



**Change
Grow
Live**

P847

Nottingham City Council Independent Visitor Service

Annual Report

April 2019– March 2020

Prepared by:

Gillian Black - Project Manager

May 2020

Contents

Forward	Head of Operations	Page	3
Section 1	Introduction to the project	Page	4
Section 2	Young People	Page	5
	Section 2.1		
	Young People's facts and figures		
	Section 2.2		
	Young People's information		
Section 3	Volunteers	Page	6
	Section 3.1		
	Volunteer facts		
	Section 3.2		
	Volunteer journey		
	Section 3.3		
	Supporting Volunteers		
Section 4	Communication	Page	8
Section 5	Best practice	Page	9
Section 6	Case Studies	Page	10
Section 7	Feedback	Page	11

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 be 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