



Independent Advocacy

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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Introduction

The Children's Society is jointly commissioned by Nottingham City and Nottingham County Council to deliver an independent and confidential Advocacy Service for all Looked After Children under its care. The Advocacy Service promotes children's rights and provides advocacy in line with the Local Authority's statutory duty.

The Children's Society's practice is underpinned by the *The National Standards for the provision of Children's Advocacy Services (2002)*.

The service aims to empower children and young people ensuring their rights are respected and that their views and wishes are heard in decision making processes. The service provides independent;

- Information
- Advice
- Advocacy
- Representation
- Support

The Advocacy process is led by children and young people and advocates follow core principles below;

- Advocates work for children and young people and no one else.
- Advocates value and respect children and young people and challenge discrimination.
- Advocates support children in care to understand what is happening to them and to ensure they have a voice in decisions being made about them.
- Advocates help children and young people to raise issues and concerns about things they are unhappy with. This includes making informal and formal complaints under section 26 of the Children's Act 1989.

Nottingham City Advocacy Service

Advocacy services are available for children and young people up to the age of 18 years or up to 25 years for those with a disability or in higher education. The Children's Society provides a free and confidential phone messaging service (available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week) for children and young people to make contact with the advocacy service.

Residential Visiting Advocacy

The Children's Society is contracted to provide Residential Visiting Advocacy to Children's Residential Units at a minimum of once every eight weeks. This includes all residential units that are Local Authority maintained, private and secure accommodation. And covers those where children are placed out of the City boundaries, including Nottinghamshire and other locations in England.

Issue Based Advocacy

The Children's Society provide issue based advocacy representing children and young people who have specific concerns that they wish to be supported with. This work has no specific time frames however advocates aim to resolve issues quickly. Once resolved the work is closed and if young people have subsequent issues these are raised as new pieces of work.

Independent Persons

An Independent Person is provided to all eligible children and young people subject to current Secure Accommodation Orders. When requested an advocate will sit on a secure panel to ensure that Children's Rights are upheld and that decisions are appropriate.

Background

The Children's Society successfully tendered and took over the contract from NYAS on the 1st November 2017.

TUPE

Two NYAS staff transferred to The Children's Society and the service moved to new premises at Castle Cavendish, Dorking Road, Nottingham.

December to March 2018

This period saw service mobilisation and the recruitment of an Advocacy Service Manager and three Advocates.

In the first months of the contract advocacy delivery was impacted by two main issues;

- 1) Transfer of service information from NYAS to Nottingham City and The Children's Society.

Initially NYAS were reluctant to share details of the work they had undertaken. This created a lack of continuity in handover to The Children's Society. Advice was sought from Local Authority solicitors and eventually the information was forthcoming. The Children's Society contacted all young people who had advocacy issues pending and work commenced.

- 2) Data in relation to residential placements

NYAS did not hand over information in respect of Residential Visiting Advocacy. Nottingham City supported the Children's Society with information however in the first few months of the contract there were some inconsistencies. For example young people were listed in residential placements where they were no longer living. Therefore through the New Year onwards the Advocacy service worked closely with the Placements Team to cross check information. This helped to establish accurate data to support delivery.

Promoting the service & networking

To raise awareness of the Advocacy service The Children's Society has produced promotional flyers which have been distributed across Children in Care services including Social Work teams, Residential Units, Secure Accommodation and Foster Carers networks. To support an understanding of advocacy provision the service manager has attended a range of meetings and networking events including;

- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Children in Care Council
- Foster carers open evening
- Foster carer forum & quarterly meetings
- Fostering Services
- SOVA – Independent Visiting Service
- Young people's Refugee Forum & youth group

The Children's Society has promoted equal access and inclusion, through using interpreting services with young people who have English as a second language and through producing material in Arabic, Pashtu and Farsi languages.

Performance overview

Residential Visiting Advocacy has a key performance indicator of visiting 100% of residential units no less than once every eight weeks. It is worth noting that many units are located outside of the east midlands region including places such as Birmingham, Liverpool, Burnley, Stockport and Manchester and often residential settings support just one young person. It is therefore important that Visiting Advocacy is carefully planned ensuring efficient use of resource. This is managed through assigning staff residential units in clusters, requiring advocates to visit up to five units in one day covering distances of up to 250 miles (including overnight stays).

