

# **VoiceAbility Scotland Quarterly Report**

FY23 Q1; 01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023

# VoiceAbility Contract Monitoring Report

Service Name	Social Security Scotland Benefits Advocacy
Contract Name	VoiceAbility Scotland; Case/540750
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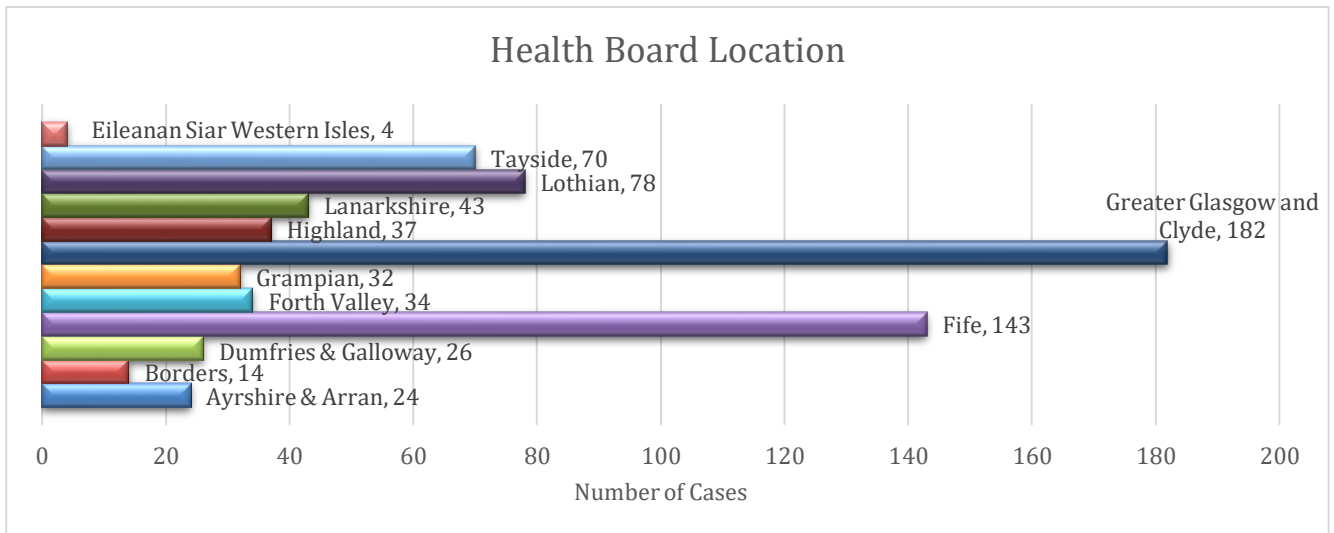
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# Executive Summary

## Headlines

From the beginning of this year, VoiceAbility have continued to see an upward trend in referral numbers, and delighted that we have exceeded previous number of cases in a given quarter. (39.2% increase) (695 cases). We have made huge strides in Lothian, Lanarkshire and Grampian. Further information detailed within the report.



Glasgow has exceeded the case numbers of Fife, our previous highest performing area. Glasgow has seen growth due to higher numbers being referred from The Big Disability Group and our newly established connections within the Job Centres.

VoiceAbility have established 6 new hubs across Scotland, making the service more inclusive and accessible for any potential clients. Job Centre Plus, (Aberdeen City, Inverness and Glasgow), Aberdeen Foyer, Seafit and Skills Development Scotland, Peterhead are offering us space to have drop-ins whenever we require.

VoiceAbility attended 38 events this quarter to promote the service and build on new and established relationships. Some highlights from this quarter include attending the Big Disability Group 1<sup>st</sup> year anniversary where many charities came together along with some local MSPs. We attended an information morning at Parkhill School designed to connect parents of children with disabilities to services that they can access in their local area.

Our Operations Manager attended an event organised by MP Marion Fellows with Alzheimer Scotland, where they provided an overview on Dementia. She found it very interesting and has arranged for the team within Dementia Friendly Scotland to attend our next full team meeting in September to provide the same overview.

We also attended events in Ayrshire, Dumfries, Edinburgh, Fife, Fraserburgh, Inverness, Stirling and Peterhead.

VoiceAbility attended an event held in partnership with Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) at HMP Inverness care.

A selection of partners were invited to the event, which included, Barnardo's, New Start Highland, Moray Pathways, Children Against Poverty, Skills Development Scotland, Developing the Young Workforce and Rokzkool.

