



Nottingham City Council Corporate Parenting Board

Date: Monday, 16 November 2020

Time: 2.30 pm

Place: To be held remotely via Zoom – <https://www.youtube.com/user/NottCityCouncil>

Councillors are requested to attend the above meeting to transact the following business

Director for Legal and Governance

Governance Officer: Mark Leavesley

Direct Dial: 0115 876 4302

- 1 Apologies for absence**
- 2 Declarations of Interests**
- 3 Minutes** 3 - 8
Last meeting held on 21 September 2020 (for confirmation)
- 4 Children in Care - social care complaints** 9 - 14
Report of Director of Children's Integrated Services
- 5 Independent Visitor Service - Annual Report 2019/20** 15 - 28
Report of Project Manager, CGL
- 6 Independent Advocacy Annual Report 2019-20** 29 - 46
Report of Gabriel Hall, The Children's Society
- 7 Children in Care Council update**
Engagement and Participation Lead Officer to report
- 8 Future meeting arrangements - proposal** 47 - 48
Report of the Chair
- 9 Date of next meeting**
To note that the next meeting will be held at a time to be agreed in item 7 above on Monday 18 January 2021 at either Loxley House or remotely via Zoom video conferencing, depending on the pandemic situation at the time

Citizens are advised that this meeting may be recorded by members of the public. Any recording or reporting on this meeting should take place in accordance with the Council's policy on recording and reporting on public meetings, which is available at www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk. Individuals intending to record the meeting are asked to notify the Governance Officer shown above in advance.

Nottingham City Council

Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes of the meeting held at remotely via Zoom -
<https://www.youtube.com/user/NottCityCouncil> on 21 September 2020 from
2.33 pm - 3.44 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Cheryl Barnard (Chair)
Councillor Jay Hayes (Vice Chair)
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Phil Jackson
Councillor Maria Joannou
Councillor Rebecca Langton
Councillor Lauren O`Grady
Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Maria Watson

Absent

Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Cate Woodward

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Helen Blackman - Director of Children's Integrated Services
Clive Chambers - Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Jon Rea - Engagement and Participation Lead Officer
Kate Morris - Governance Officer

8 Apologies for absence

Councillor Neghat Khan – Council Business – Councillor Lauren O`Grady attending as substitute

Councillor Cate Woodward – Leave

9 Declarations of Interests

None

10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2020 were confirmed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

11 Leaving Care - Pathway Planning and Supporting Transitions

Clive Chambers, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, introduced the report exploring the current operating environment for the Leaving Care Service. The report outlined the range of developments linked to the work of the Leaving Care team and plans for further work. He highlighted the following points from the report:

- (a) The performance statistics do take a slight down turn in August compared to last year, however Nottingham City still compares favourably with statistical neighbours.
- (b) There are 2 broad areas of developmental work. Nottingham City Council is working closely with Barnardo's who have been left a sizeable sum of money in a will with the stipulation that it is spent in the county or City of Nottingham. Following analysis of need the Charity concluded that the most benefit could be realised in working exclusively with Nottingham City and focusing on Leaving Care services. There is extensive discussion on how to maximise the benefits of this generous gift ensuring benefits are sustainable;
- (c) The second area of work is alongside the Integrated Care Partnership who have identified Care Leavers as a priority cohort. This creates significantly opportunities. Senior colleagues with NCC are working with partners from statutory and non-statutory organisations. The focus of this work is around three key areas:
 - Accommodation
 - Positive destinations, mainly around EET opportunities but broader; and
 - Transitions for those with mental health needs.
- (d) Aligned to this is work being done with the mental health foundation to create circles of support and mentoring to develop substantial friendships and support circles for care leavers. The mainstream bid has been paused due to the Lottery fund diverting monies to the Covid response, but since the publication of the report there has been a smaller sum of money allocated to provide resources to facilitate young people keeping in touch.

During discussion and questions from Board members, the following information was highlighted:

- (e) There has been a lot of pressure on mental health services and much of the funding is one off grants. Ensuring services are sustainable is essential. The work detailed in appendix 3 of the published report touches on this issue, there is work taking shape around development of an Action Plan focusing on reshaping local service delivery to create sustainable services into the future. Working closely with the CCG, a critical piece of work will be looking at the service specification for the CAMHS team and what young people want services to look like going forward.
- (f) The integrated personal commissioning model is a tool for young people who do not wish to access talking therapies.
- (g) Recently agreed funding through Barnardo's, is a Supported Lodging Scheme for 16 and 17 year olds. This allows young people to live in a family home setting but without being in foster care. This model has been successful in other areas, with young people having the benefits of family setting support but without making an emotional commitment. The supported lodgings scheme is cheaper than semi-independent living schemes and can be sustained by savings there.

- (h) The Covid -19 pandemic has impacted on accommodation performance for care leavers. Positive work with rough sleeping adults has moved a number of them into accommodation, leading to a reduction in the availability of one bedroom flats, typically the type of accommodation offered to care leavers;
- (i) Although EET destination performances appears to be positive it is likely to be a range of challenges for young people in sustain education, employment or training opportunities because of the impact of Covid. Local organisations have been approached through the One Nottingham Board asking that care leaver opportunities are maximised;
- (j) For all work streams, Officers specifically ask how a service addresses the specific needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. It is essential to ensure that therapeutic pathways are suitable for the cohort. These services have to allow young people to articulate need, and it is likely that the way forward is to work with community organisation which would be better placed to work with the cohort;
- (k) Other ways of supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking young people are around helping them to develop a strong support network by placement within good group living;
- (l) When a young person in care becomes pregnant two social workers allocated, one to the young person and one to the unborn child, this helps in support and preparation for the birth. There is access to parent and child accommodation placements, parent and child foster placements, so that where a young person is capable of and wishes to care for their child they are able to do so in the community;
- (m) The Pause project works with parents who have had more than one child removed. This project works with some care leavers on self esteem issues, and on employments, education and training opportunities;

Resolved to

(1) Note the content of the report

- (2) Consider whether there is further support individual members of the Board can offer good transitions for care leavers into accommodation, education or training and to promote the development of good services to meet their helps and emotional needs;**

12 Children in Care: Key Performance Indicators - April-June 2020 (Q1)

Clive Chambers, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, introduced the paper detailing the Key Performance Indicators for April 2020 to June 2020 (Quarter 1). He highlighted the following information:

- (a) The number of children in care has increased slightly to 669. This is as a result of children entering the care system throughout the Covid pandemic, but a smaller than usual proportion being discharged through adoption and special Guardianship orders. Court proceeding have started to run again and since

lockdown has been eased adoptions are going through. Statistical neighbours have reported a similar rise in children in care;

- (b) Visiting frequencies have been fairly high but the target is 95% and so requires ongoing attention;
- (c) There is good performance around statutory reviews being completed within time scales. there is high levels of participation and increasing numbers of young people chairing their own reviews;
- (d) Performance around medical and dental checks performance has been a challenge. Officers are working closely with health colleagues to understand how best to address this dip in performance as a result of Covid 19. These appointments are the annual check ups, and there are no issues with young people receiving medical attention when it has been required;
- (e) The key issue in relation to children in care and the impact that Covid 19 has had is around placement availability. Private sector placement has a strong presence in the market through fostering agencies and private care. There has been a significant lack of placements. This is impacting on stability of placements and is adding pressure to placements;
- (f) Because there is currently a high demand for places there has been an impact on cost. NCC manages price via a regional placement commissioning framework shared with Nottinghamshire, Derby City and Derbyshire Councils and placement teams challenge providers when costs are excessive. There is strong competition for places from other local authorities, sometimes as far away as London;
- (g) A review of the care system is planned and this review will attempt to address this commercial behaviour;
- (h) A Placement Capacity review has been commissioned to assess what can be done to ensure best placement matches are delivered at the most competitive prices. The first draft of this report is due to be issued this week and will come back to this meeting;
- (i) National guidance has been issued to not proceed with contested adoption cases. This will ensure that any families who are not able to attend via remote means. Work is focusing on ensuring that families in these hearings can attend court in a meaningful way;
- (j) Although lockdown has been difficult for young people in care and their placements some families have reported that the intensive family time has helped to stabilise the relationships within the family unit and has been a positive time;

Following questions and comments from the Board the following additional points were made:

- (k) Talking about accommodation and placement provision as a market does not sit well with officers or members of the Board but both recognised that that is what it currently is. There are a number of measures taken by NCC to try and reduce this, the placement commissioning framework previously mentioned, and a regional commissioning meeting where Local Authorities are able to share information on prices paid to various placements. There is also the internal review, which will look at the opportunities to expand internal provision linked to the Big Ticket Programme. The council is also dedicated to making better use of block contracts in this challenging local context;
- (l) NCC continues to invest in therapeutic services, MSTT and work with young people on the edge of offending. This investment of earlier intervention reduces the demand for care placements;
- (m) The East Midlands Lead Members meeting have written a joint letter to the Children's Commissioner asking her to push for the Care Review to take place;