Between January and August 2018 Nottingham City used 49 and up to 70 Residential Units to place between 77 and 114 children and young people. Chart 1 illustrates the monthly change in numbers of residential units, placements and corresponding Children's Society visits. For example if you look at the month of April you will see that Nottingham City used 63 residential units to place 106 Children in Care. And in this month The Children's Society visited 31 units to see 58 young people.

Chart 1

Month	Residential Units	CYP placed	TCS visits	CYP Seen
Jan-18	49	77	22	43
Feb-18	49	77	21	40
Mar-18	70	114	26	40
Apr-18	63	106	31	58
May-18	69	111	32	50
Jun-18	70	114	37	65
Jul-18	61	96	42	67
Aug-18	62	97	27	40

(November and December 2017 not included due system issues)

Chart 2 shows that during June, July and August (Q2) 2018 a total of 79% of all residential homes were visited at 8 weekly cycles. It can be seen that there is an upward trend in achieving this indicator. As already noted there is regular movement and fluctuation in the numbers of young people in residential units. This poses challenges in tracking young people’s movement in and out of residential homes. Therefore advocacy staff are in regular contact with Local Authority colleagues and Children’s Homes managers to keep up to date with these movements.

Chart 3 shows the number of residential visits per quarter increasing throughout the first year of the contract. As discussed the service had a relatively slow start due to hand over issues. The increase in residential visits can be seen in the context of service mobilisation through November 2017 to April 2018 as staff were recruited, data issues were resolved and planning and tracking systems were implemented. Chart 4 shows that 100 Children in Care received a visit in Q4 of 2018.

Chart 2

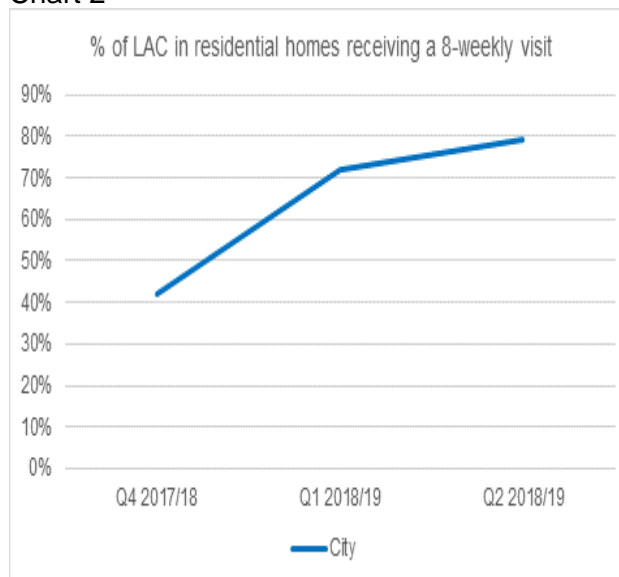


Chart 3

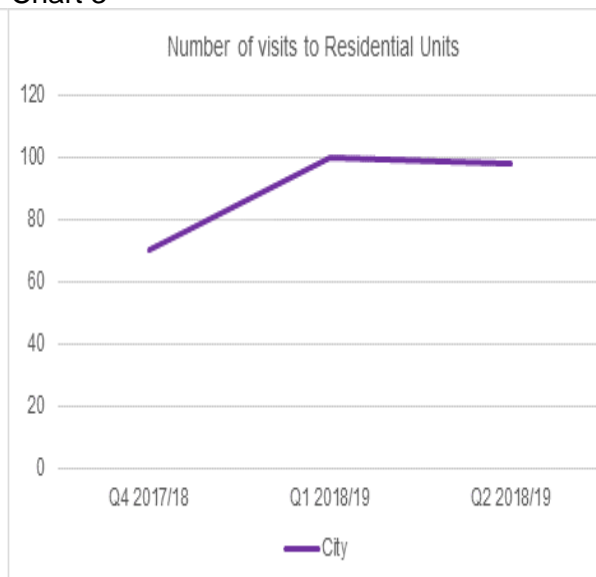
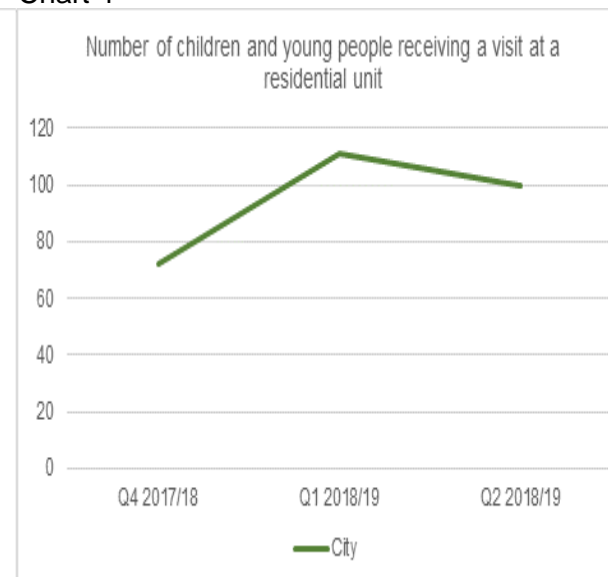


