About the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) is a membership organisation which promotes, supports and defends Independent Advocacy in Scotland. It aims to ensure that Independent Advocacy is available to any vulnerable person in Scotland.

The right to Independent Advocacy for those with mental disorders or who are potentially at risk is enshrined in Scottish legislation. However, Independent Advocacy can also have a key part to play in supporting other vulnerable groups such as black and minority ethnic groups and people with problem drug and/or alcohol use, amongst others.

Independent Advocacy helps people by enabling them to express their own needs and to make their own informed decisions. Independent Advocates support people to gain access to information and explore their options. They speak up on behalf of those who are unable to speak for themselves or choose not to. Independent Advocacy is not about making decisions for someone, counselling or providing advice, it is about tackling injustice by enabling a person to have control over their life and to make their views heard.

Independent Advocacy organisations do not provide any services other than advocacy. They are separate organisations in their own right, are financially independent, and all those employed in an Independent Advocacy organisation know that they are only limited in what they do by the principles of advocacy, resources and the law. This ensures they are able to assist vulnerable individuals whilst being as free as possible from any conflicts of interest.

Question 1: Do you agree that legislation should be changed so that civil partnerships could be registered through religious ceremonies?

Yes.

Independent advocacy is based on the principles of equality, choice and freedom of expression. Couples who wish to have a religious ceremony to register their civil partnership and to acknowledge their faith should be allowed the choice to do so.
Questions 5 & 11: Do you agree that religious bodies should not be required to conduct same-sex marriages or civil partnerships if it against their wishes?

Yes.

The SIAA believes that the principle of freedom of choice applies equally to those conducting a marriage, civil partnership or civil ceremony, as well as to the couples themselves.

Question 10: Do you agree that the law in Scotland should be changed to allow same-sex marriage?

Yes.

We believe that should a same-sex couple wish to marry they should have the same opportunity as any other couple to do so.

Question 13: Do you agree that same-sex couple should be able to get married through both civil ceremonies (conducted by a registrar) and religious ceremonies (conducted by those religious groups that want to)?

Yes.

Please see our reasons set out in response to question 10.

Question 19: If Scotland should introduce same-sex marriage, do you consider that civil partnerships should remain available?

Yes.

The SIAA believes that retaining civil partnerships will offer more choice to same-sex couples, for example, those couples who wish to formalise their relationship but not to marry. In addition, we believe that civil partnerships should be made available to mixed-sex couples to ensure equality between all couples regardless of their sexual orientation.