13 Children in Care Council update

Jon Rea, Engagement & Participation Lead Officer, gave a verbal update to the Board on the activities of the Children in Care Council. He provided the following information:

- (a) The Children in Care Council has met following the summer break. Meetings have been taking place fortnightly via Microsoft Teams and this has been successful and has allowed regular contact with the young people to be maintained;
- (b) There has recently been a very successful interactive session looking at feedback materials used by IRO service to capture the voice of young people. The end product will be co designed with the group;
- (c) The Have your say Children in Care Survey will this year be digital with only a small amount of paper based surveys available for those who can not complete it digitally. The results of the survey will be published around October half term through to December. Findings from the survey will come back to the Board early in the new year;
- (d) Members of the Children in Care Council have been invited to take part in the recruitment of the Senior Social Worker post taking place. This will include shortlisting and interviewing candidates;
- (e) Children in Care Council members are also invited to join the youth leadership conference giving an opportunity to build young leadership capacity within the Council;
- (f) There are plans for a special session of the Children in Care Council to run for the Board members to come and meet the young people to share experiences and ideas and challenges. Ideally this will be done face to face, however it will only happen in person depending on the current advice;

- (g) This term the overarching theme is Work futures and education for children in care alongside work on Health and Wellbeing and redevelopment around the city;

14 Forward Plan

The Chair is currently working with officers to look at creating themed meetings. The Board would like to see more officers from different departments attending to feed into the Corporate Parenting agenda across the different services.

15 Dates of future meetings

The Board noted that meetings would be held at 2.30pm on the following Mondays:

16 November 2020

18 January 2021

15 March 2021

Corporate Parenting Board – 16 November 2020

Title of paper:	Children in Care Social Care Complaints	
Director/ Corporate Director:	Helen Blackman Catherine Underwood	Wards affected: All
Report author and contact details:	Patrick Skeete - Social Care Complaints Manager Patrick.skeete@nottinghamcity.gov.uk 01158765971	
Other colleagues who have provided input:	Ian Hillier	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		X
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		X
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):		
<p>This report includes a brief summary of the statutory Social Care Complaints procedure, which ensures young people have a robust process to share worries or concerns about the service and/or support they receive. The report highlights complaints made specifically by Children in Care, in accordance with the statutory Social Care Complaints procedure. This report also focuses on the nature of the complaints made and whether the complaints were addressed within the statutory timescales.</p>		
Recommendation:		
1	That the board continue to support the effective complaints handling of young people in care and act as corporate parents in relation to addressing the concerns of young people in care.	

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Nottingham City has a legislative duty to ensure all young people have a robust complaints process to address any concerns that that they are responsible for.

2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 The aim of the Social Care Complaints Team is to resolve service user dissatisfaction and learn from complaints in order to improve service delivery. The Complaints Team operates a statutory complaints procedure, which includes the

production of an annual report on the operation and implementation of the procedure.¹

- 2.2 Complaints which are made and resolved within 24 hours are not logged as complaints. This is in line with national guidance.
- 2.3 The remit of the Complaints Team is not simply to receive calls. The team is required to check that, if a person wishes to make a complaint on behalf of a child, they have sufficiency of interest in respect of making a complaint and it obtains consent from the citizen/service user, where this is required. In respect of children's complaints, consideration may need to be given as to whether a child is Fraser competent (able to consent). In other circumstances, consideration will need to be given to determine whether a complaint is being made in the interests of the citizen, where she or he may lack the necessary capacity, as determined under the Mental Capacity Act. Where a Power of Attorney is raised as a right to make a complaint on another person's behalf, the Complaints Team has to establish whether such a Power is registered or not
- 2.4 It is only after these matters have been considered that the Social Care Complaints Team asks a Service Manager or Team Manager to provide a written response to a complaint (Stage One), and to respond to the complaint within the timescales, as defined within the relevant statutory complaints process. The timescales are outlined below. At Stage Two of the procedure, independent investigators are commissioned by the Complaints Team to investigate complaints and to provide reports to the Authority detailing their findings and recommendations. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied, a Stage Three complaints review panel, comprised of three independent people, is asked to review the Authority's response to the complaint, as well as the stage 2 findings.
- 2.5 The Complaints Team provides advice to the operational teams on how to avoid unnecessary escalation of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman. Further support is provided to the Department in managing complaints from the Local Government Ombudsman, along with training for all front line staff.
- 2.6 Where a complaint reaches the Ombudsman, the Complaints Team is highly skilled at risk assessing complaints in order to identify potential failings, so that they may be rectified and resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.7 The expectation from Ofsted is that the Local Authority does not operate a one dimensional view of quality & practice. Complaints provide a particular perspective on the quality of practice and performance.

Children's Statutory Social Care Complaints Procedure.

- 2.8 Stage 1 – the department is asked to provide a written response within 10 working days, this may be extended to 20 working days.
- 2.9 Stage 2 – the complainant, usually where s/he remains dissatisfied following a response at stage 1, may request an investigation of their complaint; this is usually undertaken by an Independent Investigator, overseen by an Independent Person, both commissioned by the Complaints Team. Records are scrutinised and staff are interviewed by the investigator, after which the stage 2 outcome is provided in the form of a detailed investigation report, which should be available within 25 working

days, but this may be extended to 65 working days, with the agreement of the complainant.

2.10 Stage 3 – if the complainant remains dissatisfied after receiving the investigator’s findings and any recommendations, s/he may request that an independent panel (comprised of 3 independent people) review the complaint and investigation. The complainant and any representative, and a representative from the department, along with the investigator and independent person are invited to the panel too. Whilst there is no specific timescale for a complainant to request that their complaints be reviewed at stage 3, by an Independent Complaints Review Panel, good practice guidance recommends that the request should be made within 20 working days. Complainants are advised of this when they receive a copy of the stage 2 report. The Local Authority then has 30 working days to convene the stage 3 Panel.

2.11 The relevant director then writes to the complainant to explain if the department accepts the findings and recommendations of the Stage 3 Panel; the director also explains what action plan has been agreed to be put in place so as to complete any recommendations.

2.12 Complaints Received from Children in Care 01/01/2020 – 01/09/2020

Complaint	Nature of complaint	Days to resolve	Outcome
1	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	16	Not upheld
2	Attitude or behaviour of staff	2	Not upheld
3	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	meeting	Not upheld
4	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	-	Not pursued
5	Out of jurisdiction	1	-
6	Out of jurisdiction	1	-
7	Out of jurisdiction	1	-
8	Out of jurisdiction	1	-
9	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	23	Not upheld
10	Delay in decision making	2	Upheld
11	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	14	Still open
12	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	Stage 2 29	Not upheld
13	Attitude or behaviour of staff	6	Still open

Complaints frequently have more than one issue, as such, some parts may be upheld and some not upheld. Therefore, the outcome of the overall complaint may be mostly upheld or mostly not upheld; but in situations where none of the complaints are upheld then the overall complaint is “Not upheld” or conversely, it is “Upheld” where the complaints are all upheld.

Out of jurisdiction complaints (OOJ) include those where the same complaint has been made more than once. Under the complaints regulations we cannot investigate the same matter twice. OOJ complaints may also include complaints about non-social care services or complaints received where the necessary consent is not forthcoming.

There are times where there is a 'No Finding' outcome. This is usually where there is no evidence to support a view, or where we are unable to come to a definitive decision.

2.13 Main Points:

- Compared with the previous reporting period, which was from April to December 2019, the number of complaints increased by 1.
- Of the 13 complaints received, 12 were resolved at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure. One which was investigated at Stage 2 by an independent investigator, after which a virtual meeting was held between the department, the complainant, the investigator etc. to resolve the complaint.
- 12 complaints (92%) were concluded within the statutory timescale of 20 working days. The complaint that was out of timescale was late by three days, but this complaint was made and responded to during the Covid-19 lockdown, and it was only to be expected that there might be some delays.
- No strong themes were identified during this reporting period, as no two complaints were the same. Although, "not feeling listened to" and "not feeling supported" were commonly raised concerns. However, when investigated, it was found that young people could feel like this in circumstances where staff did not agree with the young person's view.

Individual complaint synopsis

- **Complaint 1** was about a perceived lack of support provided to the young person. This was not upheld.
- **Complaint 2** was from a young person in a care facility who felt that she was not being listened to. This was not upheld. The matter was addressed by the Service Manager for Children in Care and the Young person accepted the outcome.
- **Complaint 3** was about how the young person felt about being in care. It was addressed and resolved by way of a virtual meeting with the parties involved, including staff from the unit where the young person resides.
- **Complaint 4** was withdrawn and not pursued by the young person.
- **Complaints 5 to 8** were all out of jurisdiction. Three were repeat complaints and one related to services outside of the remit of the statutory complaints procedure.
- **Complaint 9** was from a young person who complained she was not being listened to and she was unhappy about the apparent lack of sibling contact. This was not upheld.
- **Complaint 10** was from a young person who lives in a residential setting who complained that there had been undue delay in completing an outstanding

assessment. This complaint was upheld and a written apology was provided; steps were also taken to complete the assessment without further delay.