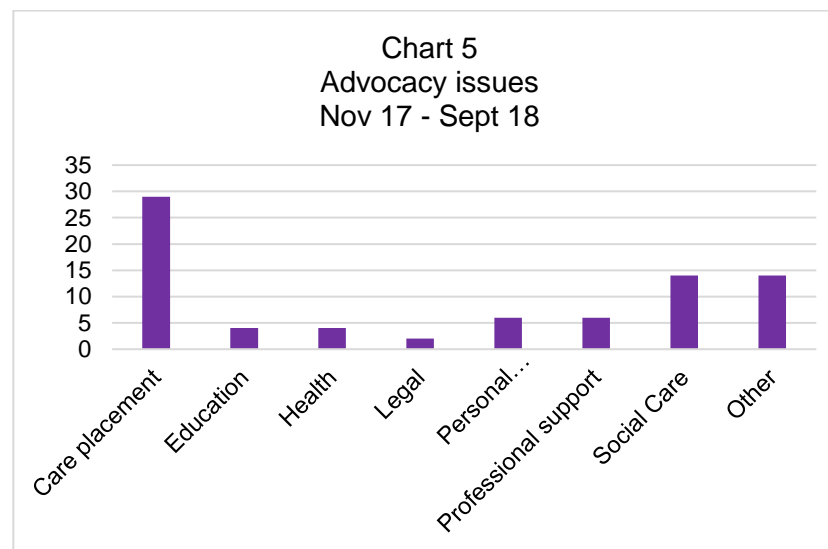
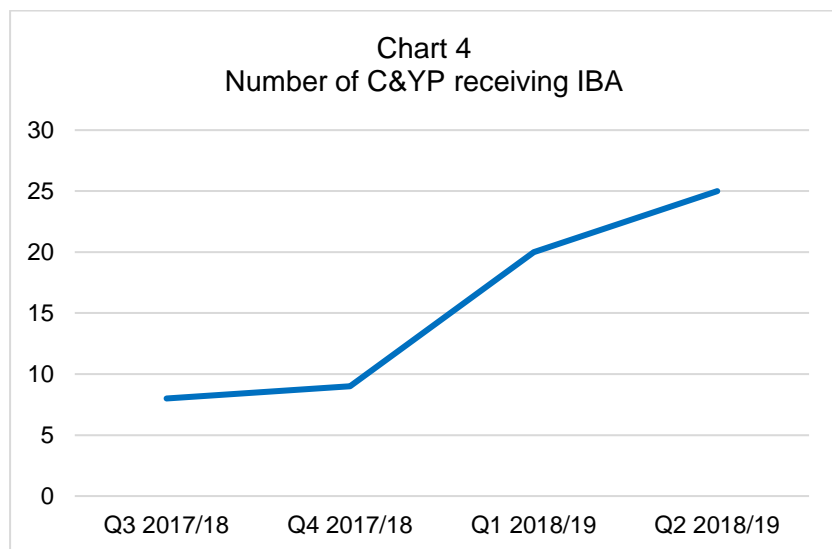
Chart 4



