

Civil Rights First

2019/20

Legal Rights Charity

Accountability

Outcomes

Equalities

Resources

Rights

Respect

Fairness

Choice

Transparency

Challenge

Control

Resolution

Information

Autonomy

Solutions

Annual Report

Scottish Charity No: SC048403. Company Limited by Guarantee: SC594829

Registered with the Financial Conduct Authority: 801521

We aim to promote social justice with delivery to everyone in society, through a valued, tailored advice and effective advocacy service.

Civil Rights First provides **FREE** advice and advocacy to all citizens, on a range of areas including money advice. We have provided this service since our launch in May 2018. In 2020 our vision is on growing our charity further. We are currently delivering our much-needed service remotely during the pandemic.

Providing **Advocacy/Advice/Representation** on the following:

Effective Advocacy

Money Advice/Housing Issues

Mortgage and tenancy repossession

Consumer Rights

Self-Directed Support

Legal Advice Civil

Information on legal rights, human rights and equalities legislation. Authorised Lay Representation

How we assist.

CRF provides advice and information on legal rights.

We undertake casework on your behalf to support resolution of more complex issues.

In some instances, we provide Authorised Lay Representation representing you at Court or Tribunal,

We refer individual cases if beyond our scope.

CONTACT: 07703 410 584. info@civilrightsfirst.co.uk

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Founder Report

This is our first Civil Rights First Annual Report for the Financial Year ending 31st March 2020, this year has presented many new challenges for all third sector organisations, including those well established. CRF is still in its infancy and only scarping the surface of what is possible with such a diverse and unprecedented service delivery. The current Covid-19 pandemic results in our service being needed more so than ever, we provide our **FREE** service to everyone, hence our much-needed support from statutory agencies, grant funders and donations which are all greatly appreciated. Holistic is one of our core organisational values and strengths, we are both person centred, and solutions based in our approach to every case we undertake. Evaluation and monitoring are key to our service delivery with gold standard advice and representation our priority, this results in all enquiries receiving a high standard of help and or sign posting to other relevant organisations.

My own background is diverse in experience both professionally and personally, as an accomplished senior professional with over thirty-year's experience in both the Third Sector together with an extensive senior business management experience my passion for making a difference is deep rooted. Utilising all capabilities within senior management Civil Rights First Charitable Organisation was founded, our aim is supporting people in Scotland with advice on their rights and Access to Justice, it is our core vision that **FREE** access to advice and representation should be available for everyone. There are thousands of citizens year on year requiring advice on their legal rights under human rights and equalities legislation. Collaboratively CRF is delivering and creating visions and values to develop strategic plans with our dedicated board of Trustees, which is implemented with values-based leadership both internally and externally. Maximising all our skills and experience to engage with major stakeholders and successfully secure budgets for future service delivery. Together our professional skills are delivered in a directive manner with a strong commitment to public service and making a real difference for everyone accessing our service.

Additionally, prior to CRF I was instrumental in the design and delivery of a Scottish Legal Aid Board Project, Making Advice Work, delivering this progressive project over a five-year period provided a strong professional foundation within the Third Sector at senior level. Assisting and supporting vulnerable people to realise positive outcomes is our priority at CRF. Consistently aligning my professional and personal values to inspire, empower and work collaboratively with others at all levels. It's fair to say my passion rests in making a real difference using all my skills and abilities.

Civil Rights First is a holistic and innovative charity making a real difference in social justice at present. We provide **FREE** effective advice and advocacy to all citizens, where access to justice and money advice is paramount. We have provided this service since our launch in May 2018. In 2020 our vision was to grow our charity further with robust sustainability. However, this has proved challenging in the current climate. Notwithstanding we are focussed on greater scope of consultation with virtual meetings across an even greater geographical area, with no travel costs, we have

reduced miles while offering person centred advice and advocacy to a wider audience, benefiting both the clients and the charity as a whole. This new innovative method of service delivery ensures we reach all our clients in a timely manner, this new service delivery offers choice and accessibility to everyone, including isolated clients who would otherwise be struggling to access advice services.