- **Complaint 11** is about the amount of a leaving care grant. This complaint is still under consideration.
- **Complaint 12** consisted of a stage 2 independent investigation, which was completed within 29 working days i.e. well within the 65-working-day timescale. The young person had complained about feeling unsupported by children's social care; the investigation sought to demonstrate what support had been provided. The complaint was not upheld.
- **Complaint 13** - made by a young person who is unhappy with the social worker's attitude. This complaint is still under consideration at the time of writing this report.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 None.

4. FINANCE COMMENTS

4.1 None.

5. LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COMMENTS

5.1 The Children Act 1989 (S24D & 26[3] & The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require each Local Authority to establish formal procedures for considering complaints in respect of services to children. Government Regulations were introduced in 2006 and the Secretary of State issued statutory guidance under the Local Government Social Services Act 1970. Failure to adhere to timescales could mean maladministration payments being made to the complainant

5.2 If the above legislation is not adhered to the Local Authority will fail to fulfil its statutory duty and this will impact on service delivery to complainants resulting in the involvement of the Local Government Ombudsman with a potential outcome of the Department being requested to make maladministration payments if the LGO feels there has been undue delay in progressing the complaint, this in turn may cause reputational risk to the Department.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions).

7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS

7.1 None.

8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

8.1 The Children Act 1989 (S24D & 26[3];
Local Authority Social Services Representations Procedure (England) Regs 1991;
National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2006;
Getting the Best from Complaints National Guidance.

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P847

Nottingham City Council Independent Visitor Service

Annual Report

April 2019– March 2020

Prepared by:

Gillian Black - Project Manager

May 2020

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Forward from the Head of Operations

As of **1st March 2019**, Sova became fully part of Change Grow Live, completing a process of integration that begun seven years ago.

Sova's original association with Change Grow Live commenced in November 2012 when it became a wholly owned subsidiary of Change Grow Live retaining at that time its independent charitable status, its own Board of Trustees, management team and separate accounting systems.

The two organizations over the next few years worked closely together on a variety of operational contracts and services, with their central and support functions coming together to provide consistent service provision support across both organizations.

However, trading conditions remained challenging and therefore Sova's Trustees and senior management team in July 2018 reached agreement with Change Grow Live to proceed with a full merger of the two organizations.

The case for merging completely with Change Grow Live was compelling and the trustees were convinced that this was the best way for Sova services to continue to thrive.

From the autumn of 2018 legal and operational/contractual arrangements commenced to implement the merger with the full process being completed and merger concluded on 1st March 2019.

The merger with Change Grow Live, has meant the activities and support that had been provided within Sova's services has continued based on an operational and organisational strategy, with a firm foundation for the future

Service users have had the best possible chances of success and staff and volunteers have had fantastic opportunities for career and personal development, as we continue to grow, learn and succeed as part of the Change Grow Live family of services.

John Leach Head of Change Grow Live ETE & CRS Operations March 2020

Section 1 – Introduction to the project

The Change Grow Live Nottingham City & Nottinghamshire County Council Independent Visitor Project is a partnership between Change Grow Live, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council Children Services Departments. The project has been jointly funded by the Councils since November 2017. It is based centrally in Derby meeting the demands of the service with a nationwide reach. During 2019/2020 the project provides Independent Visitors to looked after children and young people from each local authority.

- **Our Service to you**

Change Grow Live recruit and train volunteers from local communities where your children and young people are placed. Independent visitors may be matched with a child or young person to 18 years or beyond if the young person has additional needs. In 2019/2020 this included recruiting and training volunteers in locations such as Glamorgan, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and Yorkshire. Independent visitors may be matched with a child where there is little or no contact with their birth family or it is thought to be in their best interest. It is voluntary participation and therefore the child/young person must consent to the referral being made – starting every relationship in this way means that the child/young person has full agency.

An independent visitor provides support on a monthly basis with the occasional telephone call or correspondence between visits. The aim is to provide a trusted adult, independent of the local authority with whom the child/young person may develop a lasting, stable and trusting relationship. During the visits the pair may share an interest, hobby or go on an outing together. During recruitment we encourage applicants to reflect, are they are able to commit for a minimum duration of 2 years?

Section 2 – Young People

Section 2.1 – Young People figures

Referrals & Matching	City	County	Total
Young people referred to the service	15	17	32
Young people newly matched 2019-20	14	12	26
Year-end on-going relationships	21	15	36
Referrals withdrawn due to change in circumstances	4	8	12
Number of visits	82	75	157
Number of match end	17	9	26
Young people awaiting an IV	17	17	34

A match may end or a referral be withdrawn on account of a young person reaching 18 yrs., moving area, returning home to family, outgrowing the service or a change in personal circumstances for the volunteer,

Section 2.2 – Young People matched with volunteers demographics

Demographic of YP	City	County	Total
Transgender	0	0	0
Male	10	8	18
Female	11	7	18
SEN	5	2	7
White British	17	13	30
B/W Caribbean	1	1	2
Romany/Afro-Caribbean	0	1	1
Black African	1	0	1
White /Asian	2	0	2

Change Grow Live Independent Visitor Service helps to integrate children and young people into their local community, reducing isolation by being a part of something. Drawing volunteers from the local area helps build relationships, encourages compassion and in turn improves community cohesion.

Children and young people are at the centre of our project we are passionate about providing the support they need. Upon receipt of a referral, project staff conduct an initial assessment with the child/young person to obtain a clear understanding of their wishes and an insight into their expectations. Once a match is found the relationship is reviewed by our project staff twice a year as minimum to explore how the relationship is developing.

The longest a child/young person has had to wait for a match has been more than 300 days, however, in that particular case the young person had moved 4 times since the referral was made. The quickest match has been just one day – fortunately we had volunteers ready and waiting. On average, a child/young person can hoped to be matched within 12 weeks of an initial assessment being completed.

Section 3 – Volunteers

To attract a diverse cohort of volunteers, we advertise through a range of mediums including online job sites, universities, volunteer bureaus, libraries, business, social media and posters in local shops and public places. Our volunteers range between 24 years and 71 years, 23% are male. We have an eclectic mix of volunteers including students, lecturers, accountants, foster carers, retired people, nurses and other health professionals.

Section 3.1 – Volunteer Facts and Figures

Applicants expressed an interest in volunteering	683
Completed applications returned and interviews completed	115
Applicants attending training	70

Section 3.2 – Volunteer Journey

Applicants must be 18 years plus and undertake a robust recruitment process with Change Grow Live. The training includes our core skills including safeguarding, data protection, equality and diversity and adheres to the National standards for the provision of Independent Visitors. All stages must be complete before an applicant is registered with us. Staff may end the recruitment process at any point if they feel the applicant is unsuitable for the project.

Our training is an integral part of recruitment and matching, providing an opportunity to get to know volunteers, their suitability and seeking the best match. The process ensures applicants understand our policies and procedures essential when meeting children and young people representing our organization. We continue to offer volunteers a range of accredited and regulated learning outcomes including Level 2 Mentoring and a Level 2 Roles and Responsibilities of an Independent Visitor course.

Change Grow Live operates a 'HUB' allowing us to recruit, train and manage volunteers with a national reach. This in turn streamlines recruitment and assists the matching process.

Section 3.3 – Supporting our volunteers

Recognising that the role may feel isolating we facilitate peer meetings quarterly, inviting volunteers to a "coffee and catch-up" gathering. Whilst sharing a meal together volunteers have the opportunity to share their experience, seek guidance and build friendship with others in the same role.

Post-match, volunteers have supervision at a minimum of 6 monthly intervals with project staff, however we firmly believe in an open door policy, during training we emphasise that volunteers may contact us on as and when

needed. Furthermore, volunteers are provided with relevant safeguarding numbers and procedures and access Change Grow Live staff 24/7; volunteers are fully supported, when out with their child/young person they know there is a knowledgeable person on the end of the phone should the need arise.

Our volunteers are role models thus they are encouraged to complete additional training to enhance their skills, perhaps around autism or learning disabilities. All volunteers are invited to undertake our own training via the Change Grow Live intranet pages and it is an open door to return to the independent visitor training – just for a refresher; we aim to raise awareness about national events such as Mental Health Awareness week, Women's Day and World Book Day by cascading information.

Section 4 – Communication & Participation

Commissioners

The project has been providing a service in partnership with Nottingham City & Nottinghamshire County Council for almost 3 years, during that time we have built a strong positive relationship with professionals in a variety of different roles/teams.

Joint quarterly meetings are held with our partners from the local authority where monitoring information is scrutinised and case studies shared. Partnership working is an opportunity to highlight strengths and identify solutions should improvement or development be required.

Children and young people

We recognise that participation is key to our success in 2019-20 we :

- attended the Children in Care Council sharing existing leaflets about our service and gathered ideas on how the service could be better advertised.
- attended the “Big it up” awards to capture views of young people about our service speaking with foster carers raising awareness about Children's rights.
- Invited children and young people (with their independent visitor), to participate in our training, sharing their own experience with potential volunteers is invaluable.
- We keep in touch with young people both awaiting a match and those already matched twice a year to obtain their feedback about our service.
- All young people are invited to complete and return a questionnaire about Change Grow Live – all participants are entered into a prize drawer.
- All children and Young people were invited to assist in interviewing potential volunteers, or, help design appropriate questions, inserting “young person question” into our interview format.

