

Regular readers of *Advocacy Alive* will already know a little about our exciting project: *Advocacy Aware*. You will be interested to know that the project was officially launched in January at the Barcelo Hotel in Buxton.

Leader of the County Council, Mr Robin Baldry opened proceedings for PADA and we are grateful to him for his encouraging and wise words.



Here he is seen at the launch with Howard Matthew who is one of two PADA coordinators for Older People's advocacy. Howard is leading for PADA on the *Advocacy Aware* Project.

Amongst other things Councillor Baldry said, "I think we in this country ought to show our appreciation of the thousands of Volunteers who give their time and efforts week by week." Here at PADA we echo that. Thank you to our growing band!

### [View from Nancy](#)

Look, I'm going to be honest. I really didn't think I'd come away from this event feeling quite so impressed and upbeat, but that's undoubtedly down to my own air-headedness and the fact that I haven't been involved with the *Advocacy Aware* project from the beginning. It was great to hear the supportive message delivered by Robin Baldry from Derbyshire County Council in opening the meeting, and interesting that Derbyshire Links will be keeping a close eye on the progress of *Advocacy Aware*.

The highlight for me, though, was talking to the workers from the residential homes who have really embraced the principles of the project and advocacy generally. It's pretty brave, if you think about it. They have

so much to contend with already with ever-increasing rules and regs and sometimes very poorly residents, and yet they still are happy to open themselves up to further scrutiny.

The most powerful statement of the meeting was delivered by Russ Baker, a volunteer advocate who has been very instrumental in developing the project, when he said that "the over-riding culture for any home should be that it is just that - the home of the people living there and not an occupation for those working there."

You could just tell that the people there really believed in this as the cornerstone to their practice. With this in mind there was a really interesting discussion around how to record that. What makes a Home a home? It's going to be an interesting one but one that PADA, as ever, will work through thoroughly and thoughtfully. I'm really looking forward to being part of Advocacy Aware and would urge others to join us.



**Nancy Fox**



**[View from the Hawthorns.](#)**

The staff and residents of The Hawthorns are delighted to be a part of the pilot project Advocacy Aware. Living in residential care can be a daunting prospect especially if you realise that your ability to maintain control over your life is deteriorating. People tend to want to make

choices and decisions for you, hopefully to enhance your life, but sometimes, in doing so, they forget to ask you what you would like. Advocacy Aware is one way to address this. The Hawthorns has been allocated a dedicated advocate who will visit residents on a regular basis to get to know them and find out what are the things that would improve the quality of their lives. The more obvious role of the advocate, helping people to have a voice at a time of crisis or difficulty, is turned on its head in this instance. I see The Hawthorns advocate as someone who will be pro-active in raising and addressing issues that affect the residents who live there. Rather than becoming involved only when there is a matter to be addressed, by getting to know the residents in their everyday setting the advocate will be able to pick up through ordinary conversation the little things that will make a big difference and bring them to the attention of the care staff and management. People who live in care homes often feel they need to be grateful for the care and attention they get from a dedicated but very busy group of staff and only raise 'big' issues, but we know there are lots of little things that could be better for some people and this pilot project is one way of trying to find out what those things are and enabling people to regain control over certain parts of their life. I see this as an exciting prospect to raise the profile of people who find it necessary to live in residential care; to help them regain self-esteem and self-confidence when they have had to acknowledge they can no longer take full responsibility for themselves. I see this as an additional route to providing people with the dignity and respect that is rightfully theirs by recognising that although they live in a communal setting it is also their home and they should be given every opportunity to live their lives in the way they choose.



**Elaine Holder Major Home Manager - The Hawthorns**