



NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE



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

May 2010

Report prepared by Sara Parker

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This report has been prepared at the request of Nottingham City Corporate Parenting Steering Group. It is a response to the request that NYAS continue to assist the group in identifying any themes or issue 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 October 2009 – March 2010

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.

All of our staff, sessional advocates and independent visitors have enhanced CRB checks. NYAS maintains a database of names and dates that CRB’s fall due for renewal. We are confident that we comply with the agreed guidance on the storage and monitoring of CRB’s.

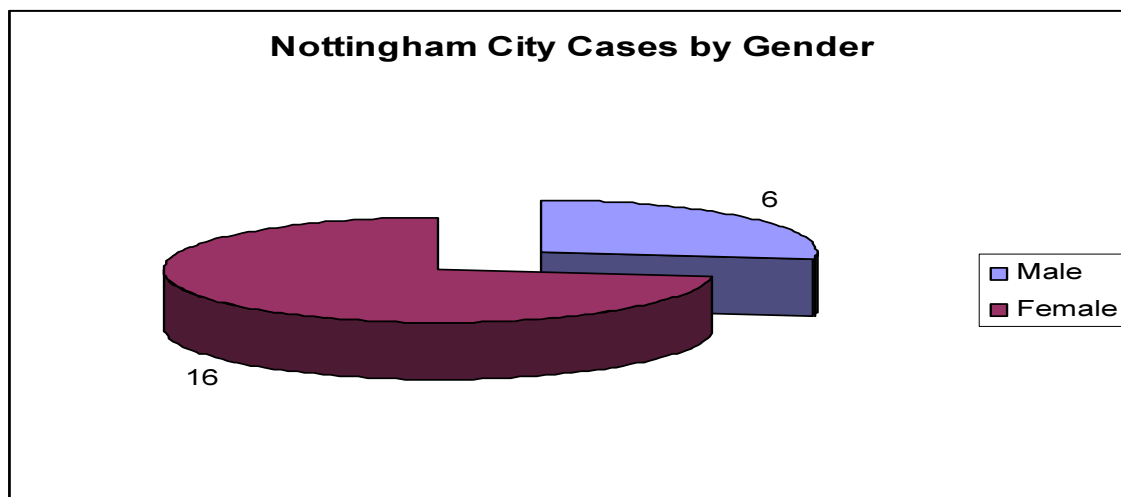
Once we have received a referral for Issue Based Advocacy (IBA). We aim to make contact with a young person within 24 hours and start helping them to deal with the issues they have raised. The concerns reported in the initial referrals are from the viewpoint of the young person, they are their perceived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

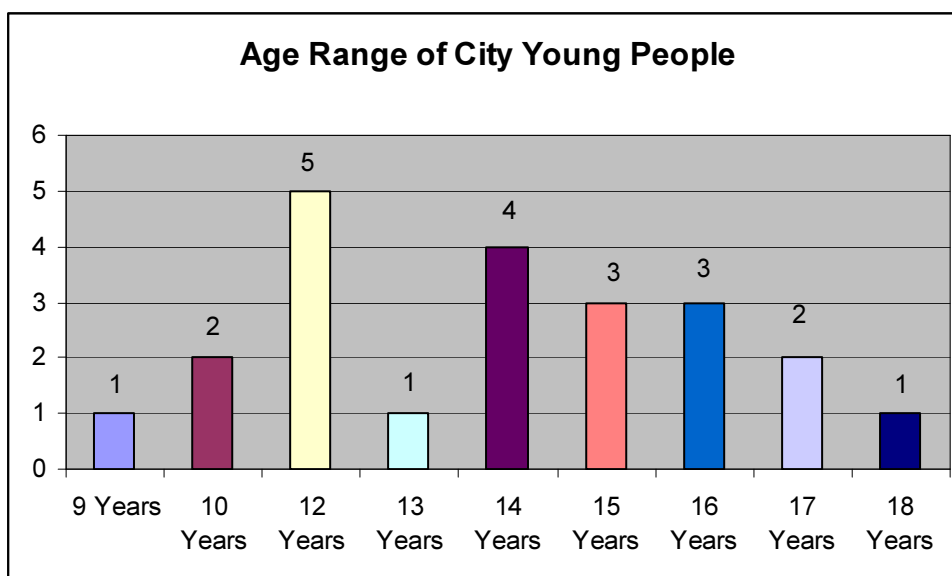
The Homes visited are:

- § Beckhampton Road, Crocus Fields x 2, Ranskill Gardens, Vivian Avenue.

ISSUE BASED ADVOCACY CASES AND HIGHLIGHTS



There does not appear to be any significant reason based on referral information why the number of female referrals is higher than male referrals.



The majority of young people we advocate for are aged 14 years and over. The main issue for which we are requested to advocate is Children's Rights, however this is a catch all phrase and encompasses rights about many issues, for example; leaving care, secure placement, legal etc.

In order to give more depth and understanding to the issues for which referrals have been made, we have in this report included a list of case numbers with the stated issue as reported by the young person or person making the referral.