Section 5 – Best Practice

Referrals: Change Grow Live accept referrals from social workers based on criteria fixed by our funders (young person subject to a care order, has limited or no contact with their birth family and it is considered to be in their best interest). To engage with the service it is critical that the young person is in agreement with the referral being made. If we are approached by other stakeholders, we redirect to the social worker, they have overview and responsibility for the care plan. Once a referral is received, project staff consider suitability. Gatekeeping is essential as occasionally other services are more appropriate such as advocacy or CAMHS. Once accepted staff visit the child/young person to complete a person centred initial assessment.

Recording Data: Information is securely stored on our data management system CRiis. We store all relevant information including basic details, contacts with professionals, risk assessments, contact sheets from volunteers and monitoring information. Only project staff and higher level management have access. Regular alerts are in place to ensure checks and responses are completed in a timely manner ensuring continuous monitoring.

Independence: We are an independent service and strive to ensure the child/young person understands that. Training, Initial assessments, match meetings and Independent Visitor sessions do not take place on Council premises. It is important that children and young people understand volunteers gift their time simply because they care.

Volunteers: Volunteers are trained under the Change Grow Live Safer Volunteer Recruitment (SVR) process a commitment to anti-discriminatory law, policy and practice. SVR is a seven stage process including; application form, first interview, classroom training, enhanced DBS check, references, assessment pack and second interview. Volunteers are not permitted to meet with a child/young person until all stages are complete.

Activities & Confidentiality: Volunteers choose with their young person the activity they wish to engage in within budget, sometimes saving for more expensive trips. They share plans with project staff. Project staff complete necessary risk assessments and seek permissions before any activity is undertaken. The volunteer returns a contact sheet and expense form to project staff –stored on criis. Unless a safeguarding situation arises, should professionals wish to know more about the IV relationship they are directed to the child/young person for their personal feed-back.

Section 6 – Case Studies

Case study 1

X has had an Independent Visitor for several years, during that time X has moved home. X has shared with her IV how she finds contact difficult with her birth family, how she struggles when her birth mother is unwell and unable to attend their contact sessions – she finds this frustrating and grapples with feelings of disappointment, anger and feeling lonely – at the beginning of visits our IV listens to her feelings and then they engage in a fun activity to ensure their visit ends in an upbeat mood. During visits, X shared her excitement in anticipation of a holiday abroad with her foster family. However, sadly, due to an incident at school X wasn't permitted to go on the holiday after all. Our IV was concerned about X and the disappointment she may experience, thus it was agreed with all that our IV would have an additional visit, the respite carers details were exchanged and the additional trip took place. The pair enjoyed a paint a pot experience and lunch together, so that X had a keepsake – a more positive memory through what might be a difficult time.

Case study 2

Z was referred to our service as after several years as a looked after child he struggled to make and maintain friendships both in and out of school. He had suffered a period of social isolation and in spite a number of interventions. His foster carers report that he simply refuses to "go-out" with them no matter what they suggest. He was matched with an experienced independent visitor, she has been successful in persuading him to leave the house and try new things, together they have enjoyed cinema trips, meals out, a Maze, mega zone, Twin Lakes to name but a few. His foster carers say that they can really struggle to get him to leave the house just on a day to day basis, they say that she has worked miracles.

Case study 3

Y was referred to us following a move from foster care into a residential home in a different town. The referral said that Y had recently shared that he was gay, and his social worker hoped that spending time with an independent visitor would help him adjust to the new town, environment and identify. Y was matched with an independent visitor, they have a common interest in the arts, they have taken full advantage of affordable theatre productions and art exhibitions in the area, when asked, Y said "We have been going to theatre and stuff, I hadn't really been before, I would recommend the theatre, I think having an IV can certainly give you the confidence to speak up about personal things, I guess, when you are with staff well, it's not the same, they are not always there and it can feel like they are lurking and listening, but when your IV comes, you can talk to them about personal stuff, I would recommend it to other people".

Section 7 – Feedback

“I've been on lots of courses and I can honestly say it was one of the best... I never felt so engaged, throughout the training and afterwards telling my husband all about it. If I didn't understand anything on the day I asked and my question was answered. There was great interaction with all the other attendees, and the tasks were varied; I liked that we were asked to get up and go across the room for one activity. It kept everyone motivated.” IV

“I was impressed by how detailed and professional the training was, and also the arrangements in place to support volunteers” IV

“Great communication with the network. Great relationship building skills with the children. Always positive feedback from the children. I'd definitely recommend the service” social worker

“The communication was very easy and the whole referral process was very smooth. Even communicating with different staff members, everyone was well informed and this made everything run smoothly, which is important at an often challenging time for families”. Social worker

“Hello all, I just needed to share what a fantastic first visit J had today with X. They went to Alton towers and it couldn't have gone any better. X was bang on time, very organised with everything covered so j felt really safe. He and X have already planned that next month they will go to Sherwood pines cycling and he's really looking forward to it He's having the summer holiday of a lifetime!” Best wishes Foster carer

“The best thing about my IV is telling her stuff and she is funny, she is great fun, she's kind, She is simply the best” YP aged 14

“My favourite visit is Maysum! I like Cineworld too, actually every visit is special”

YP age 11

“If I could change anything, I'd like to go out twice a month!” YP age 14

“The best thing about the service is that I get to go out, she's always there”, YP age 17

"It's helped me to be a better person, gain new skills, I get time away from my placement, can try new activities" YP age 16

When asked, If you were shopping for an IV what would be on your list? "a girl who is young funny and active and who likes fair rides, someone who loves chocolate as much as me, has patience, time and understanding, my IV has everything!" YP age 12

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Annual Report 2019-20

Independent Advocacy

**The
Children's
Society**

Gabriel Hall
Area Manager

Alison Smith
Service Manager

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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 children in their 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 the 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 Council 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 are contracted to provide Residential Visiting Advocacy to Children's Residential Units at a minimum of once every twelve weeks. This includes all residential units that are Local Authority maintained, private and secure accommodation throughout the UK.

Issue Based Advocacy

The Children's Society provides 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 the 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.

The service aims to ensure children and young people;

- Feel that their views, wishes and opinions are listened to
- Are confident to speak out and self-advocate
- Understand their rights and the decisions made about their lives
- Have improved wellbeing
- Have more control over the decisions made in their lives

Non- instructed advocacy

The advocate's role is to ensure that young people's welfare and dignity are at the centre of all decisions being made about them. If a young person is unable to communicate their views, then the advocate will make it clear that they do not know what a young person wants, and that they are therefore using a non-instructed approach.

The non-instructed advocacy role primarily involves observation, questioning, information gathering and being clear about children's entitlements and rights.

In practice non-instructed advocacy usually involves a combination of these techniques to ensure the rights of the young person are upheld and that decisions are made in a child-centred way and, as far as possible, the young person has some input into the decisions affecting their lives. Advocates will draw on a range of communication tools for example symbols,

signing and PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). This may involve working with other people in the child's life to gain a better understanding of what the child wants to communicate

Independent Persons

An Independent Person is provided to all eligible children and young people subject to current Secure Accommodation Orders.

As an Independent Person, the Advocate is an active member of the decision making panel, which decides whether the criteria for keeping a young person in secure accommodation continue to apply, ensuring that children's rights and entitlements are upheld and that decisions are appropriate

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, Semi- Independent Providers, Secure Accommodation and Foster Carer networks. And in supporting an understanding of advocacy provision the service manager has attended a range of meetings and networking events including;

- Social Work team meetings
- Foster Carer Support meetings with the National Fostering Agency
- Foster Carer business meetings
- PoWer – Independent Visiting Service
- Young people's Refugee Forum and youth group
- Residential Provider visits

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 five languages including Arabic, Pashtu and Farsi.

Performance overview

Residential Visiting Advocacy has a key performance indicator of visiting 80% of residential units no less than once every twelve weeks. It is worth noting that many units are located outside of the east midlands region including places such as Sheffield, Burnley, Crew, and Shropshire. Often residential settings support just one young person. It is therefore important that Visiting Advocacy is very carefully planned to ensure the best 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).

The contract year has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (March 23rd 2020 onwards). With national lockdown and social distancing restrictions requiring significant changes to service operations. Most notably the service swiftly transitioned to full remote delivery – with all advocacy support being provided through digital platform and phone contact.

The move toward remote delivery created additional staff capacity for face-to-face (phone/digital) delivery since there was no longer a requirement for staff travel. Chart 1 clearly illustrates the increase in Residential Visiting Advocacy output post COVID-19.

Throughout the contract year The Children’s Society visited between 48 and 182 Residential Units, making a total of 451 visits to residential units.

