



Broker Bites



Your quarterly update from The Community Brokerage Network

Hello there!

Welcome to the September issue of Broker Bites! We can hardly believe we're now in the final quarter of 2020, a year which has been challenging and surreal to say the least.

With continuing Covid-19 physical distancing restrictions we've had to adapt to and overcome a fair number of obstacles, both in our personal and professional lives.

With the return of our SQA accredited course, The Community Brokerage Award, we've made some changes to the structure and delivery of our teaching, which you can read about in this issue.

We also take a look at Self Directed Support Scotland's (SDSS) National Report, 'My Support, My Choice', which focuses on people's experiences of SDS and social care in Scotland and how it might be adapted to become more accessible, inclusive and person-centred.

Finally, we bring you the latest news on the Scottish Government's review of adult social care and some wonderful comments from Deborah Gardner, who was recently put in touch with the Community Brokerage Network for support and guidance on issues concerning her little boy.

We hope you and your loved ones are continuing to stay safe and are paying attention to both your physical and mental well-being.

We may still be in the grip of lockdown but it pays to remind ourselves that every new day is a step closer to semi-normality. We'll leave you with these words from Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, which we feel are very fitting for these trying times:

"Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today."



Meet Our Brokers

Say hello to some of the fantastic brokers who make up the Community Brokerage Network. Here three of them tell us a little bit about themselves and what they bring to the network and the individuals they work with.

Mhairi Ligat

Mhairi has worked in a bank, in Educational Resources and laterally in Social Care, supporting adults with learning disabilities on a one-to-one basis. During this time, Mhairi gained an H.N.C. in Social Care to better understand the ethos behind social care today. She is also experienced in self-directed support and volunteers with Alzheimer's Scotland.



Mhairi became involved with the Community Brokerage Network Network when her father was terminally ill and her mother was receiving community care support for Alzheimer's through a provider organisation. With help from the brokerage Mhairi was able to plan support for both her parents. She benefited greatly from the help of CBN who provided information, support and guidance about self-directed support.



Michelle Robertson

Michelle was introduced to the Community Brokerage Network to help her get her independence back. The support they provided was invaluable and made her want to learn more and train to help others as she had been helped.

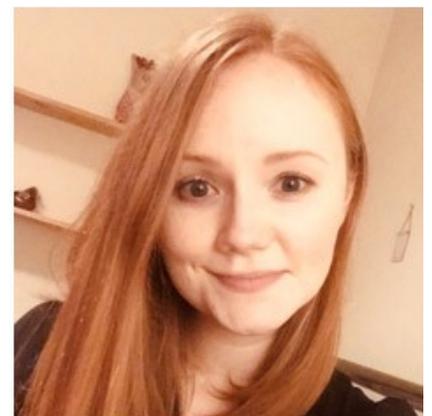
As a mum of 3 boys she has always had an active role in education and been involved with most stages of development and transition. She understands the SDS process from a personal perspective and knows the challenges that come with accepting that you need help.

She enjoys working with all age groups and has a passion for helping everyone to achieve their goals. Having personal experience of managing a budget allows her to talk through concerns and encourage people to reclaim the missing parts of their lives.

Lorna Wallace

Lorna is the newest recruit to the Community Brokerage Network. She loves social media and blog writing and is currently assisting us with our Facebook and Twitter platforms as well as the content and layout of our website.

Lorna has a degree in English Literature from the University of Strathclyde and loves anything to do with writing and being creative. She is also a published poet and has won praise for her Scots language poetry and open mic stage performances.



New Recruits!

The return of our SQA course

Thanks to Covid lockdown restrictions, a large number of classes, groups and social gatherings have had to be rescheduled or cancelled. Fortunately, it's still full steam ahead for our SQA course, The Community Brokerage Award, as much of the learning is already online. This allowed classes to return on Thursday 3rd August with a fresh group of eager participants. I spoke to our SQA Coordinator, Jenny Reekie, about how we've adapted the delivery of the course to ensure applicants continue to receive the best possible learning experience during these unusual times.

“The course was already well structured for people to access online so most of our adaptations were already in place. It involves a lot of independent research anyway and even before Covid we used Zoom to interview applicants and were planning on using it for tutorials.”

