Change Grow Live - End of Year Report 2018-19
Nottingham City Council Independent Visitor Service

On March 1st 2019 Sova merged with Change Grow Live (CGL) to form a larger stronger more focussed service provider. Our mission at CGL is to help people change the direction of their lives and live life to its full potential. Our objective is to deliver services which improve the health and wellbeing of the young people we support helping them to achieve life affirming goals. CGL have over 53 projects across England and Wales attracting more than 2000 volunteers and in excess of 3500 staff. Through our service on behalf of Nottingham City Council in 2018-19 we supported 23 children and young people by providing the independent visitors; those children have enjoyed 137 separate trips, meals and adventures! We pride our service delivery on the passion for equality which drives our staff and volunteers.

Quality Assurance

CGL are committed to delivering high quality, safe and cost effective services. In 2018-2019 CGL continued to operate under the following quality frameworks and approved provider standards;

Stonewall TOP 100 EMPLOYER 2019

bsi. ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management | OHSAS 18001 Occupational Health & Safety Management | ISO/IEC 27001 Information Security Management

disability confident COMMITTED

The support group is so useful and enjoyable, meeting other volunteers, it's invaluable sharing experiences. Shirley IV

Your Independent Visitor Service

CGL are commissioned by Nottingham City Council to deliver their Independent Visitor Service.

Our practice is underpinned by the National Standards for the provision of Independent Visitors 2016. Positive stake holder partnerships are maintained by providing reports and meeting with commissioning managers quarterly to ensure close monitoring and review of the service.

We have built links with independent reviewing officers, social work area teams, fostering services and the Children In Care Council together with third sector organisations to ensure the service is accessible, transparent and independent.

Our Volunteers

Our model is to recruit, train, deploy and supervise volunteers. We are passionate about equality and create an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. We want our volunteers to reflect the diverse communities of Nottingham City we encourage applications from all members of the community including those with previous experience of the challenges our young people may face. Existing volunteers continue to be our very best ambassadors and receive a Rolls Royce experience in terms of training, opportunities for development, support and supervision. Here is a sample of what our volunteers have to say:

There is always a phone call, email or text from staff which makes me feel connected, valued & part of the team. I find the boundaries and guidance for the role reassuring so I am clear in what I can and can't do. Sally IV

I was impressed by how detailed & professional the training was also the arrangements in place to support volunteers. Douglas IV

The training was great. It gave a really good grounding into the care system, what the YP may be facing & things to look out for along the way. Primrose IV

The supervision I've had has been great, positive and helpful and I know if I'm unsure about anything I'll get a quick response. IV

We currently have 47 volunteers involved in our service either already active or in progress, we are delighted to boast a husband and wife team reinforcing the caring, nurturing nature of our volunteer profile. With such strength within our team we are able to offer a unique service to your looked after children; Our staff team of two are tenacious in recruitment linking with a hub within CGL projects nationwide to find support for young people. Networking is essential on a local level too, drawing interest and developing relationships with agencies such as The Fire Service at community events, Derby Radio, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham Further Education, Sheffield Hallam University, Derby University, Churches and other third sector groups.

Under CGL we adhere to a national volunteer training programme ensuring all are embedded into the organisation, sharing our values and committed to our service. The recruitment process nationally and locally is:

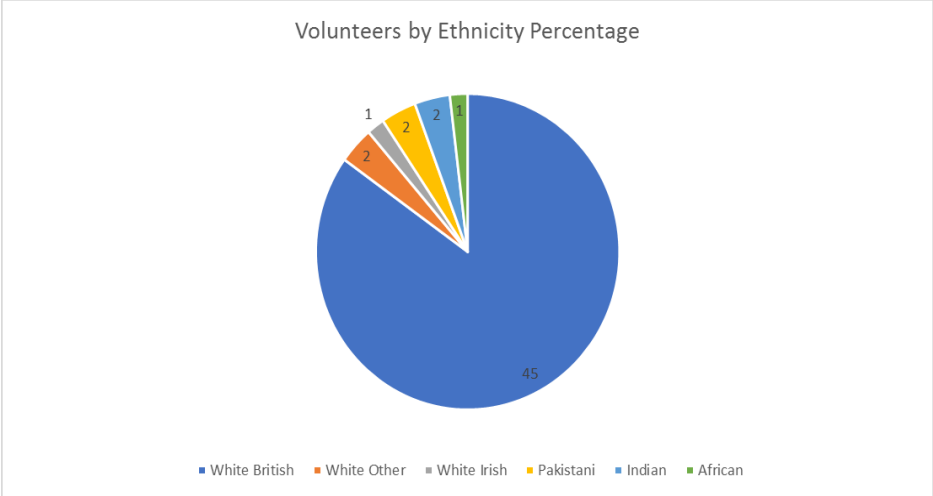
- Initial interest / application and interview
- References & DBS
- Classroom training including core elements and project specific information.
- Safeguarding ELearning
- Completion of assessment pack
- Pre-start discussion