During the months April to September 2020, residential visits were undertaken remotely (digital platform & phone) representing 71% of the total annual visits.

It’s worth noting that prior to the COVID-19 restrictions and as a result of feedback. The service understood that Children in Care with complex disabilities in specialist settings required an increase in the frequency of Visiting Advocacy – (which changed to monthly). This adjustment began in February of 2020.

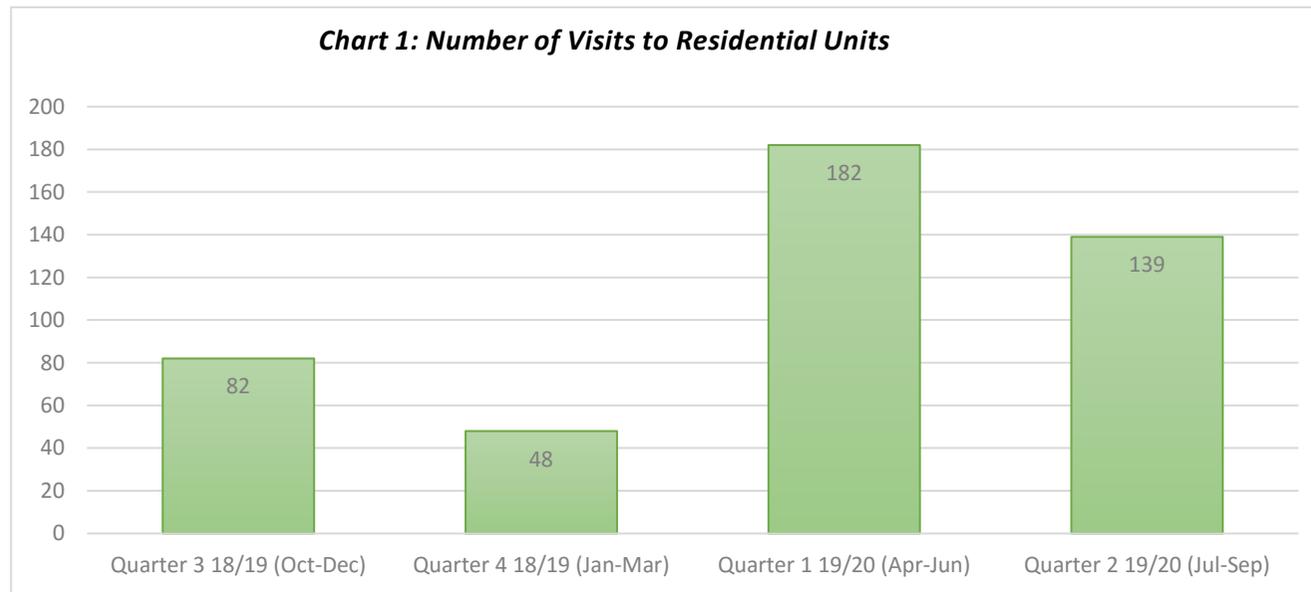


Chart 2 demonstrates that between 74 and up to 272 young people were provided access to Advocacy each quarter (totalling 668 young people for the full year).

Chart 3 illustrates the percentage of young people receiving a visit every twelve weeks against the benchmark 80%. This shows visits ranging between 70% and 116% compliance - with some young people receiving more than one visit in quarter 2 of 2020. It is noticeable that the period's quarter 2 and quarter 3 of 2019 see performance at 70% and 85%. Through this period delivery was being stretched due to increasing; Out of county placements, Referrals for Issue Bases Advocacy and Independent Person requests - (including secure review panel meetings in Glasgow and Exeter).

Chart 2: Number of young people receiving a visit each quarter

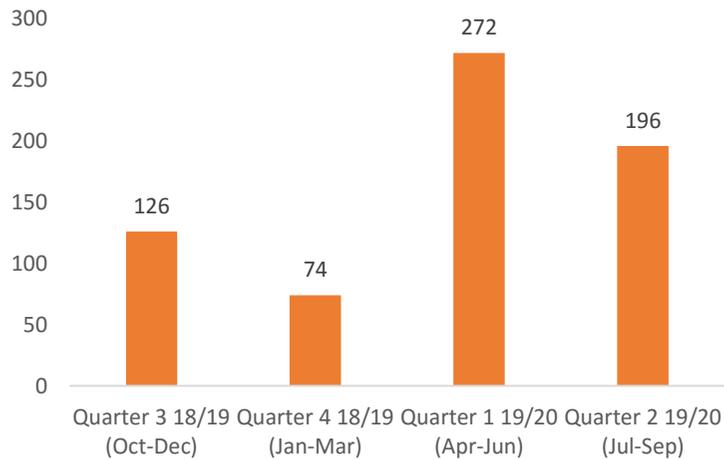
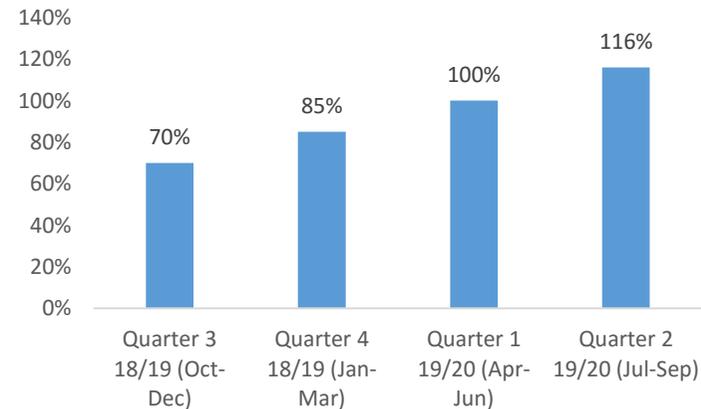


Chart 3: % of children receiving a visit every 12 weeks



Issue Based Advocacy (IBA)

Chart 4 illustrates active cases throughout the quarterly periods showing a high of 73 in Quarter 3 of 2019. With the total number of children supported across the year standing at 83. Representing an increase of 30% from the 2018-19 total of 64.

Chart 5 shows seven broad areas that young people required advocacy support for, with the majority being in relation to Care Placement and Social Care (with IBA figures being similar to 2018-19). However it's worth noting that issues in relation to Personal Relationships and Professional Support have increased by 100% when compared to last year. A more detailed breakdown of Advocacy issues can be seen in Chart 6 (p.10). With a full description of each advocacy issue being located in the appendix section of this report.