The aim of the event, was to interact with individuals within HMP Inverness care, giving advice and support on what is available.

Kerry O'Hagan – Head of Operations at HMP Inverness gave an Introduction and welcome.

It was a fantastic event, where we were able to provide an understanding of our service and how VoiceAbility could support. Interaction and engagement with all the individuals was a great success and literature was taken away for reference. It was great to be given the opportunity to highlight the work that we are doing across Scotland.

We are pursuing an opportunity to attend on a regular basis with the partnership manager within DWP.

## Successes

1. Exceeded the number of cases received in Q4 against our first year of delivery.
2. Collective Advocacy expansion.
3. Growth in areas.

FY23/24 Q1 saw 39.2% increase in cases. We have detailed information relating to this in section 3.1 & Section 4.1

Following the success of our collective advocacy sessions, we are increasing our efforts to run these more frequently across Scotland. To start this activity, we sent invitations to all our previous and current clients who had foregone the redetermination process. The dates, times and venues will be placed on our website to provide further opportunities for others to attend. Some of our clients may wish to provide one to one feedback, rather than attend a group setting. (collective advocacy report attached).

We have been working with numerous partners across these areas such as Job Centre Plus and Advocacy North East in the Grampian area and have been seeing steady referrals from both. We have also made a connection with North Lanarkshire Advocacy. Within Lothian we've had meetings with Salvesen Minds and the Action Group to promote our services and joined the East Lothian Financial Inclusion Network meetings to enhance our reach within Edinburgh.

## Challenges

1. Increased service demand
2. Contacting Social Security Scotland

Due to high demand in Glasgow, we have three advocates travelling across health boards to provide support where appropriate. We have planned recruitment and come September

we will have a further six advocates in Glasgow. This will take our staffing quota to service Glasgow up to 9.

Our advocates have highlighted a challenge when they are supporting clients and need to contact Social Security Scotland direct. We have experienced waiting times of over an hour, which is having an impact on the delivery of our service to our clients. We are working closely with Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland to find a solution. We met recently in Glasgow to discuss a few options which are being explored.

## Organisational News

VoiceAbility has created a dedicated newsletter and section of our website which contains news and updates from across Scotland, below are some highlights from that.

**“Get involved, come on in:” student volunteer Barney shares his experience - Barney, 22, volunteers for VoiceAbility in Edinburgh. We talked to him about why he volunteers, and what he gets out of it. [Read more](#)**

**Joint call to implement human rights for all in Scotland - VoiceAbility has signed a joint letter to Scottish public authorities, calling for action to prioritise human rights. [Read More](#)**

## Report

### 1. Key Performance Indicators:

#### 1.1 KPI Summary

FY24 Q1			
No	Key Performance Indicator	Milestone	Result
1	All requests for support received must be processed and allocated to appropriate advocacy representation within 2 working days.	95%	100%
2	Initial appointments with Individuals should be arranged within 3 working days of the referral to the advocacy worker or service partner	95%	99.5%
3	Acknowledge receipt of complaint/concern within 2 working days of receipt and provide a formal response within 5 working days of receipt (copied to the SG contract manager for information).	90%	N/A
4	Any complaints which cannot be resolved by Service provider regarding the system or services must be sent to SG contract manager within 6 working days of receipt.	90%	N/A

5	Serious issues to be escalated to the Scottish Government within 24 hours	100%	N/A
6	Service Provider must issue satisfaction survey to 100% of Individuals within two days of their service requirements ending	95%	100%
7	Service Provider must make payment to any sub-contractors within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice	100%	N/A

## 1.2 Response Times

All KPI's met this Quarter.

## 2. Call Centre Key Performance Indicators

### 2.1 Call Centre KPI Summary

No	Call Centre Key Performance Indicator	Milestone	FY23/24 Q1 Result
1	80% of all calls and webchats answered with 20 seconds	80%	91.80%
2	100% of calls and webchats answered with one minute	100%	100%
3	Average handling time of an enquiry 5 minutes (this KPI does not apply to remote advocacy delivery)	Average of 5 minutes	Average of 9.7 minutes
4	Under 5% abandon rate	<5%	2.13%
5	95% call classification capture of all inbound calls	95%	97%
6	All e-mail, out of hours webchat and voicemail enquiries processed within one working day for urgent	Within 1 working day	100%
7	All online referrals allocated to the most appropriate advocate within one working day	Within 1 working day	100%
8	All eligible referrals allocated to the most appropriate advocate within two working days	Within 2 working days	100%

The Scotland Call Centre connected 702 calls, with all call centre KPIs being met. KPIs 4 and 5 have steadily improved over the past two Quarters.