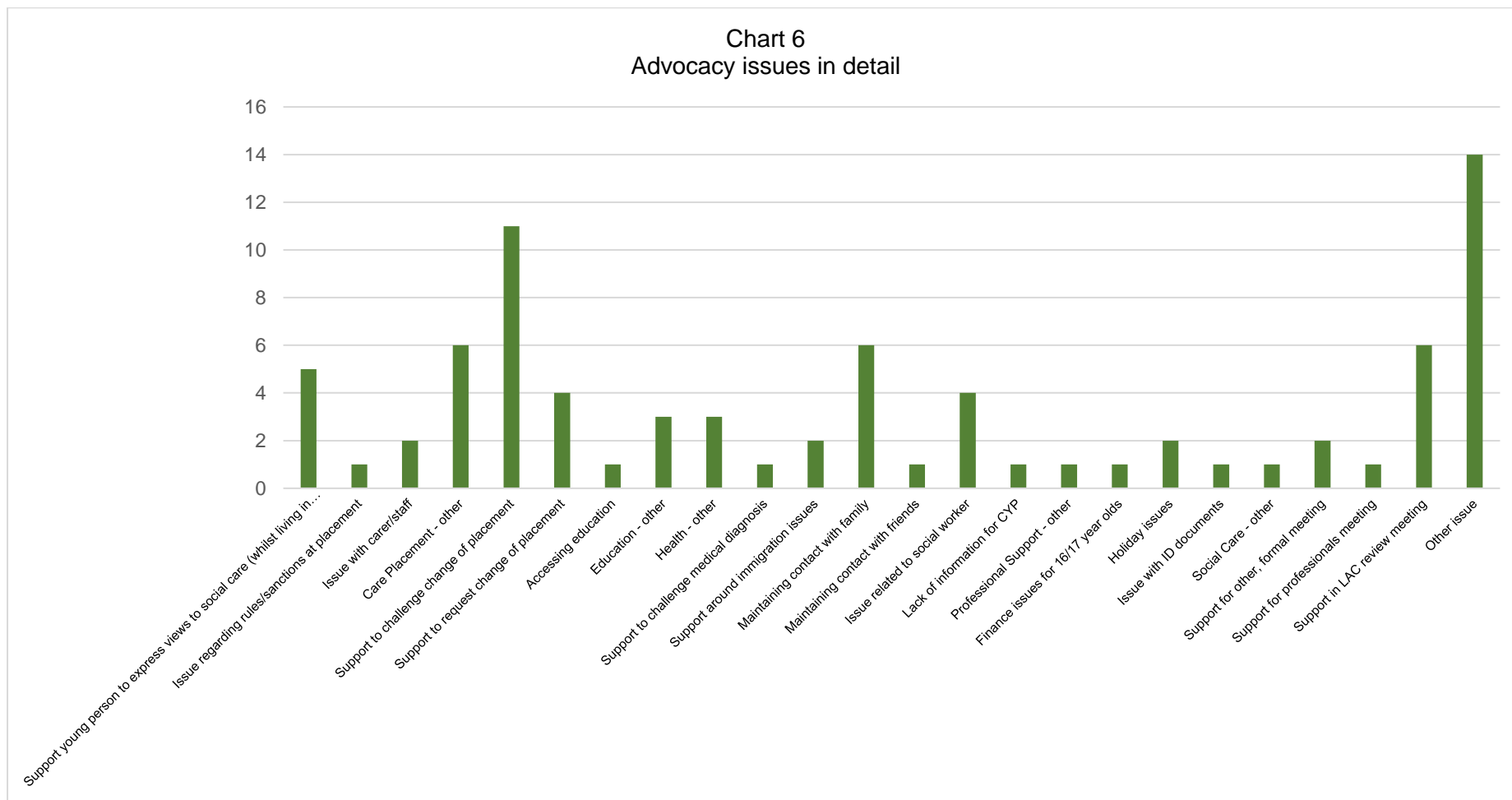
Issue Based Advocacy (IBA)

The number of children and young people supported with issue based advocacy from November 2017 through to September 2018 stands at 76. Chart 4 shows Issue Based Advocacy work increasing throughout the quarterly periods showing that in quarter 2 of 2018 the service supported 25 Children and young people. As the service moves into year two of the contract we expect to see quarterly requests for advocacy increasing further.

Chart 5 shows eight broad areas that young people require advocacy support for, with the majority of these being in relation to care placement. A more detailed breakdown can be seen in Table 3 (page 8). This shows the most common theme being 'support to challenge change of placement'. Issues in relation to 'maintaining contact with family', health and education issues also feature highly, as does 'support to express views to social care'.