Chart 4: Number of children being supported with Issue Based Advocacy

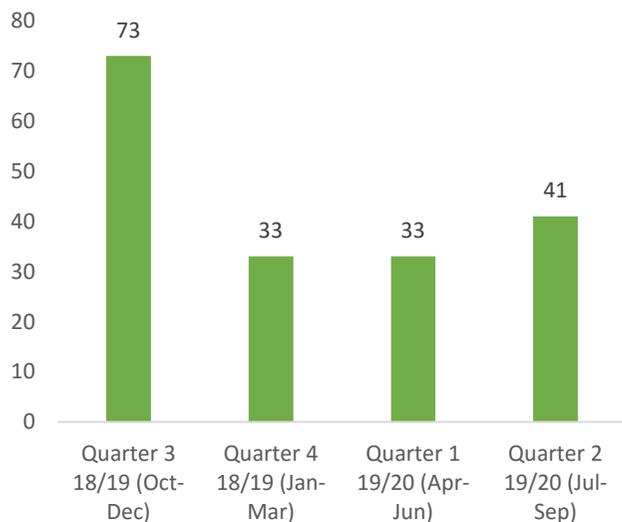
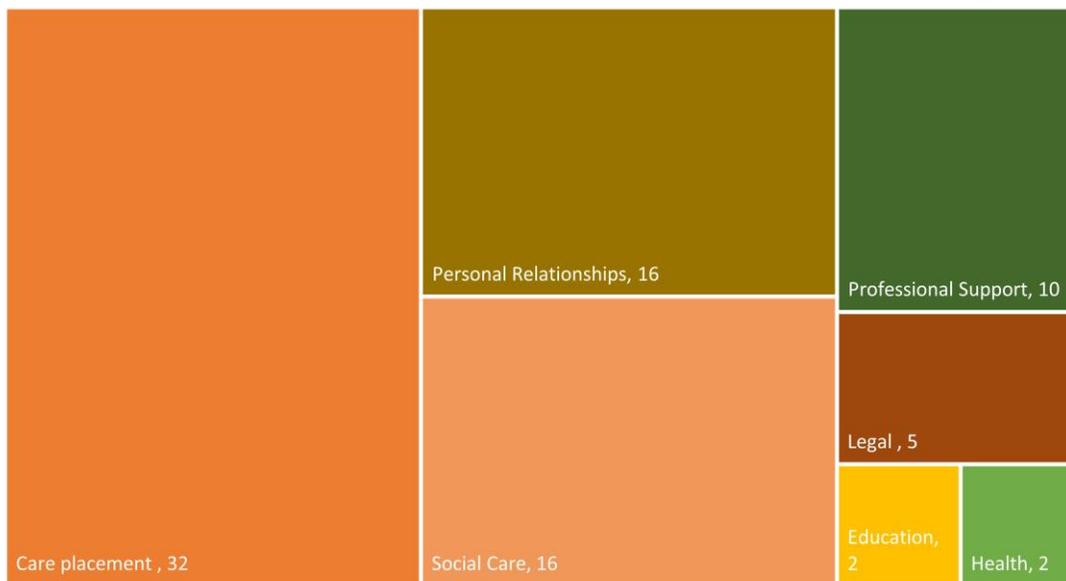
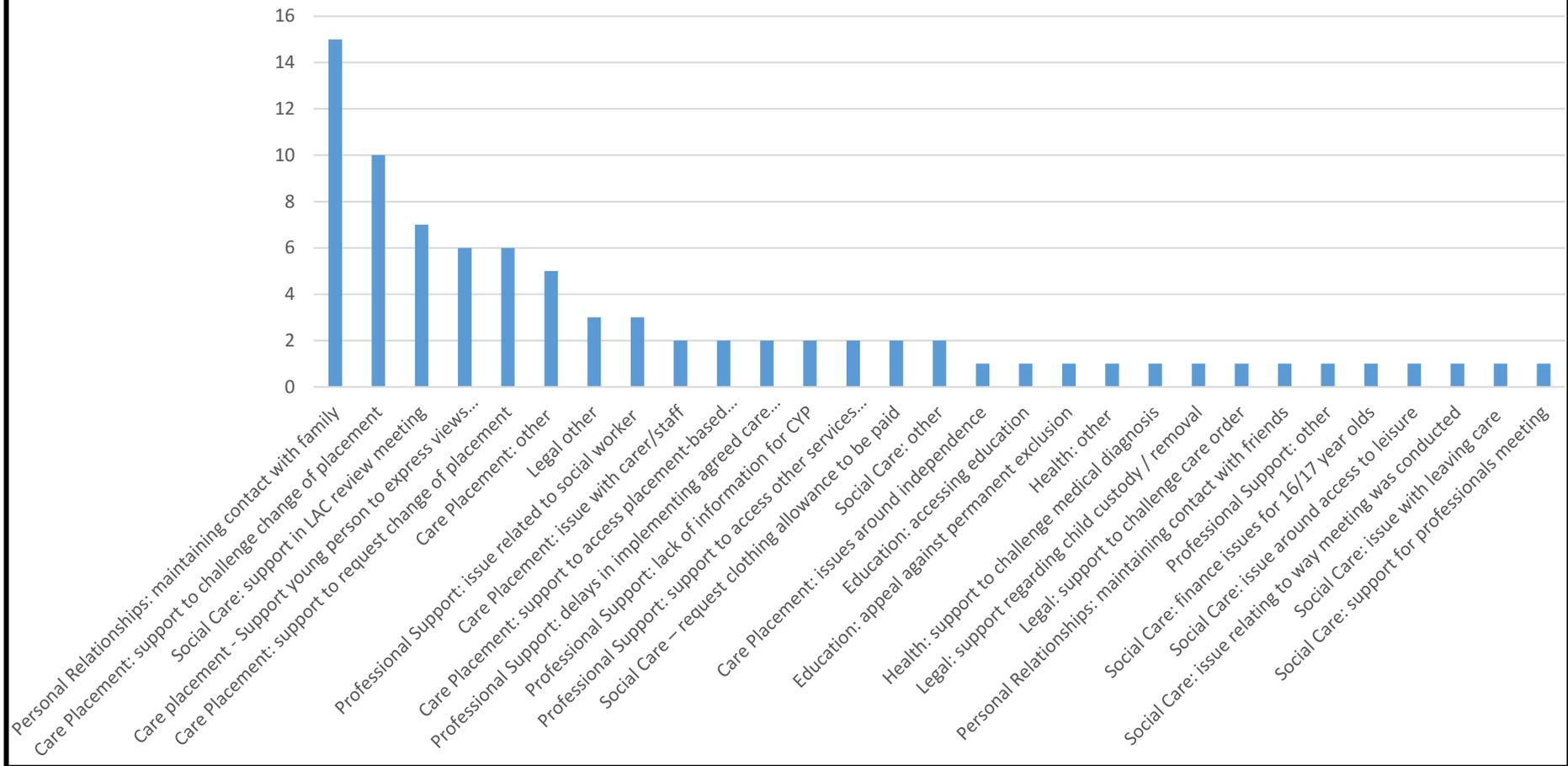