### 3. Individuals (Clients)

#### 3.1 The Number of Clients Supported

In FY23/24 Q1, VoiceAbility received 695 cases, 39.2% increase from the previous quarter.

Initial Applications	556
Change of Circumstances	36
Redeterminations	98
1 <sup>st</sup> Tier Tribunal	5

With our cases increasing quarter on quarter, we have seen the benefits of working within the local community. Having a base, where people feel safe and know the surrounding area, with the added bonus of saving travelling times across the health boards, means we are able to see more clients in one day.

#### 2.2 Geographic Split of Cases

Opened Date →		Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Total
Service Name	NHS Health Board	Record Count	Record Count	Record Count	Record Count
Benefits Advocacy	Ayrshire & Arran	6	8	10	24
	Borders	4	3	7	14
	Dumfries & Galloway	7	8	11	26
	Fife	30	48	65	143
	Forth Valley	6	15	13	34
	Grampian	9	11	12	32
	Greater Glasgow and Clyde	57	53	72	182
	Highland	17	7	13	37
	Lanarkshire	15	15	13	43
	Lothian	17	27	34	78
	Orkney	0	0	0	0
	Shetland	1	0	7	8
	Tayside	19	17	34	70
	Eileanan Siar Western Isles	2	2	0	4
	Unknown	0	0	0	0
<b>Total:</b>		<b>190</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>695</b>

FY23/24 Q1 continues the same pattern from previous quarters in that our numbers are much stronger from Fife (143) Glasgow (182) and Lothian (78), however, other areas have significantly grown this quarter such as Ayrshire, Highlands and Lanarkshire.



### 3.3 Equality Act Statistics

The full breakdown of Equality Act statistics can be found in 'Equal Ops' tab in the attached FY23/24 Q1 Data Report. This quarter we have seen a 4% increase in Mental Health cases, a summary of some of the more noteworthy information can be seen below:

Top 4 Support Needs:

- Mental Health (37%)
- Long-Term Health Condition (21%)
- Physical Disability (14%)
- Autistic Spectrum Diagnosis (8%)

Age Breakdown:

- 0-17 (9%)
- 18-49 (53%)
- 50+ (38%)

### 3.4 Number of Onward Referrals

36 of our 761 referrals have been signposted to other organisation for further support.

44% of our referrals have come from our partner organisation.

We have seen a significant increase in the number of signposting opportunities whilst delivering benefit advocacy to our clients, demonstrating that they are at the true heart of the work we do. Main signposting requirements are for support with services such as housing, DWP benefits or advice on benefits.

## 4. Requests and Referrals

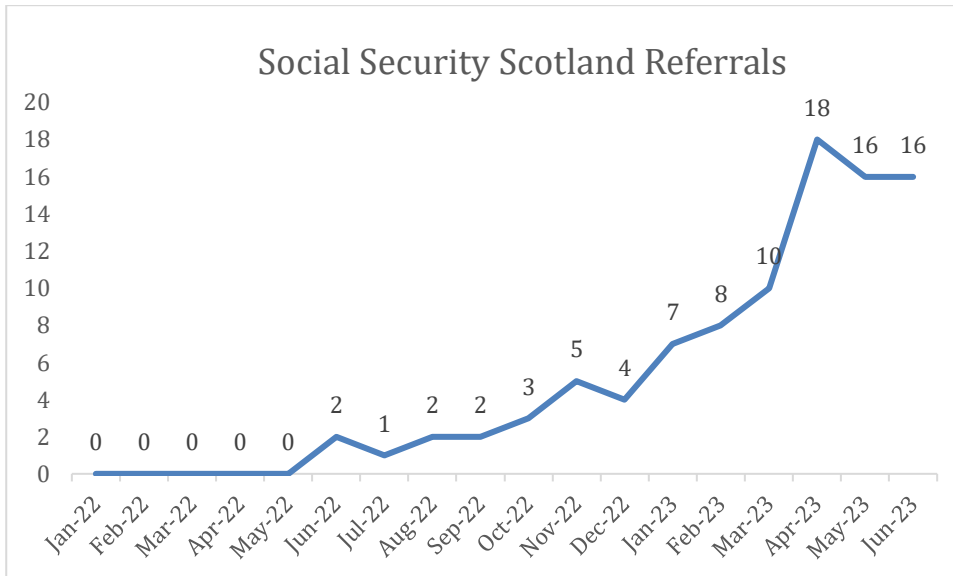
### 4.1 Requests for Support

Out of the 761 referrals that VoiceAbility received in FY23/24 Q1, 92% have converted into a case.

