Brothers of Charity
NATIONAL ADVOCACY DAY
23rd October 2003

National Advocacy Day is the first in what organisers hope will be an annual celebration of the rights of people with disabilities to advocate for themselves. Advocacy is the process through which people are given a voice. They are given the tools and knowledge to enable them to express their views themselves or with the help of an Advocate. The Brothers of Charity Services recognise the rights of the individual, and support the system of Advocacy through their Service User Councils.

To raise awareness October 23rd 2003 was chosen to celebrate Advocacy. The Brothers of Charity Services hope that this date will become a national annual event with the wider Intellectual Disability Community and the State joining in as full participants.

A programme of events was organised in each of our six regions. Events such as seminars on Advocacy organised and presented by Self Advocates, launch of Information Packs on Advocacy, Open Days where members of the public could walk into a service and talk to Self Advocates, Poster Sessions and the Launch of the National Service User Conference were just some of the events developed to celebrate Advocacy within the Brothers of Charity Services.

A successful day was enjoyed by all participants.

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DEVELOPMENTS IN SOCIAL HOUSING IN THE BROTH-

The National Secretariat coordinated a workshop held in the Clarinbridge Court Hotel on Thursday 30th October to address the developments in social housing within our services. We were delighted to have such an experienced and knowledgeable range of speakers such as Chris White, Irish Council for Social Housing, Sean Gallagher, Limerick County Council, Bro. Alfred Hassett, Brothers of Charity Services, UK and Padraic Kenna, Author and lecturer in NUIG.

The workshop broke into three working groups to consider the following:

1. Personal Outcomes and the Choices surrounding where one lives and with whom one lives.
2. Whether Social Housing provision in the Brothers of Charity Services would improve if the Housing Associations were to amalgamate and form one National Housing Association.
3. What National Guidelines should be in place for Housing Associations associated with our services e.g. compliance with company law, tendering, design purchasing etc.
Developments in Social Housing cont…

Debate developed and time ran out and we were unable to present each of the Working Groups recommendations to the Workshop at the end of the day. All the ideas and suggestions will be collated and put into report format for presentation to the National Directorate.

The National Secretariat would like to thank the speakers, facilitators and those involved in organising the day, for their help in making the day the success it was.
The report of the joint working group on the role of the RNHM has concluded and the report is now available on the HSEA website (www.hsea.ie).

The report makes a number of recommendations in relation to the following:

1. The provision of additional Clinical Nurse Manager 1 posts within the intellectual disability service.
2. The introduction of Clinical Nurse Specialists posts within the service.
3. The development of respite services.
4. The appointment of a Community RNHM on a needs basis.
5. Proposals for the development of Advanced Nurse Practitioner posts.
6. Recommendations concerning entry qualifications and reporting relationships within the service.

The issue of the pay relationship between the RNHM and Social Care Professionals was the subject of a conciliation conference under the auspices of the Labour Relations Commission (LRC). The outcome of the conciliation talks resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding which acknowledges that the appropriate mechanism to explore the full pay position of the RNHM grade vis a vis other social Care Professionals should be part of any future benchmarking process.
In 2002 the Brothers of Charity Services in Waterford launched the Homeshare Scheme. This new service is co-ordinated and operated by the Social Work Department at Lisduggan Lodge and is funded by the South Eastern Health Board.

Homeshare is an innovative family based respite scheme for children in the Waterford Community Care catchment area. Homeshare links children with an intellectual disability with families and individuals who provide them with short breaks. Individuals who provide Homeshare are known as host carers or host families.

Homeshare aims to give children with an intellectual disability a chance to have fun, meet new people, try out new activities and gain independence while staying with their host carers. Host carers spend time involving the children in everyday activities in their own home. At the same time, the child’s own family get a break.

Prior to its launch, its development was publicised through interviews with the local media, newspapers and radio, shop receipt advertisements, and flyers. Since it’s launch in 2002, the Brothers of Charity Services have recruited, assessed and trained a small number of host carers who are now offering short breaks (typically weekends) to children. The recruitment of additional host carers is ongoing in order to expand the current pool of host carers/families. The feedback so far from host carers, children and the child’s family is hugely positive. People have recognised the valuable support that is on offer from family based services.

Anyone over the age of eighteen may apply to be a host carer. Formal qualifications or experience in intellectual disability are not essential, however, you do need energy, commitment and a desire to offer support to a child with intellectual disability in your own home. A preparation training programme, which takes place over a period of four weeks, is provided once the application and assessment process is complete. An allowance is paid to host carers who participate in Homeshare.

Prior to a child linking with a host carer, the needs of the child and his/her family are established. This involves the sharing of relevant information about the child, informal introductions and arranging initial visits. Support is provided by a social worker throughout a family’s participation in Homeshare.

In the Waterford based services, we look forward to the future of Homeshare with enthusiasm and hope that by individuals giving a little time to children with intellectual disability, they will make a BIG difference to everyone involved.

Anyone who is interested in participating in finding out more about the scheme is invited to contact the Homeshare Coordinator, at the Brothers of Charity Services, Child and Family Centre, Lisduggan Lodge, Waterford. Telephone: 051 378831.

Other Regions which have formal Homesharing Services are:
Galway, Roscommon, Limerick,