Chart 5: Advocacy Issues

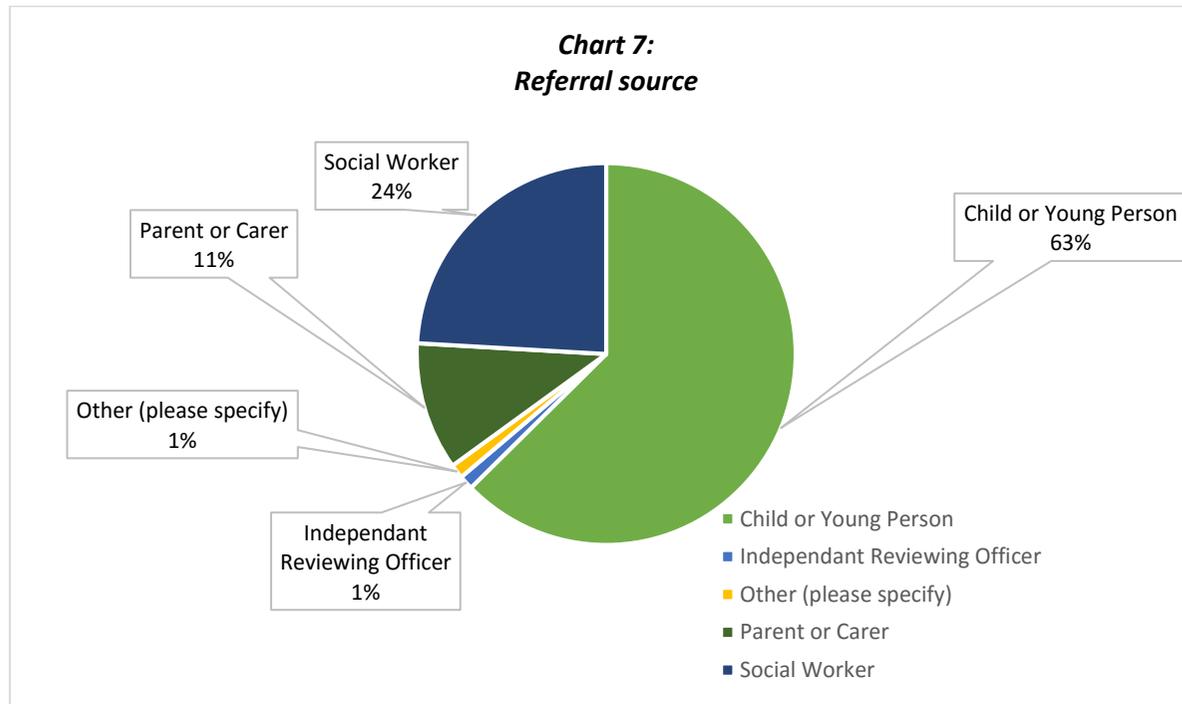


**Chart 6:
Issue Based Advocacy in detail**



Referrals for Issue Based Advocacy

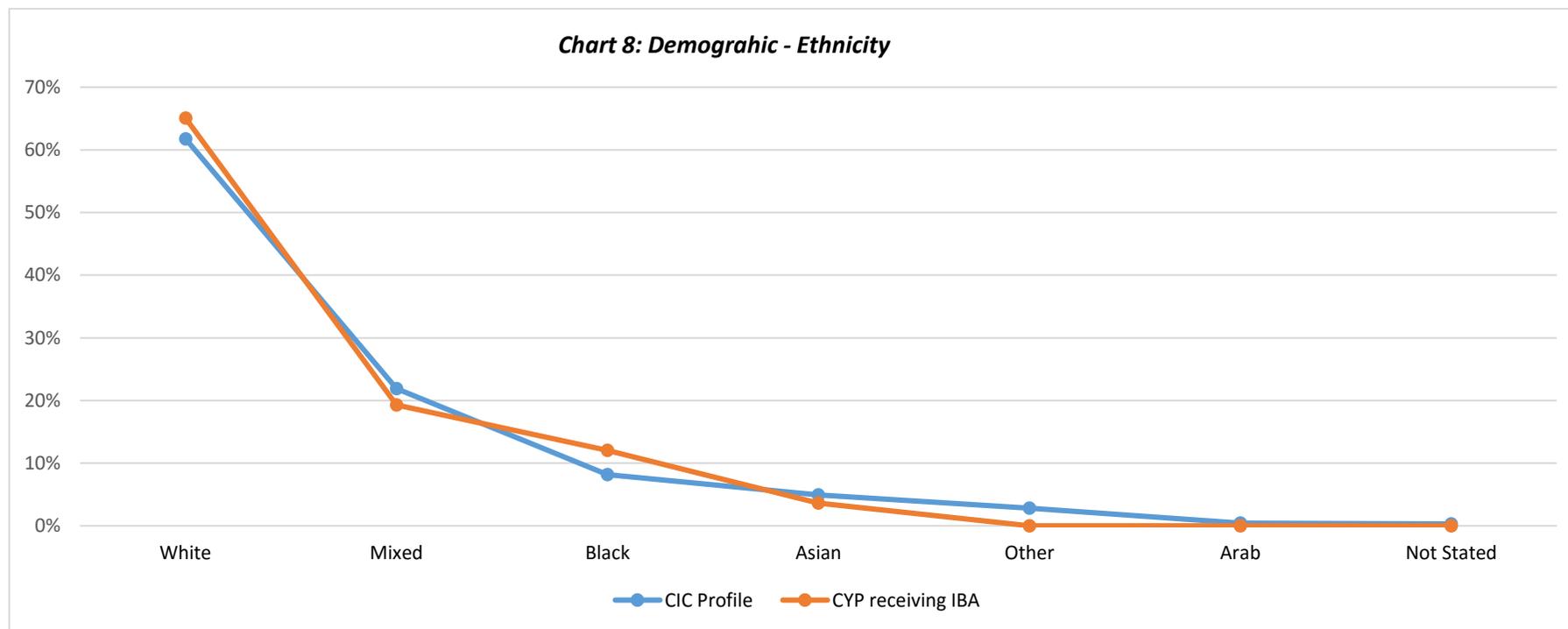
The Advocacy service receives referrals from a range of sources including young people, parents/carers, social workers and other professionals. The largest proportion of referrals at 63% have come directly from young people (last year the figure was 52%), 24% have come via social workers (down from 29% last year). With 11% being made by parents or carers (similar to 12% in 2018-19). Referrals from IRO's show 1% which are down from 2018-19 at 6%.



Demographic data - Ethnicity

Chart 8 shows children and young people accessing Issue Based Advocacy support by ethnicity compared to the Children in Care population (Sept 2019 - August 2020). The largest group taking up advocacy at 65% were White British, this is consistent with 62% of the Children in Care population.

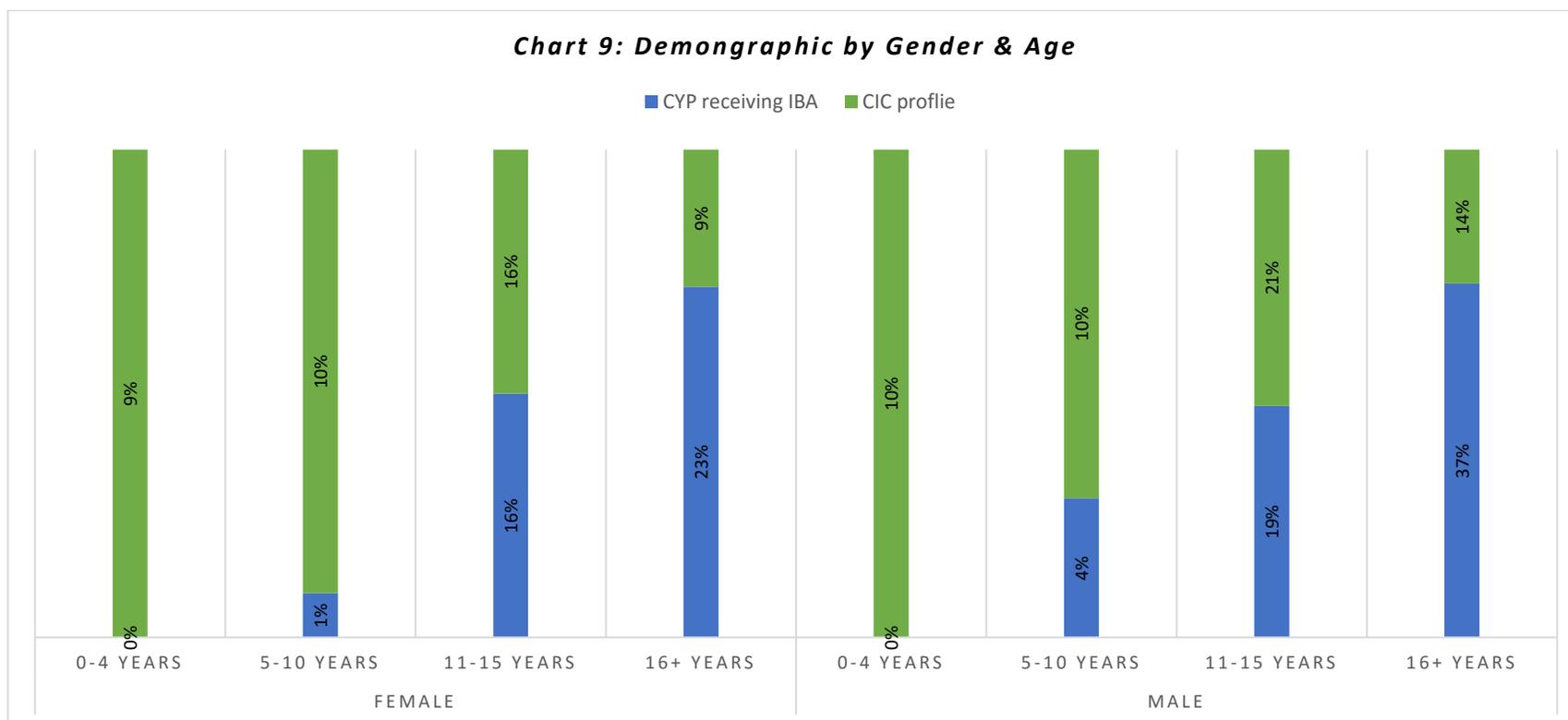
It is noticeable that most ethnicity groups are in line with the CIC profile. For example 22% of Children in Care came from Mixed Heritage backgrounds making up 19% of those who have used the advocacy service. Children from Black British Caribbean, African and other Black groups make up 8% of Children in Care with 12% receiving advocacy support. Asian British, Indian Pakistani and other Asian groups make up 5% of Children in Care with 4% having accessed the advocacy service. However no young people from Arab or other groups received Advocacy support.



Demographic Data - Gender and Age

When comparing the age and gender of Children in Care with those receiving Issue Based Advocacy. In line with 2018-19 data we can see that males aged 16 years and over have been the largest group at 37% accessing support, this is up from last year by 9%. Females in this range also show second highest at 23%.

Males (19%) and females (16%) in the range 11-15 years were the third and fourth largest groups to access advocacy. While females in the 5-10 years range made up 10% children in care and just 1% of those accessing support. Notably children in the range 0-4 years for both males and females make up 0% of those accessing advocacy (this is similar to last year's data).

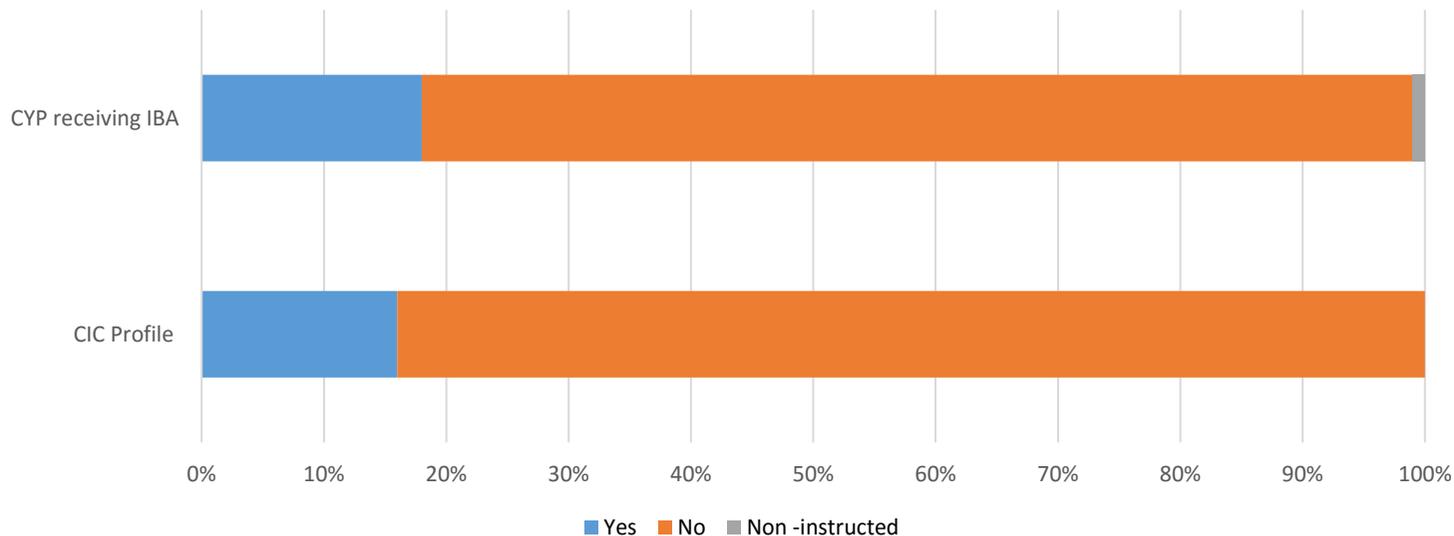


Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND)

The Children’s Society provide a dedicated advocate whose focus is to work with Children in Care who have special needs and disability. The Advocate undertakes regular visits to Crocus Fields and Woodview Residential units who provide care for children with special needs and disability. When appropriate the service will provide non-instructed advocacy to support children who lack capacity to make decisions. In these cases advocate spends time getting to know the child, observing them in their environment in order to develop an understanding of how they communicate. Through this process (and through talking to parents/cares) the advocate builds up a picture of the young person’s wishes and feelings.