100% of our referrals received from Social Security Scotland carried over into a case this quarter.

### 4.3 Referring Agencies and Organisations

As mentioned previously, professional referrals (44%) have increased significantly, we have now received referrals from 110 different organisations. Our self-referrals (52%) have continued to see great reach through our networking effort. This demonstrates how effective our networking has been, and that the steps we are taking to create a larger focus on our community engagement, will yield greater results.



From the table above, we can see further increase in referrals from Social Security Scotland, of which 44% of redeterminations.

Quote from local delivery team member

*"Working with VoiceAbility was a fantastic experience both for me and for the client, it was great to work in partnership with VoiceAbility for the greater good of the client. We were like two peas in a pod working collaboratively to ensure the client's needs were met".*

## 5. Service Administration

### 5.1 Onward Referrals

As discussed in section 3.4, we have signposted 36 referrals to external organisations.

### 5.2 Feedback and Complaints

96% of our clients that responded to our satisfaction survey rated our service as very good (our top option).

100% of our clients stated they had got what they wanted from VoiceAbility.

Key words used to describe our service were, "supportive" (40%), "helpful" (33%).

Feedback from our clients

Kerry was absolutely fantastic, she was a confidence booster for me, extremely knowledgeable and approachable, I would recommend VoiceAbility to others

The advocate gave me confidence that I was completing the application properly and fully, which would not have been the case without their reassurance.

I was very happy with the service and I feel I gained knowledge from this experience. I would recommend the service to others.

Lynn put a lot of time in to communicate with me regarding my sons case as I am profoundly deaf and need to understand someone by lipreading. I felt at ease having Lynn help us out.

Prompt contact, consistent, clear communication and helpful

### 5.3 Concerns

VoiceAbility have nothing to report this quarter.

## 6. Compliance

### 6.1 Social Security Advocacy Quality Assurance

This quarter our team meetings have focused on redetermination training, along with looking at the new review forms that have been sent out to clients.

### 6.2 Communication

This quarter, we have utilised our translator service to communicate with clients whose first language was Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Portuguese, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, Ukrainian and Urdu. We also used BSL for three of our clients.

For awareness raising efforts please see power point presentation.

### 6.3 Partnerships

Our newly recruited advocates have been making strides in the areas of the Highlands and Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

#### Inverness

Established hubs within the Department of Work and Pensions employment and partnership team, in addition we also attended events within HMP, HTSI Custody Link, 1668 Café children's and families' afternoon and the employability forum.

## Aberdeen

We have made contact and set up a partnership with Aberdeen Cyrenians, Turning Point Scotland which is funded by Aberdeen City Council who are keen to have our details included on their financial inclusion webpage. Northeast College are having a fresher week presentation and two advocates will be attending with a leaflet from VoiceAbility going into each of the 1600 welcome packs. Aberdeen Job Centre has accepted us to have a desk there one morning a week. We have also contacted the maternity ward in Aberdeen, the aim of this project is to provide information to new mothers and families about the best start grants.

We are in the process of contacting our referring organisations to complete a satisfaction survey of our service. We shall have the results by the end of July.

Further to contacting our existing partners, we have also reached out to all members of SIAA to arrange meetings. We have met with Advocard, Ceartas, Kindred and Salvesen Mind. Actionforme, Angus in Advocacy, Circles, Includeme and Partners in Advocacy all agreeing to meet to discuss how we can best work together. Awaiting dates for the diary.

In Edinburgh we've also secured a spot in the Thistle Foundation building as this will become our new centralised hub for support services in Edinburgh. Our Edinburgh Advocate has been working jointly with The Edinburgh Food Project to get this underway. Other services involved, and who will potentially be joining the hub are: The Salvation Army, Sacro, Bethany Christian Trust, Action Group, Changeworks, Community Alliance Trust, Circles, Advocard, Access to Industry, Big Issue, Vocal, and Turning Point.

VoiceAbility attend a conference within the Fenwick Hotel to participate in a "speed networking session". We promoted our school placement project to all the Ayrshire School Co-ordinators, teachers, and Pastoral support teachers who came from all localities, East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, and North Ayrshire. From this we managed to set up a few meetings from schools who were keen to hear more.