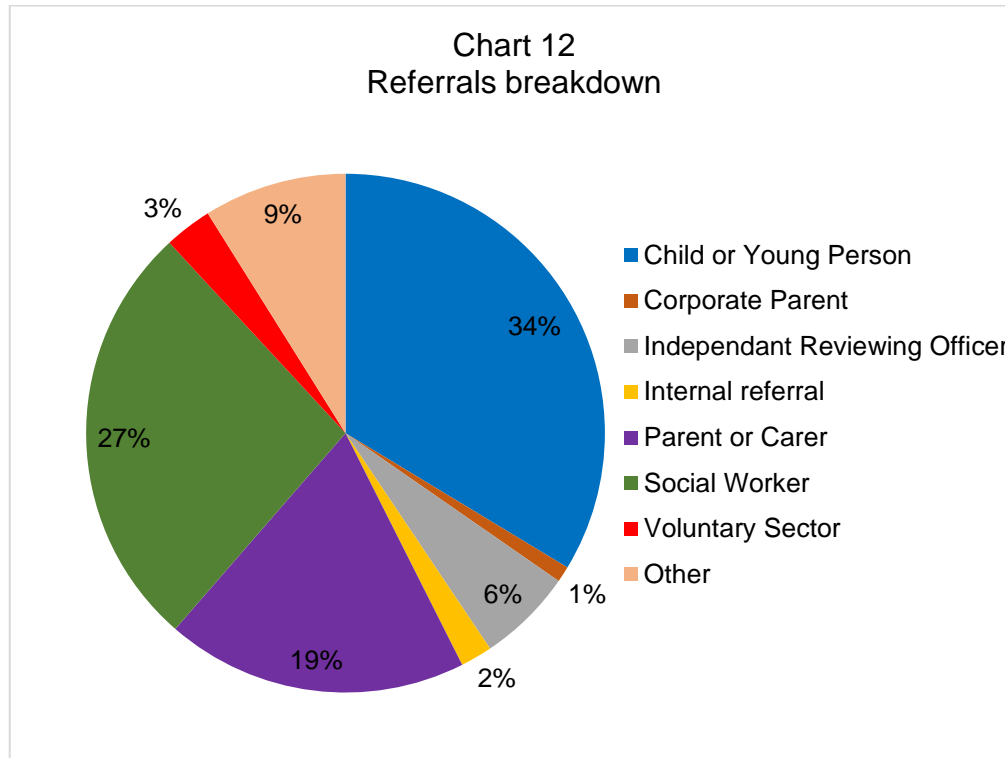
A large proportion of advocacy issues are recorded under category of 'other'. This includes for example support to attend appointments such as 'age assessments' or where young people have a number of issues and require support to navigate routes to address concerns.



Referrals for Issue Based Advocacy

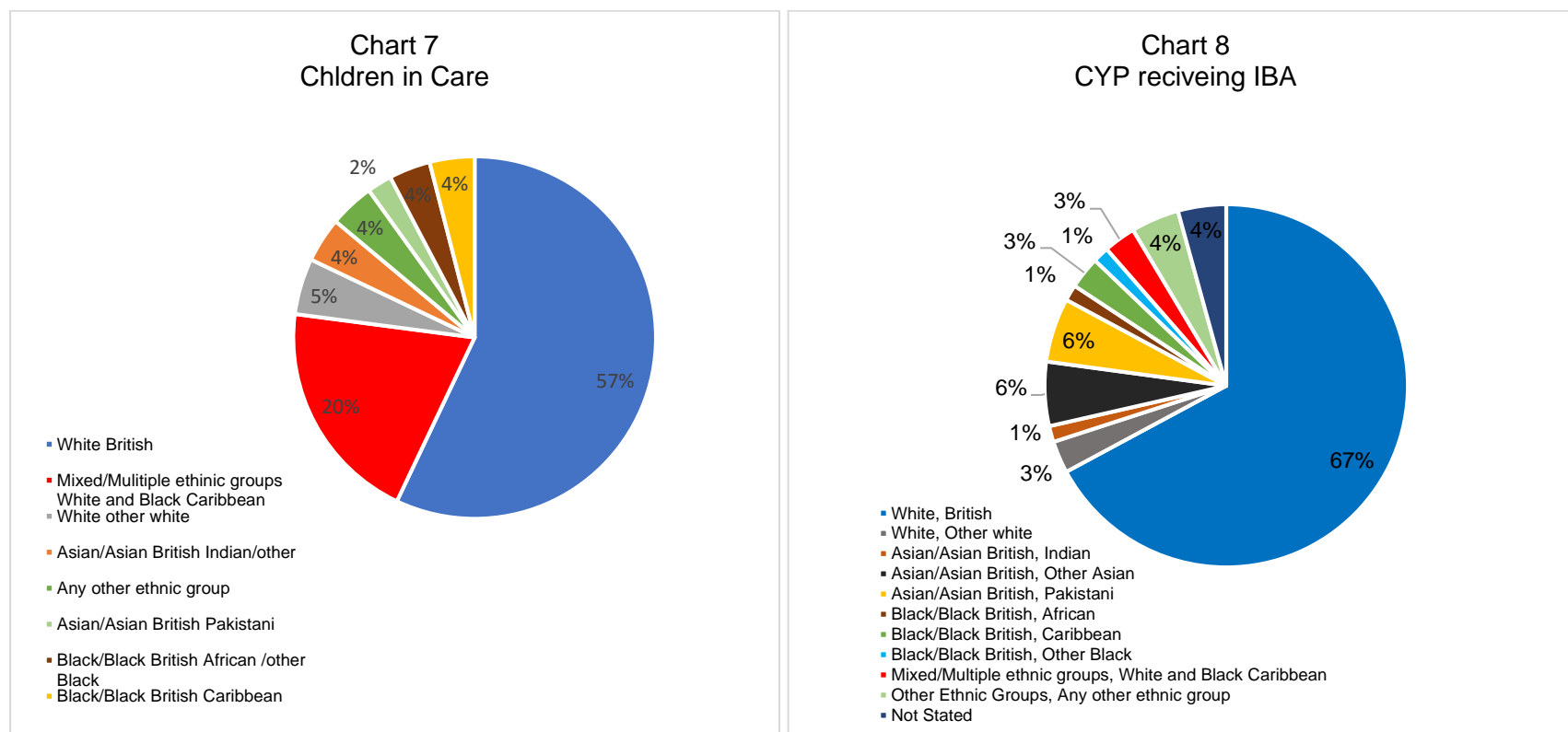
The Advocacy service receives referrals from a range of sources including young people, parents/carers, social workers and other professionals. The largest proportion of referrals at 34% have come directly from young people, 27% have come via Social Workers with 19% being made by Parents or Carers and 9% coming from other sources including schools and professionals.