Chart 10 show that 16% of Children in Care have a recognised disability or special need. And similar to last year’s data Advocacy take up is closely aligned to this profile with 18% receiving support. With 1% of this cohort receiving non-instructed advocacy, this is an increase on 2% from last year.

Chart 10: SEND

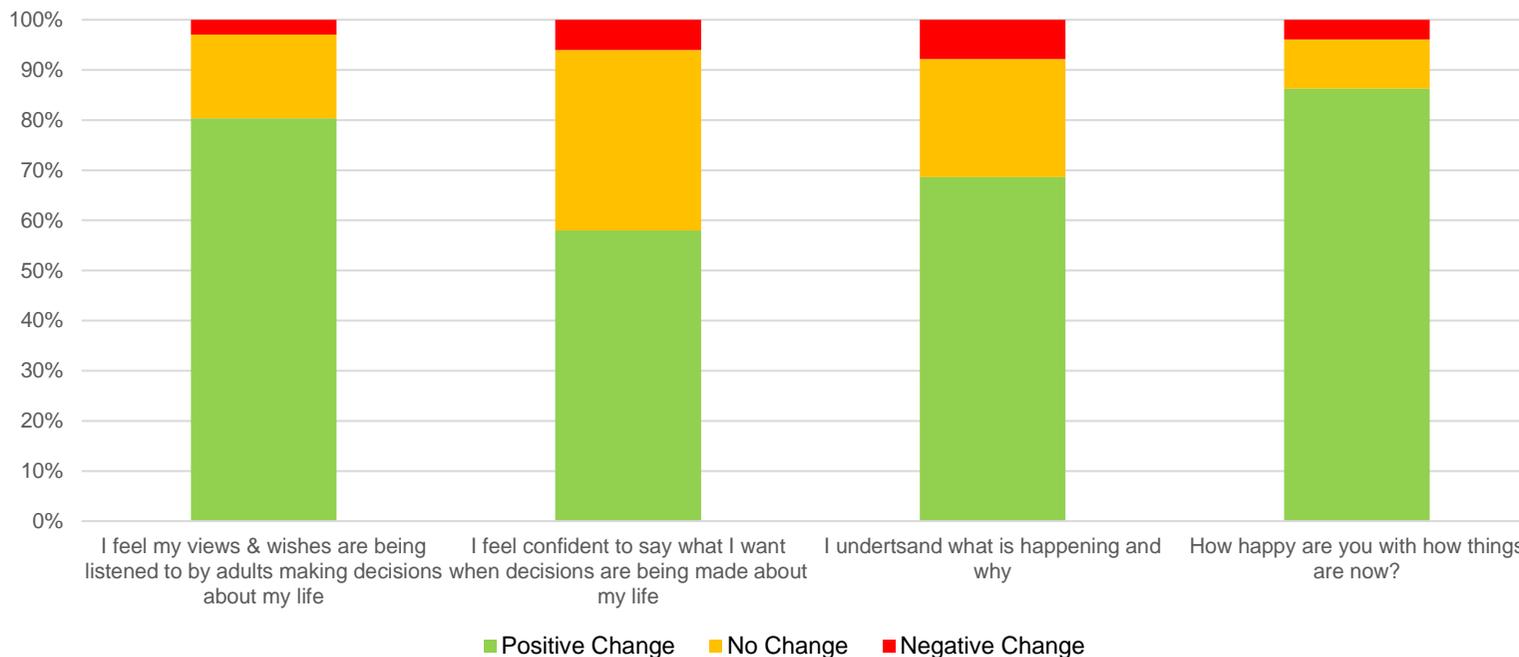


Children and Young People's Feedback (Issue Based Advocacy)

The service has developed an outcomes tool which is designed to track children and young people's views in relation to the resolution of issues they have raised. It needs be noted that Advocates have difficulty in obtaining feedback from young people once advocacy work has concluded. Anecdotal feedback (from advocates, professionals and young people) suggests that this is largely because young people consider that the advocacy process has finished, and therefore they feel they do not need to engage further with advocacy staff. However the service has been successful in obtaining feedback from 73% of the cohort accessing advocacy support.

Chart 11 shows that 86% of young peoples were happier following advocacy intervention. With 69% indicating they understood what was happening (with their care) and why. While 57% 'felt confident to say what they wanted' and 80% 'felt listened to by adults making decisions'.

Chart 11: CYP Feedback



Conclusion

This year has been a year of two halves with November 2019 to April 2020 being delivered within usual expectations. However the period from late March through to October 2020 has required advocacy to be delivered within the framework of COVID-19 restrictions. The Children's Society worked closely with commissioners throughout the lockdown period sharing information in relation to business continuity, risk management and outcomes for children and young people.

And as we look ahead toward 2021 with some uncertainty regarding the impact of COVID-19. The service will continue working closely with children and young people understanding their needs and responding appropriately. It is pleasing therefore that feedback demonstrates 86% of young people were happier following advocacy support. This being a good indication that the service is able to work effectively using remote and 'socially distanced' approaches.

Throughout 2019-20 advocacy take up has continued growing being evidenced through increasing requests for Issue Based Advocacy and in particular self-referrals by young people. With the service continuing to work collaboratively with professionals, supporting decision making processes and ensuring that the rights of children in care are upheld.

Appendix 1

Advocacy Issue	Number
Personal Relationships: maintaining contact with family	15
Care Placement: support to challenge change of placement	10
Social Care: support in LAC review meeting	7
Care placement - Support young person to express views to social care (whilst living in temporary placement) during move to another placement.	6
Care Placement: support to request change of placement	6
Care Placement: other	5
Legal other	3
Professional Support: issue related to social worker	3
Care Placement: issue with carer/staff	2
Care Placement: support to access placement-based activities	2
Professional Support: delays in implementing agreed care plan	2
Professional Support: lack of information for CYP	2
Professional Support: support to access other services (including signposting)	2
Social Care – request clothing allowance to be paid	2
Social Care: other	2
Care Placement: issues around independence	1
Education: accessing education	1
Education: appeal against permanent exclusion	1
Health: other	1
Health: support to challenge medical diagnosis	1
Legal: support regarding child custody / removal	1
Legal: support to challenge care order	1
Personal Relationships: maintaining contact with friends	1
Professional Support: other	1
Social Care: finance issues for 16/17 year olds	1
Social Care: issue around access to leisure	1

Social Care: issue relating to way meeting was conducted	1
Social Care: issue with leaving care	1
Social Care: support for professionals meeting	1

END

Corporate Parenting Board – 16 November 2020

Proposal for future meeting arrangements

- 1) The Chair of Corporate Parenting Board (Portfolio Holder for Children) has requested that new arrangements be put in place to support effective Board discussions, prioritising the views and voices of children and young people and demonstrating the impact of our partnership to support children in care and care leavers in Nottingham City.
- 2) It is proposed that future Corporate Parenting Board meetings will be organised into two parts:
 - a) The consideration of reports (by exception) from partner agencies to enable scrutiny, challenge and accountability in relation to their work to support children in care and care leavers;
 - b) A themed discussion, capturing the views of the Children in Care Council and Your Voice Groups, to shape future policy, service design and improvement.
- 3) The themed discussions will be:
 - a) Health and Wellbeing;
 - b) Education and Employment;
 - c) Homes and Housing.
- 4) These themes align to areas of focus identified by the Children in Care Council and will enable consideration of key themes emerging from the Have Your Say survey.
- 5) For each theme, a member of the Corporate Parenting Board will be identified to work with a representative/s of the Children in Care Council to gather the views of a wider group of children and young people, identify key areas for exploration by the Board, and present their findings to the Board for discussion.
- 6) We propose to pilot these new arrangements at the meeting in January 2021, with a focus on Health and Wellbeing.
- 7) To support the involvement and attendance of young people, it is proposed that the Board meets at 5.30pm to ensure that it takes place outside of standard school/college/work hours. We will also ensure we have measures in place to protect the privacy of any young people who attend.
- 8) It is also proposed to extend the standing membership of the Board and to seek representatives from the following:
 - The Independent Reviewing Service;
 - The Virtual School;
 - Nottingham City Homes;
 - Housing Aid;
 - The local Clinical Commissioning Group;
 - Nottingham City Public Health;
 - The Department for Work and Pensions.



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