has been able to set up Independence Groups for people with learning disabilities who have Personal Budgets. Self Advocacy in Action is an organisation of people with learning disabilities. Sometimes people call this being a user led organisation. It doesn't seem to matter how many times we tell some people, through our newsletters, through meeting people and through our leaflets that Self Advocacy in Action is run and managed by people with learning disabilities, they still don't get it. We can apply for funds and say this in the first few lines of a bid and get a question back saying 'How do you involve 'users'?' It gets very frustrating.

When people with learning disabilities join one of our funded self advocacy groups, or join a group using their Personal Budget, they are getting the chance to become **part of** Self Advocacy in Action; this is much more than 'using a service'. It means they have a say in what goes on, they are part of a wider group of people with learning disabilities, they learn and share with other people with learning disabilities, and they might take up a role in Self Advocacy in Action, such as being on the Management Committee and maybe even becoming something like the Vice Chairperson or Treasurer of the organisation.

At our last Management Committee we talked about how we feel about some of the things that have happened recently and the attitude of some people in the local authorities.

It feels like people are just being taken out of our groups. No one talks to us about it and we don't think people with learning disabilities are getting real choices because people don't understand who we are and what we do. We are happy for people who do want to move on; it's not that - it's about how this is done. We don't like it.

I think Local authorities are scared of Self Advocacy in Action because we are people with learning disabilities and we run the organisation ourselves. They might say they think it's good but they don't really like it.

Some good news is that we have just heard that in Leicester City, organisations where people are using their Budgets will have to be invited to reviews and they can appeal if they think the decision is not what the person wants. That sounds like a really good thing.

Over the coming months we will tell you about the varied and interesting work that we do, including a more in depth look at our Self Advocacy groups, the training we provide and a unique opportunity to find out about the individuals behind the organisation.

If you can't wait for more information, or have a question about our organisation or our services, please contact us on 0116 229 3035 or email us at selfad93@yahoo.co.uk



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