Ayrshire is an area for development and our Advocate has spent much of their time this quarter attending numerous events. From this work we have seen a 300% increase in referral numbers.

Some examples below on how this tremendous increase has happened.

VoiceAbility attended The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT) Third Sector Networking Event along with 36 other organisations. They have our details of the service within the directory, along with other third sector and charitable organisations' details.

On the day we were asked by Sheridan Waldon Development Officer Arran Community & Voluntary Service if we would attend a meeting and deliver a presentation of our service on Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2023.

We have also been invited to attend a further meeting by the Lennox Partnership, Nicola Weir Co-ordinator, who works for families.

SCDN Meeting within South Ayrshire

Great conversations were had all round the table, and we all provided an update on our services.

Connected with Julie Lindsay who works within the Football Academy, and she had suggested that we come along to their “Honest Men’s Group”.

Elizabeth Dougall, Health and Social Care Partnership recommended we attend a networking event within a South Ayrshire School in September 2023 time to do a presentation on our service.

Further to these two contacts and upcoming events, we were invited by Joyce McGregor Community Worker East Ayrshire to attend another networking event in August within the Ayrshire College.

SCDN circulated all our marketing materials to the whole network, these were included within the minutes of the meeting.

## 7. Staffing

### 7.1 Staffing

The team consisted of 39 members with the following breakdown:

- 1 Operations Manager
- 1 Contract Manager
- 4 Team Leaders
- 1 Volunteer Co-ordinator
- 29 Advocates
- 3 Referral/Information Advocates

In addition to our staff, we have seven volunteers, some of which are just about to finalise their training. Our volunteers support with light touch advocacy and community engagement work.

36% of our Advocates recruited since contract GO LIVE were unemployed before joining VoiceAbility.

## 8. Trends and Insights

### 8.1 FY23/24 Q1 Analysis

We have continued to increase our cases per quarter, however, we have identified areas that we have seen smaller than expected growth specifically in Tayside. We have 2 advocates based in this area, and had expected more cases than what we have received so far. We have started work on identifying new partners to work with in this area to extend our reach.

Our success in Fife is for a number of reasons, we have had very successful partnerships and outreach hubs, welcoming organisations that are willing to work with VoiceAbility to benefit their clients. Fife has areas that rank high on the deprivation scale, which, we have identified and work within to enable us to reach people in these areas that could perhaps not have had access to our service.

Our partnership started early days with Auchmuty Learning Centre in Glenrothes, who were keen to spread the word with all their Welfare Rights team across Fife. Café Connect, Leven and Quit Your Way, are all run by Fife Council and as a result their welfare officers often drop in and meet our advocate supporting clients in the local community. This has resulted in a positive upshift in referrals from the welfare officers.

Cowdenbeath Job centre is one of our newly founded hubs, which is proving to be very fruitful.

Restoration Fife, Buckhaven, we attend their welfare weeks. BRAG Enterprises signpost clients that require support for benefit applications. The success of the partnerships and outreach hubs would not have happened had we not had the time and resources required to build these relationships. With 236 professional referrals making up more than 50% of all referrals from fife (406) it speaks to the success of our networking, partnerships, and outreach hubs success.

Fife Council	168
Café Connect	8
Brag Enterprises	13
JCP Cowdenbeath	7
Glenrothes community hub	12
Gilven foodbank	3
HSCP	12
NHS Fife	5
Social security Scotland referrals	8

In Glasgow the themes are very similar to what we see in Fife. We have created close working relationships with partners such as the Big Disability Group, Scottish Refugee Council and have established hubs in areas like Dennistoun Library, Job Centre Plus City Centre and integrated ourselves within the local foodbanks. We have seen great success with all of the partnerships, and even received requests to have multiple days at centres due to the demand for our work. In addition, we have continued to see great success in our targeted approach to working within areas that we have identified using the SIMD map and will continue to do this throughout Scotland.

In Aberdeenshire and in the City we have been working closely with many organisation such as Alzheimer's Scotland, Penumbra, Shirley's Space, Aberdeen Foyer, Fraserburgh Men's Shed, Age Scotland, Help for Heroes, SeaFit, Skills Development Scotland, Four Pillars, Advocacy North East, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, Dyce Library, Social Security Scotland, Ellon Foodbank, various Aberdeen Hospitals, HouseAbility and local Job Centres. Many of these connections are still in their infancy and we have already seen 10 referrals from the above agencies.

As new Advocates join the business, our aim will be to continue down the route of networking to help build the caseloads. This has definitely worked in our favour.