It is worth noting that in Q2 of 2018 over 33% of all referrals came from young people in residential homes responding to their Residential Visiting Advocate.



Demographic data - Ethnicity

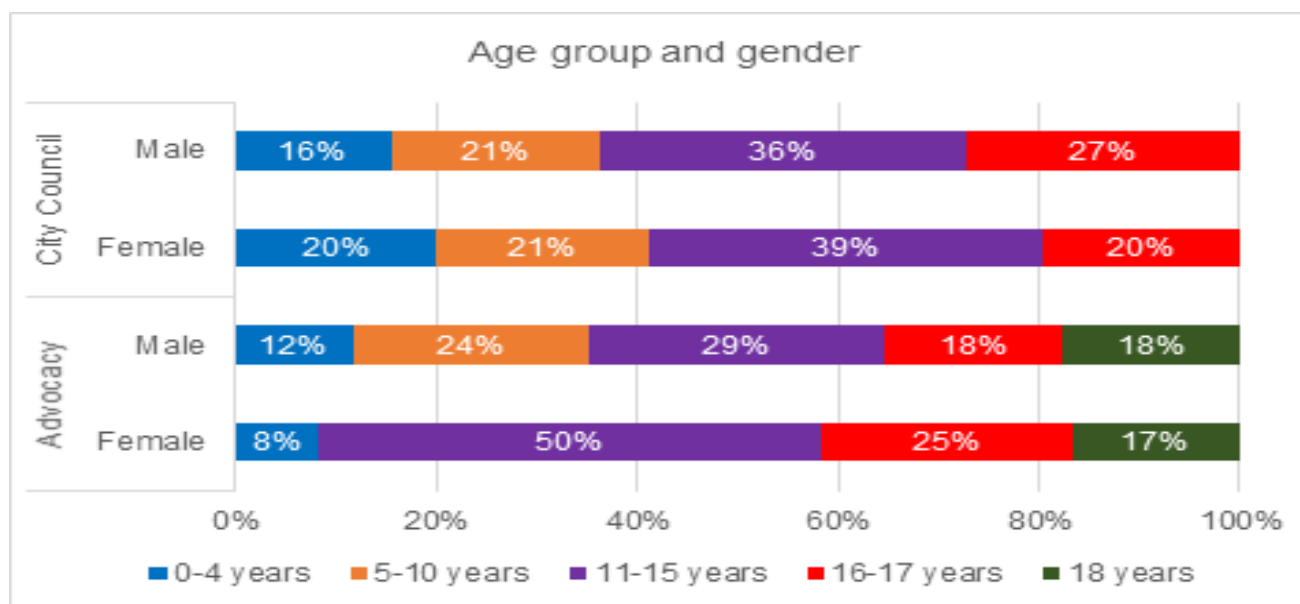
Chart 7 shows Children in Care ethnicity data for a full year 2017-2018 (groups of 1% or less have been aligned to enable comparison e.g. Black other has been included with Black African). Chart 8 shows the ethnicity of Children in Care taking up advocacy (Nov 17 to Sept 2018). The largest group at 67% were White British with this being broadly comparable to 57% of the Children in Care population. However there are some noticeable differences when looking at minority groups. For example 20% of Children in Care are from mixed backgrounds but only make up 3% of those who have used the advocacy service. Black British Caribbean, African and other Black groups make up 8% of Children in Care with only 5% accessing advocacy. Asian British, Indian Pakistani and other Asian groups make up 6% of Children in Care and 13% of those having received advocacy.