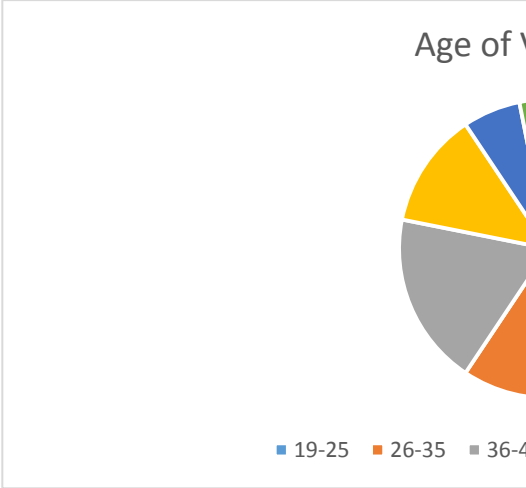
- **In 2018-19 We Delivered:**

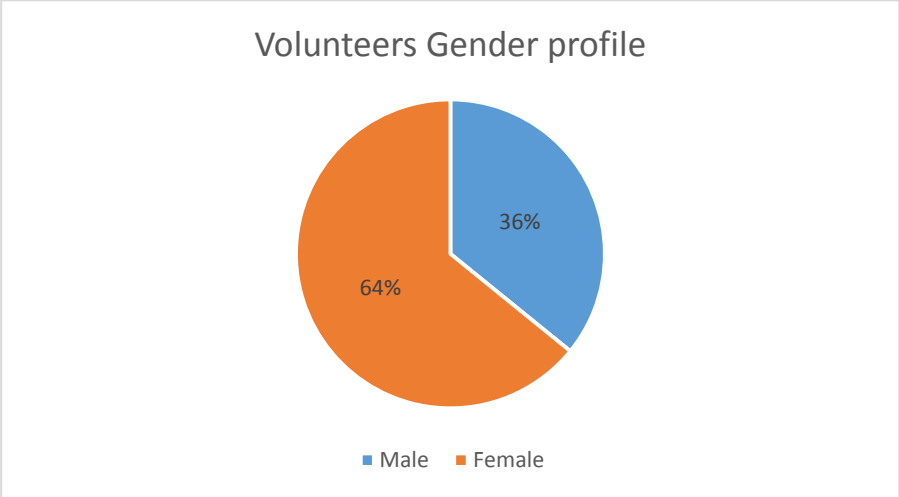
I get guidance and feedback from the staff team, frequent meet-ups to share experiences with other volunteers and plenty of training opportunities. Sue IV

Expenses are paid quickly, I know the contact sheets notes are read, digested, feedback given & advice offered if necessary. Alison IV

- 8 training sessions for volunteers
- 6 volunteer support group meetings.
- 4 tailored and informative Newsletters
- 2 minimum supervisions for each volunteer
- National Celebration event for former Sova & Volunteers







I enjoy having something different to do
Aged 16

The Independent Visitor Service

Independent Visitors are heroes to our young people. They provide on-going tailored companionship, role models offering a long term supportive relationship. They meet with the child/young person on a monthly basis and engage in activities they both enjoy with a view to raising the self-esteem of the child/young person and help their confidence to grow.

Where we have fun!