## **8.2 Gaps in Service Provision**

With such a growth in our case numbers we have noticed our advocates have less available time in some areas to complete their networking efforts. We have a number of advocates joining in the coming months, where we hope to reverse this.

## **8.3 Continuous Improvement**

Our SQA advocacy qualification is in the early development stages, We have completed Unit 1 which focuses on An Introduction to Independent Advocacy. There are 2 mandatory units and a specialism to be written, each with sub-topics. They are -

- Unit 2 - The Role of an Independent Advocate
- Unit 3 - Safeguarding
- Unit 4 - Benefits Advocacy (Social Security Scotland)

We are looking at ways to increase our referrals to Child Disability Payment. A member of staff has been in contacted with one of the Advanced Paediatric Nurse Practitioners to raise awareness about the service we provide. Supporting people to apply for Social Security benefits with a particular focus on Children's Disability Payment. This information was well received and circulated with ten other colleagues within the Community Child Health Team, including the Community Paediatricians, which includes staff based at both the Queen Margaret Hospital in Dunfermline and the Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy. We have been invited to provide an overview to the team. We have offered to carry this out before or after clinics to allow as many staff as possible to attend. We have expressed that this invite can be extended to other colleagues within child health, including staff based in the Children's ward and Neonatal unit at The Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy.

## **8.4 Feedback from Focus Groups**

In the previous quarter we held our second collective advocacy group meeting and have now collated the results of this.

The aim of the session was to learn people's experiences and understanding of independent advocacy and Social Security Scotland benefits. Each participant received a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent Form prior to the collective advocacy session and asked to sign to confirm their agreed participation. Participants also completed a quantitative paper questionnaire during the session. Five out of the six participants completed this questionnaire. One participant was unable to attend a group setting and provided their comments in writing. This document can be found in Appendix D.

Please see the full attached report for the full findings of our collective advocacy group.

## 9. Social Value

### 9.1 Evidence of Community Benefits

DFN Project SEARCH is a one-year transition to work programme for young adults with a learning disability or autism spectrum conditions, or both. We attended the City Chambers in Glasgow for this event that was attended by over 50 young people to inspire them to take on advocacy as a potential career path.

Ardrossan Academy have provided dates to deliver our school placement (Introduction to Advocacy). The first one will commence 25<sup>th</sup> September (1 full week). They were keen for VoiceAbility to support with further sessions during November/December for one day a week. These sessions are for those pupils who are due to leave in December, supporting with extra developmental skills set.

They also invited VoiceAbility to a Careers Fair (3<sup>rd</sup> October).

Queen Margaret have emailed hoping we could help them in two different ways. They have an SLC department who would love our input and they are very flexible in regards for this delivery. They are hoping we may be able to support pupils in mainstream. They have a work placement week beginning 9<sup>th</sup> October for those pupils who may struggle to access this and our input may be more valuable to them. We are awaiting final confirmation of dates.

Social Enterprise Academy, are keen to explore further opportunities to deliver our Introduction to Advocacy as part of our School Placements.

We have set up two event bright sessions to promote the self-advocacy tool kit, this will be for clients and stakeholders. Our Volunteers will be supporting these sessions.

VoiceAbility have been working on establishing apprenticeships within Scotland and are working closely with Borders College to create a bespoke advocacy apprenticeship course. We are also developing an apprenticeship in management for our team leaders, in addition to this we are also discussing potential apprenticeships in Marketing, Finance and Learning & Development with the same provider.

We have contacted Further Education Colleges and Universities in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow and Stirling as our initial pilot areas for working placements. An invite to attend a meeting early September via TEAMS will be sent within an email to discuss what we are able to offer. We are looking for these to be in place later this year, early next.

## 10. Promotion, Groupwork & Involvement

We added a new 'In Scotland' page to our About us section, which allows us to share our services, stories and policy work in one location. We also link to advocacy providers across Scotland via the SIAA, to support people to find the right service for them. There is also an option to subscribe to our new Scotland-focused email newsletter.

We are now using the Google ad grant for non-profits to run PPC adverts for benefits advocacy across Scotland.



Sleeping Giant Media is continuing to support us with promotional work across the web.

A full detailed report on this can be found attached to these documents named:  
Scotland digital and content work in Q1

## 11. Safeguarding & Governance

This quarter we have identified and raised seven safeguarding concerns. We can confirm that each of these have been closed due to local authority advising they have taken the case on.