Age group by Gender

When comparing age ranges and gender for Children in Care and those receiving advocacy we can see that young females between 11-16 years are the group most likely to access advocacy at 50% reflecting the largest group of those in care at 39%. While males in this age range make up 36% of those in care and 29% of those receiving advocacy.

Females 0-4 years make up 30% Children in Care but only 8% of those receiving advocacy. While female's 16-17years represent 20% of those in care and 25% of young people receiving advocacy support.



Special Needs and Disability

The Childrens Society provide a dedicated advocate whose focus is to work with Children in Care who have special needs and disability. The Advocate undertakes eight weekly visits to Crocus Fields and Woodview Residential units who provide care for children with special needs and disability. And when appropriate the Advocacy service will provide non-instructed advocacy to support children who lack capacity to make decisions.

Chart 11 show that 17% of Children in Care have a recognised disability or special need. In comparison the Advocacy service has worked with 9% of children with a disability or special needs.

Chart 11 (CiC 2017-18)

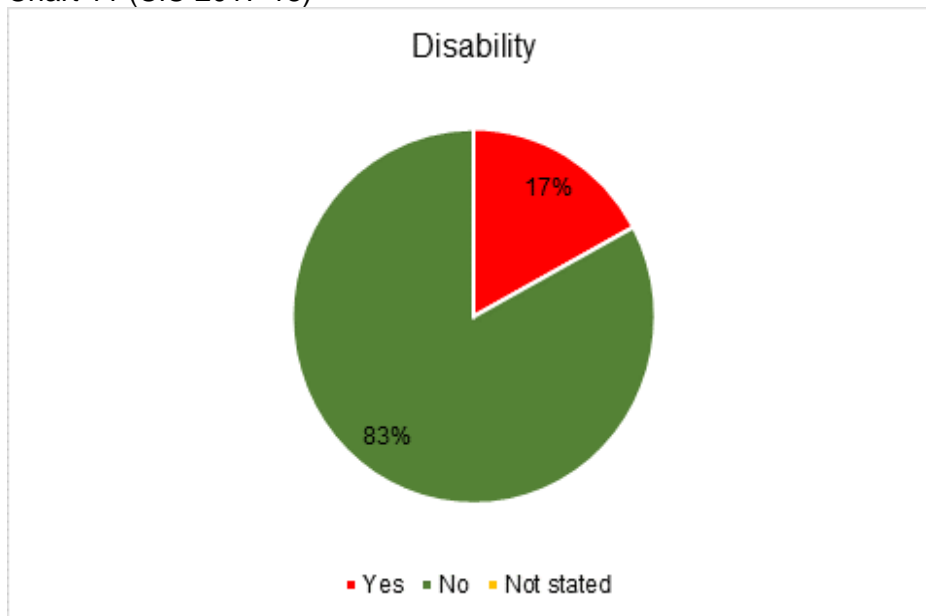
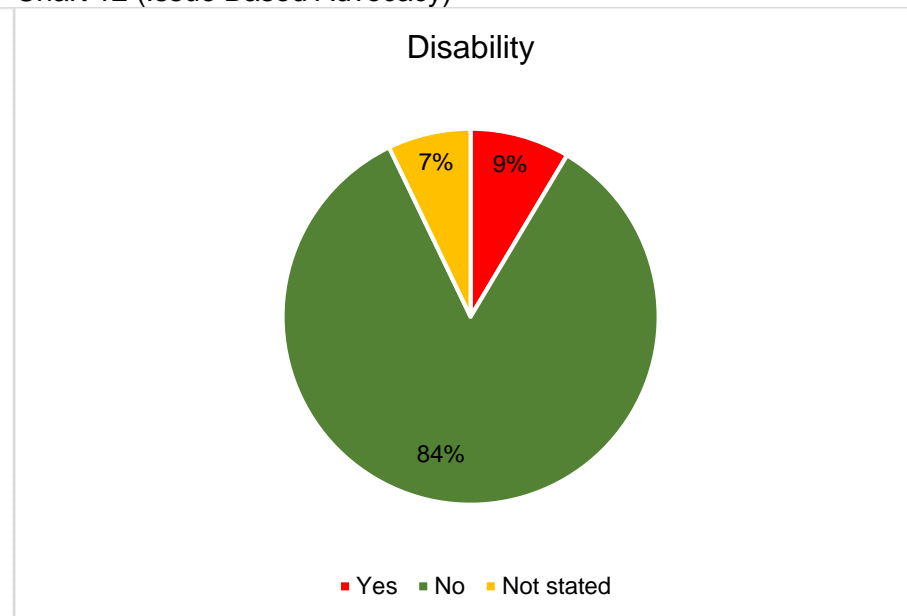