I like having a friend to talk to
Aged 14

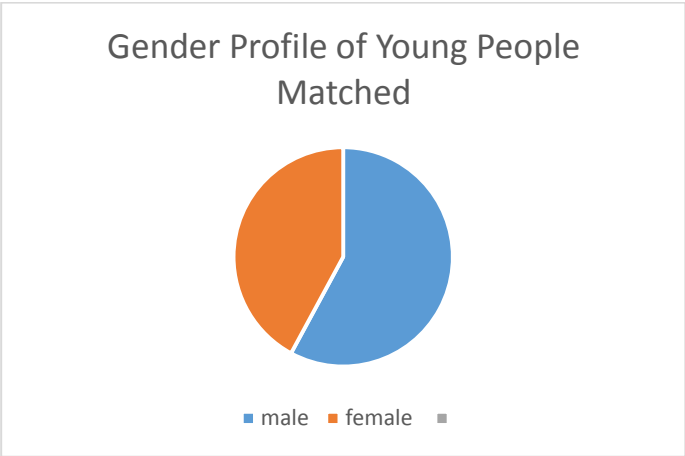
A selection of activities this year include: Playing football, Cadbury's World, Alton Towers, The Light Cinema, Playing Pool, Cinema , Ashover Rock Wooley Moor Show, Barton & Willington Marina - mug painting, Recording studios, Dove dale, Pic-nics, Walking, Canal side Heritage Centre, National Videogame Museum, Tutbury Castle Ghost Walk, Lakeside Theatre Nottingham Arts Centre, City Farm , Eating out , Rugby matches, Football Matches, Horse riding, Go Karting, Window Shopping, Comic Com, Exhibitions, City walks, Crazy golf, Sledging,

Young People Matched with Independent visitors

We end 2018-19 with 23 young people matched and 12 on our waiting list.

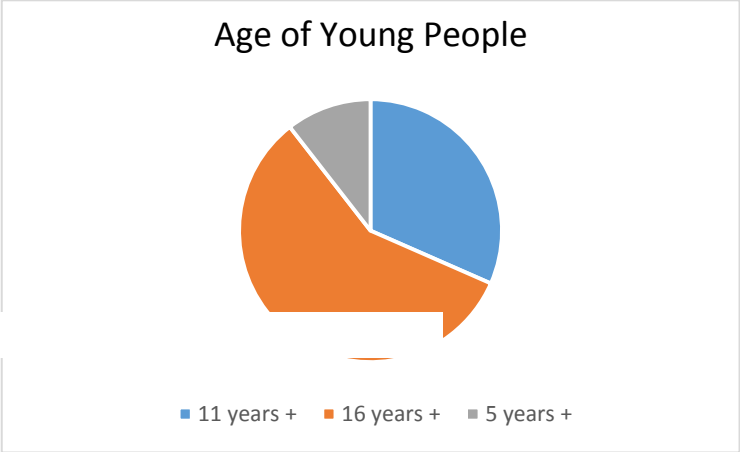
"My IV is kind & funny"

Aged 12

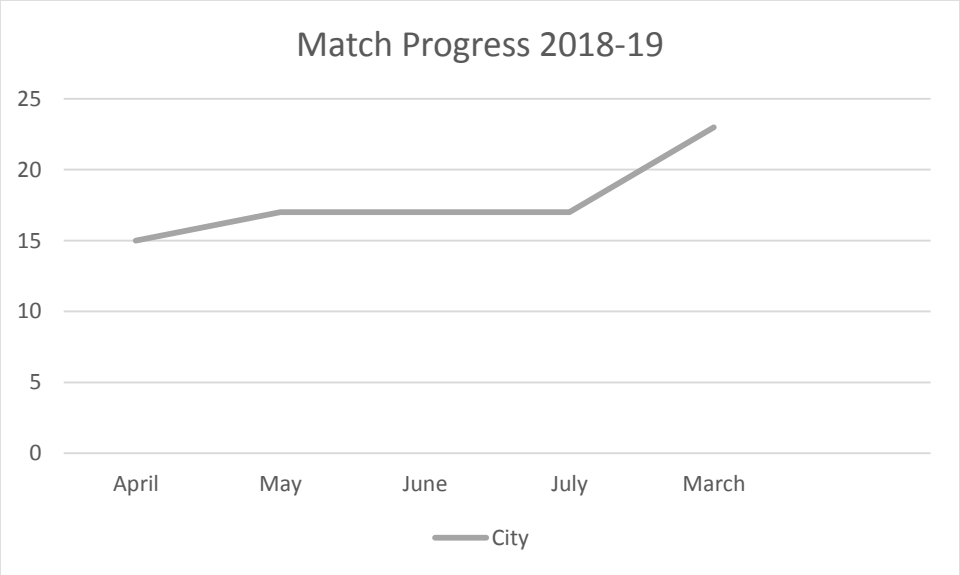


"We have fun, we talk about 101 things!" Aged 14

My IV is really funny I like everything about him. Aged 14



2018-19 We received 24 new referrals on behalf of young people and completed initial assessments for all. We made 15 new matches and support 23 matches overall exceeding the target by 16% for Nottingham City. The average waiting time from referral to match in 2018-19 was 63 days.