Nottingham City Cases by Issue

| Case No | Issue |
|----------------|--|
| 44978 | YP Feels educational needs are not being met and are not being listened to. Would like someone independent to voice her views, wishes & feelings and her rights. |
| 45180 | Would like to speak to an advocate about not having contact and for the advocate to represent wishes and feelings regarding wanting to return home or to have over night stays. |
| 45257 | Not happy in foster placement and would like the help of an advocate to move. |
| 45532 | Not happy with social worker as he is not listening to YP and does not get back to her. Young person wants to discuss contact issues with family. Also young person wants to change social worker. |
| 45843 | I.P |
| 45956 | YP has been told by the L/A that they will be moving him to Nottingham into his own flat when he turns 18. YP is still at college until June and does not want to move until he finishes his course, then he will be happy to move. YP has told social services this but they are not listening. |
| 46273 | YP is looking at placements and would like someone to support them with thinking about this and with dealing with professionals. |
| 46321 | YP would like representation at a LAC review |
| 46323 | YP wishes to have contact with immediate family and has not been able to do this. Advocate required to attend future meetings to help the YP understand what decisions are being made about him and to also represent his wishes and feelings. |
| 46612 | Advice and support in regards to decision made at review. |
| 46640 | YP would like an advocate as she does not want to leave care when she is 18 years old. YP feels that she is not ready for semi independence and wishes to remain where she is. For next 8 weeks. |
| 47407 | Issue of young person caught between foster carers/social care and relatives. All giving conflicting advice. |

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|-------|---|
| 47696 | Education provision not meeting need /disability. |
| 47718 | Support with complaint. |
| 47733 | Advice/ Rights to Involvement in Care Planning of self and son. |
| 48488 | Inappropriate / Quality of Accommodation – additional need. |
| 48521 | Support with LAC Review/ Concerns at contact with parent/ social worker changing. |
| 48621 | Support with Reviews/ Promises made by social worker not kept. |
| 48605 | Advice / Rights as regards relationship with parent/ Support with LAC review |
| 48818 | Concerns with treatment by foster carer/ placement issue. LAC review. |
| 49053 | Bullying within a residential home. |
| | |

The issues raised above have been or are being addressed. In the matter of case number 48818, Social care managers etc were informed of a safeguarding concern and were quick to deal with the situation.

In the matter of case number 49053, staff in the home made the referral on behalf of the young person and were very proactive in ensuring the young person had the situation dealt with and were able to voice their concerns independently.

The cases for which we have 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 two cases to give an idea of the some of the reasons young people are requesting an advocate

Case Study 1

[ECM Outcome: 1.4.1 Children and young people have access to an appropriate range of support if they feel troubled.](#)

(NYR 45956) G needed advocacy to challenge the plans to move him back to his own county part way through his college studies.

The advocate arranged two meetings with him. She contacted the complaints department on his behalf. Liaised with the social worker to attend short notice meeting at college and advocated on his views, wishes and feelings. The advocate was subsequently informed at a meeting that a decision had been made to allow G to complete his studies before returning to his own county.

This intervention was relatively short but brought good outcomes for the young person. G became aware of his rights and was reassured that his views, wishes and feelings had been taken into account and these had effected change. The young person took responsibility in being prepared to meet the local authority half way by saying that he would be prepared to return to Nottingham but to do so at that particular time was detrimental to his welfare and studies.

Case Study 2

[ECM Outcome: 2.5 Children and young people have security and are cared for. 3.7 Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve.](#)

(NYR 45257) An advocate was requested as this young person wanted to change his carers and wanted his wishes and feelings represented to Nottinghamshire Social Care.

The advocate visited the young person at school as he was not comfortable meeting at the home of the carers, and represented his wishes and feelings in writing to the young persons Social Worker and managers. The advocate then pressed for a meeting between the young

person, school, carers and Social Worker to enable and support the young person in discussing the issues he felt were affecting his wellbeing.

A new Social Worker was appointed and after further representations a meeting was held between all parties. The young person now feels more satisfied and more confident that his voice will be listened to.

THEMES AND ISSUES FROM RESIDENTIAL VISITING ADVOCATES

The monthly visits to the agreed residential homes aim to consult the young people who are present at the time with regard to their wellbeing and to ascertain that their perceived needs are being met. Issues raised that can be resolved during the visit are child led and addressed in conjunction with the staff on duty. We have continued to deliver regular RVA visits to all residential homes.

The homes staff are now reported as being supportive of the advocates and their visits. In some of the children's homes have seen the young people engaging with the residential advocate and in others it has been a more prolonged process to get them to engage. Staff have been working with the advocates to address this.

The only issue that would have been a concern and that has emerged in the last six months on more than one occasion is bullying within a residential home. On both of these occasions staff were aware of the issue and were taking /took steps to deal with the issues immediately on behalf of young people. (RG Nov & BR Nov).

Areas of future concern

As local authorities move towards a model of small group homes and independent residential placements for the care of looked after young people, thought should be given to the independent voice of the young people within those settings. At present the young people may be told of NYAS advocacy services and their right to access them, but this is not necessarily to all eligible young people. Currently residential advocacy visits are completed on a monthly basis to the main Nottingham City and County homes. The private homes do not receive a visit. Therefore the local authority is relying on the private homes taking the responsibility to inform the young people placed there of their right to advocacy. This may leave young people vulnerable and without a voice.

We are aware of the lack of referrals from IRO's and for young people from minority ethnic groups from both City and County. We will be addressing these issues in the next year.

Young people are still asking for help with and around the subject of leaving Care. We are hopeful that the establishment of the new City over 15 team will go some way to addressing these issues.

Some thought also needs to be given to returning young runaways being offered the support of an advocate when they are undergoing return interviews.