Chart 12 (Issue Based Advocacy)

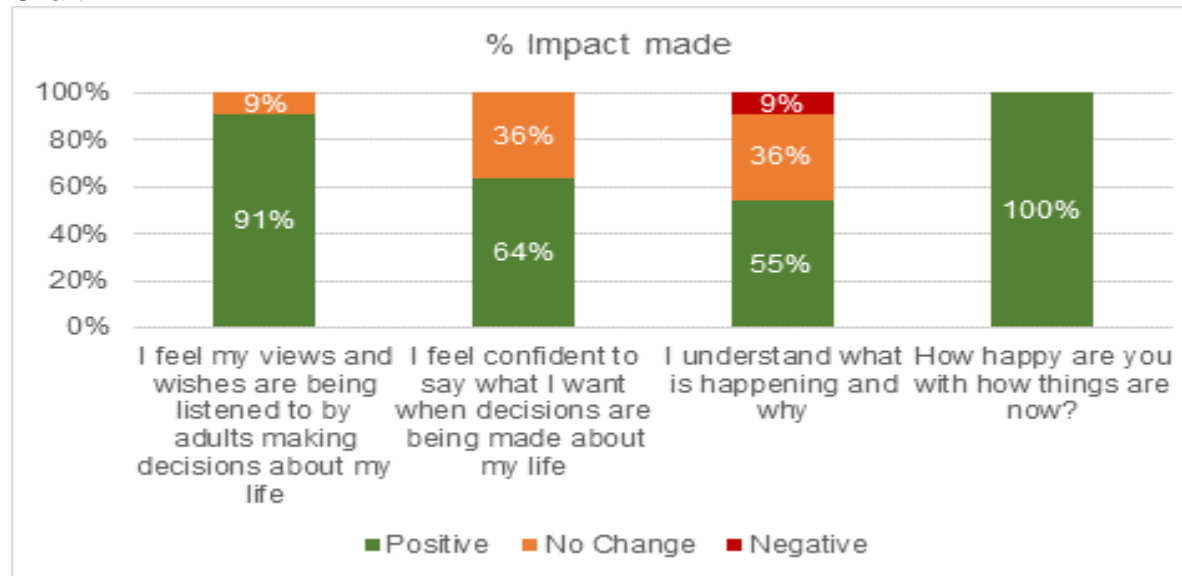


Children and Young People's Feedback

The service has developed an outcomes tool which is designed to track children and young people's views in relation to issues they have raised. It needs be noted that Advocates have difficulty in obtaining feedback from young people once advocacy work has concluded. By and large this is because young people consider that the advocacy process has finished and therefore feel they do not need to engage further.

Between April and September of 2018 a total of 11 children and young people completed the outcomes tool (8 children Nottingham City, with 3 being Nottingham County). Chart 11 shows that 91% of these 'felt listened to by adults making decisions', 64% 'felt confident to say what they wanted', 55% felt they could 'understand what was happening and why' while 100% were happier after advocacy intervention.

Chart 11



Conclusion

After some initial problems with service hand over and data issues, The Childrens Society has built a solid platform to take forward Advocacy provision into the second year of the contract. Commissioners have been positive regarding the quality of delivery and the level of output. The Childrens Society continue to work closely with Nottingham City colleagues ensuring that Looked After Children can benefit from Independent Advocacy.