Jenny explained that the course will now be delivered through 4 half-day sessions, spread over the course of two weeks, and will make use of break-out rooms for smaller group discussions.

“We had our course induction on Zoom a few weeks ago. They told us it was reassuring to meet everyone and that doing so helped alleviate their fears. However, this way of learning is new for us all so we're constantly getting feedback from the group to make sure they get the best experience.”

“We currently have 12 participants from right across Scotland, each with a different range of experiences. Some already work in the social care sector and some of them have had direct experience of Self-Directed Support (SDS).”

Jenny also shared this screenshot of the group, which was taken during one of their recent Zoom meetings, and it's clear to see that everyone's eager to get stuck in!



See the next page for full details of the course and how to contact Jenny for more information!



The Community Brokerage Award

Introducing our very own SQA certified course:
The Community Brokerage Award!

Covering all aspects of community brokerage relating to self-directed support, the course is worth 30 credits at SCQF Level 7 and is comprised of 5 modules, delivered over 9 months.



Comments from past participants. . .

“This course has enabled me to see how SDS principles and values can be applied to different areas of my own and other people’s lives.”

“My confidence has improved by doing this [course], both personally and professionally.”

“You all did a great job and I’m proud to have been a part of it.”

“I would definitely recommend the award—their presentations have been superb and the support is second to none.”



For more information about the course and details on how to sign up for the next intake, please contact our SQA Advisor and Co-ordinator, Jenny Reekie.

jennyreekie@communitybrokeragenetwork.co.uk

SDSS National Report: 'My Support, My Choice'

Self-Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) recently published their National Report, 'My Support, My Choice'. The report uses data from a research project run by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) and SDSS and was funded by the Scottish Government.

This data was collected between November 2018 and February 2020, via surveys, interviews and focus groups, all gathering the experiences of 637 people who received SDS or who had been assessed in the previous 12 months.

It represents the most recent and comprehensive reflection of people's experiences of SDS/social care in Scotland prior to Covid-19.

Research participants acknowledged SDS as important to achieving a higher quality of life and independent living. However, there are some key improvements that would respond to people's concerns. The views expressed by the participants have led to a number of recommendations, which covered the following topics:

- Poverty and SDS
- Data Gathering and Analysis
- Information About SDS
- Informed Choice and Control
- Communication and Relationships with Social Work
- Impact of SDS on Family/Relationships
- SDS and Mental Health
- Care Staff, Recruitment, Training and Quality
- Independent Advocacy and Support



There have been several reviews of SDS since its inception in Scotland.

In its 2019 review, the Care Inspectorate found that, when SDS is effectively implemented, people accessing social care find it transformational and experience positive personal outcomes.

However, they also found that effective SDS is not accessible to all. Some of their key messages include:

- More needs to be done to inform, empower and enable people to fully participate in decisions that affect them.
- Eligibility criteria can stop staff from working in ways that support the SDS principles.
- There is inconsistent availability of all four SDS options around the country and some people don't have access to all four options.
- There is inconsistent understanding, knowledge and engagement in SDS across different professional staff groups.

When surveyed, 74% of the 637 participants agreed that SDS had improved their social care experience; however, some were unhappy with issues relating to paperwork, assessments and insufficient budgets. Comments included:

- *The process is frustrating and time consuming.*

- *It isn't worth the stress and judgemental interference in your life.*
- *Very challenging, takes up a lot of time and isn't the solution that it's portrayed as. Very restrictive in terms of what SDS can and can't be used for.*
- *We didn't have any choice in the matter, as we were told it was happening and that was that. Try to make sure you are given as much information about choices as possible and sufficient to make your decision.*



When surveyed, 74% of participants agreed that they'd been fully involved in all decisions made about their care and support. The findings reflect our experience as brokers supporting people with Self Directed Support and we welcome the report being published.

Click [here](#) to read the report in full.



Visit the SDSS website and follow them on social media:



www.sdsscotland.org.uk



@SDSScot

Review of Adult Social Care

The Scottish Government will conduct a review to consider the idea of a national care service.