CRF is both robust and sustainable, connecting digitally has demonstrated positive outcomes. However, it is noted barriers still exist with exclusions and inequality for those who do not have access digitally. Therefore, partnership working is crucial, organisations working with vulnerable groups can enable further accessibility for vital advice services. Recognising many of the benefits with digital visions, the main focus is working with all agencies and partnership's across communities, money advice and social care services, this is central to our continued success.

Civil Rights First is a new and innovative charity with excellent strategic planning, the demands are extensive and considerable, market research has evidenced this widely. We have sustainability strategies; nevertheless, it is necessary to grow in fluidity within the present changing landscapes. CRF has a robust sustainability policy; CRF Policy Statement is follows: As a result of ongoing public sector austerity, there has been a major shift in business models. Public trust is Civil Rights First's most valuable asset, it is vital to protect it together with the fundamental aims and objectives from dilution or deflection. For continuity Civil Rights First must constantly review its funding strategies for a diverse means of income generation to mitigate reliance upon grant funding sources. Although sustainability poses challenges to both finance and reputation, Civil Rights First will always consider ALL sources of funding, including grants, donations, fundraising events and within our five-year strategic planning with the future for long term sustainability of the charity.

The delivery of our specialist advice service is presently delivered on a voluntary basis, dedication to helping others is key to our values-based approach. In 2021 we would like to expand our service and recruit more specialist advisers and part-time administrative staff; this is dependent on securing much needed funding. A considerable amount of management time is spent on funding applications and securing necessary core funds to maintain our gold standard service. There is increasing demand for our advice services, please see our case studies and client financial gain. Moreover, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our board who play a vital role in the governance and visions for CRF. Providing due diligence with governance guaranteeing compliance with policy and procedure with recommended guidance under the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Thank you all for your dedication and hard work during these uncertain and difficult times. Keep well and stay safe.

[Dionne McCabe](#)

CIVIL RIGHTS FIRST (CRF)

Chairman's Report for year 2020

CRF has survived a challenging year successfully in that the core aims of the charity are being met and it is still active.

COVID-19 has obviously not helped in one way curtailing our ability to meet and discuss issues, but in another way, it has opened up a raft of potential clients to serve...and so it has been something of a two-edged sword for CRF.

The majority of the work volume – dealing with individual cases and pursuing Grant applications has been addressed and sustained by Dionne McCabe. This is the foundation of the charity's success and the benchmark for continued progress. Dionne and the Board fully appreciate the workload, and, from the Board's perspective it is an ongoing concern.

It is not a position easily absorbed as a continuing means of managing CRF; as finding a suitable or feasible balance between distributing the case load and sustaining funding applications, must be addressed.

Employment of additional staff to alleviate case work, either on a voluntary or part time basis, is the short-term solution. Applying a cap to the level of case work while practical, does not meet with the ethos of CRF. These are, nevertheless, matters for Board consultation and consideration.

In any event, CRF needs increased and sustained funding on an exponential base to make serious progress in 2021. Grants and the Advocacy Fund income is a useful lining, but a structured programme is highly recommended.

The year ahead will not be any easier than the past 12 months but collaboration as a Board with a workable strategy will give much to be optimistic about.

Hamish Alldridge

Chairman

23/09/2020

Advocacy Plus Project

Civil Rights First is breaking new ground with our advice service and delivery approach to Scotland's most vulnerable members of society. We are making a real difference with our SDS Advocacy project providing a wide range of support services to informal carers and those in receipt of social care at all levels. We work primarily with communities who experience marginalisation due to ethnicity, age and other protected characteristics. This rights-based project supports social care needs to realise new rights and entitlements conferred by the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. It is aimed at individuals entitled to SDS, empowering them to live their best lives. We provide advice and information on legal rights under self-directed support with more complex case work being undertaken with advocacy. Individuals having difficulty with reviews or complaints process are assisted. Information is provided on a case by case process through the assessment and planning process, including informed choice on options available under the current legislation. Should a review have resulted in a reduction to budget we provide advocacy to reach a positive outcome for each case. The project accepts referrals from both individuals requiring support and Third Sector organisations helping individuals with SDS. We work in partnership with In Control Scotland, Radical Visions and Housing Options Scotland. In addition, CRF will provide an online advice and information service to Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) for member organisations across Scotland. At present 6 online sessions have been agreed each month beginning 18th November 2020.

