



NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE



**NYAS Nottingham
Themes and Issues Report for
Nottingham City Council
Corporate Parenting Board**

April - September 2009

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INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared at the request of Nottingham City Corporate Parenting Board. It is a response to the request that NYAS continue to assist the group in identifying any themes or issues that are prevalent for Nottingham City young people in Social Care. This account is based on reports from NYAS Residential Visiting Advocates and Issue Based Advocates for the last six months, April 2009 – September 2009.

NYAS represents young people through Issue Based Advocacy, as well as carrying out residential visits to City children's homes on a regular monthly basis. The aim of the Residential Visiting Service is to provide a regular visitor to the young people in residential homes who are independent of the children's home staff.

Once we have received a referral for Issue Based Advocacy (IBA), we aim to make contact with a young person within 24 hours in order to start helping them deal with the issues they have raised. The concerns reported in the initial referrals are from the viewpoint of the young person; they are their perceived beliefs about their own situation. On closer inspection an advocate may find that the young person has not got the "whole" picture, and with some communication between parties, a matter may be resolved relatively easily and quickly. Therefore, this report will contain instances of some young people's anxieties which will have now been dealt with: they are used as examples of the variety of concerns that young people have raised.

Residential Visitors do not provide 1:1 support to young people. If a young person asks the visiting advocate for individual support, the visiting advocates will either signpost the young person to the most appropriate service or discuss with the young person the option of having an issue based advocate.

The children's homes visited are:

- § Beckhampton Road
- § Crocus Fields x 2 (Older and Younger unit)
- § Ranskill Gardens
- § Vivian Avenue

ISSUE BASED ADVOCACY CASES AND HIGHLIGHTS

A breakdown of referrals shows that the gender mix is fairly equal between male and female, with 22 Male and 24 Female for this reporting period.

As can be seen from the chart below the main issues for which we have accepted referrals are Children's Rights followed by Support at Reviews and meetings.

Most referrals have come for seventeen year olds followed by fifteen year olds. There is not however one predominant issue in any age range. This is a change from our last report as then issues of placement and leaving care were predominant for the older age ranges.

Issues for Young people											Total
Ages	7	10	11	13	14	15	16	17	18	20	
Homeless						1		1	2		4
Rights			1	1	3	4	1	2			12
Education Funding								1			1
Support General							1				1
Support at Reviews/ Meetings		1	2	3		2	2		1		11
Proposed Change of Placement				1	1	1	1	2			6
Quality of Accommodation							1				1
Care Planning	1							1	1		3
Accommodation funding								2			2
Access to information								1			1
Education issue				1		1					2
Contact issue									1	1	2
Total	1	1	3	6	4	9	6	10	5	1	46

The cases for which we have received referrals for Issue Based Advocacy are wide and varied. Each case in its own right raises concerns when it comes to the Rights of the Child. Below are highlighted three cases to give an idea of the some of the reasons young people are requesting an advocate.

Case Study 1

The manager of the young person's residential home phoned in a request for an advocate on his behalf. 'J' required an advocate to promote his wishes and feelings at a review meeting. The young person wanted to move back to Nottingham to be near his family and friends. He is refusing to engage with professionals.

The advocate met 'J' at the residential home. 'J' was very distressed due to an earlier incident and the police were present at the house. Initially reluctant to engage 'J' decided to speak to the advocate once he learnt that they were there to listen to him and his wishes and feelings. He told the advocate of his wish to move back to Nottingham. He requested that the advocate speak for him at forthcoming meetings. They agreed that the advocate would write a report with 'J' prior to the meeting to help in the meeting.

'J' seemed relieved that he would have someone to help him with his situation; however the advocate received a phone call to say that the young person had now been moved out of area. The advocate wrote to 'J' confirming that he is entitled to an advocate despite the move and offering further services should he wish. 'J' was happier in his new placement and did not feel the need for the help of the advocate at this time. (Ref NYR 42586)

Case Study 2

The advocate was requested to ascertain 'L's wishes and feelings and represent him at his forthcoming review.

The advocate visited 'L' in his home and spent some time talking through the issues.

The advocate had conversations with the social worker and made home visits to 'L'. There appeared to be some uncertainty in the minds of the social worker and foster carers as to the reasons behind 'L' being moved class at school with little or no consultation or social worker or carer around at the time. The review was postponed at short notice by the social worker which afforded the advocate the opportunity to visit the young person again. This allowed the young person to not only refresh his wishes and feelings but also widened the focus of subject matter which had previously been focused on the school issues. This visit allowed more time to consider with the young person, his placement and communicate in a manner suited to his autistic disability.