We provide case studies at quarterly meetings to illustrate the quality of the matches made and the enjoyment the young people have. Distance is no barrier to our service, we have young people matched in Newark, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Worksop.

It's helped me to be a better person, gain new skills, I get time away from my placement, can try new activities Young person age 15

I've got more confidence and can try new things, Young person age 12

Matters beyond our control impacting waiting times

- Referrals made but risk assessments are missing or incomplete
- Referrals made but young person changes their mind about wanting to engage in the service at match point.
- Young people are moved and the service is not notified of the change of address
- Work load of social worker causes delays in responses for additional information
- Difficulties contacting foster carers & coordinating availability of all parties for initial assessment
- Difficulties coordinating availability of all parties to identify match date;
- Young person having complex needs requiring specialist support rather than a volunteer
- Volunteers identified but awaiting paperwork to fully progress e.g. references or DBS
- Capacity of staff to provide training days to coincide with availability of volunteers who are frequently working full time.

Solutions

- Rolling programme of recruitment offering weekends and weekdays, working in partnership with other CGL providers;
- Ensuring all available means of communication are captured mobile phone, land line, email addresses for carers, social workers and volunteers;
- Staff work flexibly to accommodate needs of the young person, volunteers and foster carers

What do our Independent visitors say?

Over the last twelve months X and I have enjoyed spending time together and she has grown in confidence and visited new places. When I arrive at her foster carer's she is always ready and waiting with a big smile. We usually have a drink and snack and chat about which places she has enjoyed the most. Visiting Santa on the narrow boat comes out pretty high!

I've thought for very many years that looked after children and young people get a raw deal (having taught for 35 years) so when I retired I began as an IV. A few things have changed for the better since then (9 years ago) but I still think it's really important for X (and others) to have a person they trust who is independent from the foster carers. IV

Being an IV means that I might just be doing someone else some good during my life, it means that I can invest the experiences I have from my past, and to some degree feel as though my own time being brought up in what would now be classed as an institution, is now being reinvested to positive effect. I have grown to appreciate how lonely it must be inside for a YP who does not have a guaranteed place to live, and could be asked to leave at any moment, which birth parents cannot just do, it must feel like being on permanent trial. We have had some good times doing stuff – walking along the Trent, Wall Climbing, Cycling, Mini Golf and the Cinema. YP is not at all demanding and just as happy to operate on a low budget as to have money spent, this is important to me because I see this as a signal that we both turn up because we get on, and not because there is something in it for us. To some degree, because as an IV I operate under choice, the relationship between YP and IV is real, and not in place because the system places us there, so as an IV, I do feel as though I can speak to, and respond to the YP in a more straight forward manner than those who have a greater level of responsibility, I hope bring some normalised adult interaction to the world of the YP. IV

Conclusion

"When everything is going well for the young person it's good to just enjoy our time together, talk about things, building trust. If things go very wrong for the young person that is when an IV can be the one bit of stability in their life" Belinda IV

2018-19 has been a successful year for the Independent Visitor Service. Participation is at the heart of what we do,

- We encourage young people to participate in the National Independent Visitor Service event in London.
- Young people were contacted a minimum of three times per year by staff to seek their views on the service in addition to a written invitation to participate in "feedback fortnight" with a prize drawer incentive for responding to our survey – to ensure we capture the voice of young people and are able to adapt our service to meet their needs.
- Young people are invited to our volunteer training to provide guidance and advice to future independent visitors;
- We welcome senior care leavers from all local authorities to our volunteer team willing to share their own care experience for the benefit of all.
- We visit the Children in Care council to obtain feedback into our leaflets and publications to encourage others to take part and recruit volunteers.
- We have invited all young people to get involved in our interview panels when recruiting new volunteers.

CGL will continue to work closely with stake holders to ensure delivery to the highest possible standard of service as they continue to exceed expectations of commissioners.