Specific: Delivery of advice and effective advocacy for vulnerable people on Self-Directed Support. Financial Capability is delivered to vulnerable individuals giving people the power to make the most of their budgets and improve their lives. This is achieved by addressing all factors, increasing knowledge and self-determination.

Measurable: Civil Rights First delivery of this Advice project for 30 clients over a 12 month funding period. It is noted 60 individuals have benefited and supported with client financial gain of over 250,000.00 in 2020. Evaluating this service fully, the inclusion of other family members who benefit from our service equates to over 180 people per annum. (Based on a two-three person household)

Impact:

Partnership working with other agencies and organisations to reach a much wider number of people with shared learning outcomes to strengthen future delivery of this service. CRF is a member of Self Direct Support Scotland.

Achievable: Targets are estimated on the present project. Project is delivered by one volunteer specialist adviser.

Relevant : Geographic limitations: other agencies are often restricted, for instance Citizens Advice Bureaux by local authority boundaries. Civil Rights First operates without restriction. Specialist Roles: Agencies generally employ a number of staff for different roles. Civil Rights First advisers have a vast array of knowledge and skills combined with a wealth of experience to fulfil a number of roles including Authorised Lay Representation.

Time Bound : Funding for this project enables Civil Rights First to evidence a positive impact within the targets stated. All clients have multiple positive outcomes unless they withdraw; this will be either with direct assistance from the CRF project or with signposting to appropriate organisations to enable a positive long-term outcome. All data is recorded in line with GDPR, enabling future policy development.

CASE STUDY Client A: a young person with Cerebral Palsy transitioning from school was prevented from attending college after transition from Secondary School with no budget to support. CRF provided advice and advocacy to the family and negotiated with the Local Authority to secure a budget for a three-day placement at college with one to one support. CRF provided further representation in negotiations with LA to secure funding with an initial SDS budget totalling £68,000.00 per annum. This enabled the vulnerable young person to attend college with a client Financial Gain 68,000.00 to live a full and supported life within the local community.

Money Advice

We provide Money Advice with delivery of our money advice service offering transformation and accessibility with digital access and income maximisation, monitoring and evaluation with Money Advice Scotland and Financial Conduct Authority regulations and Money Advice Trust. CRF delivers under:

Specific: Delivery of money advice and effective advocacy for vulnerable people. Financial Capability is delivered to vulnerable individuals giving people the power improves their lives.

Measurable: Civil Rights First delivery of this **Advice** for clients. Individuals are supported with client financial gain.

Impact: Partnership working with other agencies to reach a much wider number of people with shared learning outcomes to strengthen future delivery of this service.

Achievable: Targets are estimated on the present money advice. Project will be delivered by one specialist adviser.

Relevant: Geographic limitations: other agencies are often restricted, for instance Citizens Advice Bureaux by local authority boundaries. Civil Rights First will operate without restriction. Specialist Roles: Agencies generally employ a number of staff for different roles. Civil Rights First advisors have a vast array of knowledge and skills combined with a wealth of experience to fulfil a number of roles including Authorised Lay Representation.

Time Bound: Funding for a 12 month forecast will enable Civil Rights First to evidence a positive impact within the targets state. All clients will have a positive outcome unless they withdraw; this will be either with direct assistance from the CRF project or with signposting to appropriate organisations to enable a positive long-term outcome. All data will be recorded in line with GDPR, enabling future policy development with the Advice Pro Case Management System.