Attempts to establish meaningful communication in assisting 'L' to identify and portray his wishes and feelings appeared successful. Both the areas of home and school were addressed. The review concluded that 'L' was well placed at present and the rationale for his change of class at school appeared well founded. 'L's wishes and feelings were successfully conveyed at the review.

(Ref NYR 40259)

Case Study 3

This young person wanted representation with regard to maintaining contact with his younger brother who is adopted and also to forward his wishes to remain in his current foster placement where he feels settled in the local school and area.

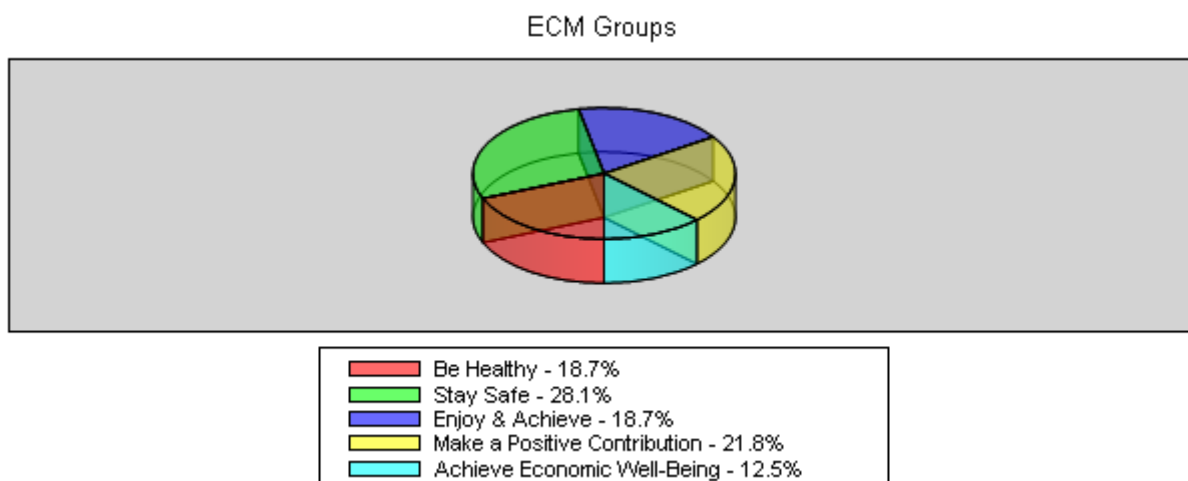
The advocate established the young person's wishes and feeling. They then represented these at review and liaised with the social worker and guardian. Reassurances were given to the young person that his social worker and guardian will look at his best interests when making decisions. This was a complex case with many factors to take into consideration whilst maintaining the focus of the wishes and feelings of the young person.

The young person was happy that his wishes and feelings had been listened to and his request for contact was being discussed openly with him.

(Ref NYR 39882)

IBA. ECM OUTCOMES FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD

These are outcomes following on from the interventions from advocates on the issues presented by young people.



THEMES AND ISSUES FROM RESIDENTIAL VISITING ADVOCATES

1. New staff moved from Radford Bridge Road having an unsettling effect on the house as reported by three young people (BH 31/05).
2. Young people expected home but do not turn up in time for advocates visit. (BH.31/07 & 17/08).
3. Young people being taken on visits or trips when the advocate has pre planned the visit and no notification is given that the young people will not be there.
(CF 6/04 & 20/4 & 21/05)
4. Cannabis use by young person whilst in the home reported and dealt with by staff (VA 24/06)
5. Concerning issue of young person replaying cctv footage with two members of staff watching and laughing. The staff explained that the young person had played a joke on another member of staff by bringing a dog in and hiding it in a room to jump out at him later. Apparently the worker in question has not been back to work since the incident. Staff watching laughed whilst it was replayed and then shown to another young person. The advocate raised her concern with this apparent condoning of bullying behaviour and support of the young persons unacceptable actions. The member of staff who the advocate spoke to said she would be raising it with the manager as the member of staff in question had been quite traumatised. (VA 23/09)

OTHER AREAS OF POSSIBLE CONCERN

As the local authority move towards a model of small group homes and independent residential placements for the care of looked after young people the issue of no independent scrutiny of these homes is being raised as an issue. The subject has been discussed on a number of occasions by young people and professionals in the current residential homes who are expressing concern that young people may not have an independent outlet once they are moved out a City residential environment. Discussions have been held with City concerning this issue and it has been decided that the small group homes will have to buy in their own Residential Advocacy services, however it should be noted that as yet none in the local area have done so either from NYAS or other providers.

CONCLUSION

There have been no particular themes or issues these last few months that have been of major concern as an emerging theme. Referrals remain high but the issues are varied and wide spread.