The review, a Programme for Government commitment, will aim to ensure Scotland provides consistently excellent support for people who use care services, their carers and their families.

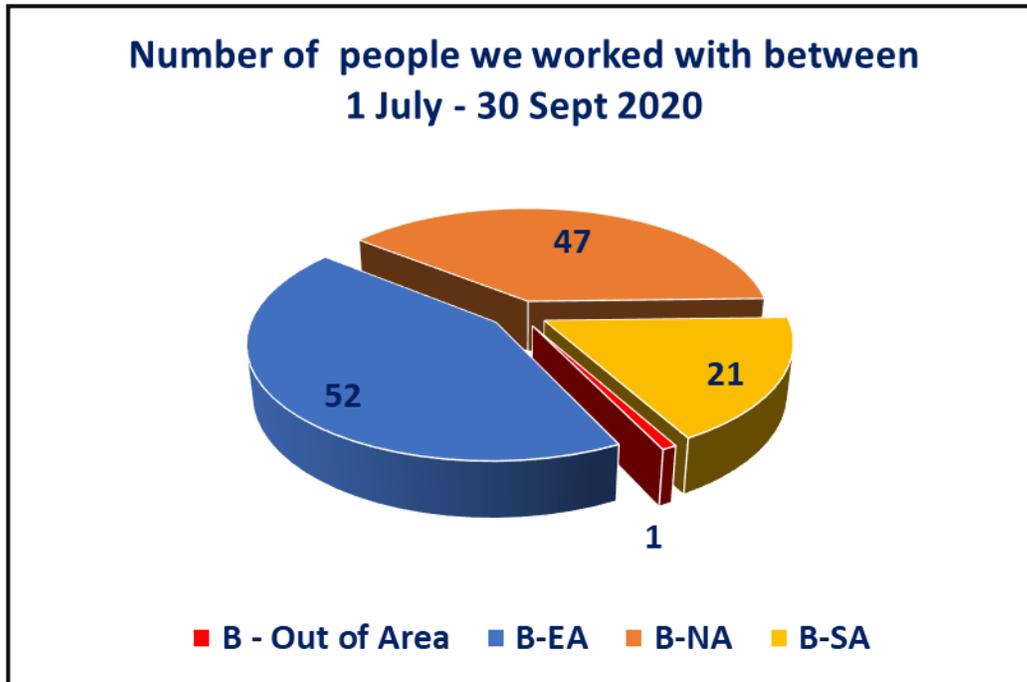
Chaired by Derek Feeley, former director general of Health and Social Care at the Scottish Government, the review will consider people's needs, rights and preferences while looking at funding, governance, administration and delivery.

An expert panel will report by January 2021.

For further details on the outline of the report, click [here](#).



Activity this Quarter



People We've Helped

We recently received this wonderful feedback from Deborah Gardner, who was put in touch with the us for support and guidance on issues concerning her little boy, Arizona. It really is fantastic to know we're making a difference to people's lives. Thank you so much again to Deborah for sharing these lovely comments with us!

"I had the most wonderful conversations with Kaye Robertson and Liz Callaghan. It left me in tears because it just felt like someone (in a professional capacity) really cares and wants to help us navigate this very complex system.

I've just started with my broker this week and already she's been amazing. I think we're going to achieve an awful lot in the next few weeks."

-Deborah, mum to Arizona.



Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) Short Film

You may remember Arlene Howe from our last issue, in which she told us all about her experiences with the Community Brokerage Network and what we've been doing to help make life easier for her and her young daughter.

We recently contacted Arlene again, inviting her to take part in a short film for our funder, the Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) stream from the Scottish Government.

Arlene's experience with the Community Brokerage Network began when she was put in touch with our broker, Andrea, through a community link worker. Since then Andrea has been providing Arlene with support and guidance in her efforts to secure a more fit-for-purpose house for herself and her five-year-old daughter, Sophie:

"I love that I was put in touch with Andrea and it's great to have someone to speak up for me. I've had a lot of battles and sometimes don't have the fight in me but Andrea's always in my corner. I wish I'd known about the Community Brokerage Network sooner."

Click [here](#) to watch Arlene's video.