Civil Rights First provides **FREE** effective advice and advocacy to all citizens with no geographical restrictions, where access to justice and money advice is paramount. We have provided this service since our launch in May 2018. Information, advice and representation is provided to everyone in relation to civil matters. Based on the broad knowledge, skills and our services are delivered under the broad categories of advice, negotiation, representation and policy development as follows: Advice: specialist advisers provide a gold standard of service. Negotiation: resolving matters amicably we communicate effectively with other agencies and parties: Our core value is to negotiate with parties using the principles of Best Alternative to Negotiate Agreement (BATNA), advising on preferred outcomes for our clients and converting to practical solutions. Representation: we provide a unique service to everyone

within Scotland, making services more accessible to all citizens, including the most vulnerable. We provide free specialist Authorised Lay Representation where our unique service fulfils an unmet need in dedicated legal services giving practical effect to the legal process, enabling everyone to participate and take part in the decision-making process within an inclusive society. Policy Development: contributes to the development of Scotland's legislative framework in line with evidenced case work and continuous improvement. The charity aims work with a project monitoring group to steer the money advice project with direction in best practice. The group will develop and inform those agencies who campaign for fairer rights and a more just decision-making process.

Moreover, CRF advises and supports families in our Advocacy Plus Project advocating for vulnerable individuals and their families who experience marginalisation due to disability, age or other protected characteristics with Self Directed Support, their rights under human rights and equality legislation. Identifying those hard to reach and those who would otherwise not have accessed debt advice.

CRF is utilising innovation with greater consultation volume, building on mobilisation plans to ensure service delivery and transformation offering choice and accessibility reducing miles and offering person centred care in a new innovative manner in money advice delivery in Scotland. It is recognised there are both benefits and barriers to digital connectiveness. Notwithstanding it will broaden access for vulnerable groups with disabilities identified. Recognising many benefits with the overarching digital vision working with all agencies and partnerships across communities and social care services where sharing and learning are at the fore.

Civil Rights First delivers money advice tailored to individual needs, increasing financial resilience where possible and maximizing income. CRF advocates and protects everyone's rights through values of equality and diversity. We are a unique charitable service with advisers fully equipped proven in legal and money advice. Our service is bespoke, case work from initial contact to resolution alleviates stress for the client and provides a professional service with positive resolution and outcomes for all. Moreover, our prevention, intervention and support approach aim to:

- Identify and target priority groups within the over-indebted population.
- Prevent problems before they reach crisis point.
- Intervene when people are unable to resolve problems themselves.
- Support vulnerable people to resolve their problems through case work, services and representation.
- Increase the financial gains secured for clients.
- Provide a remedy and solutions-based approach to all case work.

FUNDRAISING



Swimmers brave the Boxing Day chill to back charity with dip in Loch Lomond

A small but enthusiastic band of 'dippers' took the plunge at Luss on Boxing Day in aid of the Civil Rights First charity



HOWEVER, you chose to spend your Boxing Day this year, we bet it wasn't quite as adventurous - or as chilly - as this plucky bunch's plans.

Several brave swimmers took a dip in the waters of Loch Lomond last Thursday to help raise funds and awareness of new charity Civil Rights First (CRF).

The organisation, launched in 2018, helps vulnerable people access justice through an advice and advocacy service.

Following the event at Luss beach, CRF director Dionne McCabe said: "For our first ever event it was a success. We are hoping to run it every year and grow it from there, hopefully it will keep getting bigger and better.

"We did have some hardy souls but it was a bit of a freezing day. They had great fun and were all rewarded with hot tea and coffee afterwards.

“We held a race night back in October which raised over £2,000, but the Boxing Day dip wasn’t so much about the money, it was just

to raise awareness of the charity. “Those who took part said it was

invigorating and for a good cause, rather than sitting on the couch all day they felt like they had done something amazing.

“I was planning to take part but someone had to take the photographs.

“Thanks to everyone who took part for their support.”

Visit the Civil Rights First Facebook page for more information about the charity’s

Thank you for all your kind and generous donations, with continued support from our main funders and memberships organisations. Thank you for believing in us.

