

**Corporate Parenting Committee  
Nottingham City Independent Visitor Service  
Annual Report  
April 2020 – March 2021**

## Contents

1. Introduction to the Nottingham City IV Service.....	1
i. Independent Visitors .....	2
2. The Independent Visitor Service .....	2
i. Young People Figures .....	2
ii. Independent Visitor Activities .....	3
iii. Service Feedback – Independent Visitor .....	4
3. Communication .....	4
i. Commissioners .....	4
ii. Networking .....	4
4. Children and Young People .....	5
i. Best Practice .....	5
Referrals Independent Visitor Service:.....	5
Practice: .....	5
Recording Data:.....	5
Independence: .....	6
Volunteers: .....	6
Confidentiality: .....	6
ii. COVID-19 .....	6

### 1. Introduction to the Nottingham City IV Service

The Change Grow Live Nottingham Independent Visitor Service is a partnership between Change Grow Live and Nottingham City Council Children Services Department. The project has been funded by the Council since October 2017. During 2020/2021 the project continued to provide Independent Visitors to look after children and care leavers.

### i. Independent Visitors

Change Grow Live recruit and train volunteers from local communities to be independent visitors where children and young people are placed. Independent visitors may be matched with a child or young person up to 18 years or beyond if the young person has additional needs. In 2020/2021 this included recruiting and training volunteers in locations such as Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire. Independent visitors may be matched with a child/young person 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 monthly, with the offer of a telephone call or correspondence offered at the start of a new match relationship to allow for relationships to develop. 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 able to commit for a minimum duration of 2 years?

## 2. The Independent Visitor Service

### i. Young People Figures 2020/2021

<b>Referrals &amp; Matching - Independent Visitor Service</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Young people referred to the service</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Young people newly matched</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Year-end on-going relationships in Nottingham City</i>	<b>26</b>
<i>Referrals withdrawn due to change in circumstances</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Number of matches ended 20-21</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>Young people awaiting an IV at year end</i>	<b>9</b>

A match may end, or a referral 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

## Young People Demographics

<b>Young People within Nottingham city Independent Visitor (including waiting list)</b>	
Male	<b>20</b>
Female	<b>11</b>
Identify as other	<b>3</b>
SEN	<b>15</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White British	<b>26</b>
Mixed white British	<b>2</b>
Black British	
Asian British	
Other	<b>6</b>

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. We have several examples where volunteers have been matched for many years and some have continued to support their young person even when the young person has moved out of their local area.

### ii. Independent Visitor Activities

During 2020/21 young people and their independent visitors have taken part in a range of activities, together they plan how to make the best of their budget. This year it has been very challenging, but the young people have been amazing at accepting the changes.

During Covid these activities moved to virtual, or occasional socially distanced visits in the local area. The young people and their Independent Visitors enjoyed a variety of TEAMS meetings: Amazon deliveries – games, paints, crafts, and lots more. Movie nights, pizza's, pamper sessions have also been shared. Not forgetting, walks & bike rides outdoors. Pokémon Go has also made an appearance.

### iii. Service Feedback – Independent Visitor

#### Foster Carers

*About their 20 year-old YP with additional learning needs commenting on the IV who has been supporting for 3 years and 6 months:*

“IV is very reliable. They have a great relationship. Sometimes he is grumpy but never doesn’t want to go out. She soon turns that around and I know he enjoys it. During lockdown IV kept in regular contact and went for local walks. ”

*About their 16 year-old YP with a health conditions commenting on the IV who has been supporting for 6 months:*

“It’s nice for her to have someone who is closer to her age taking her out. She really enjoys doing out with her IV. I can see the impact on her, since having an IV I have noticed an increase in confidence and independence.

#### Young People

*When asked what’s the best thing about having an IV, YP said:*

“I enjoy doing different things”

“I always look forward to them coming”

“I am not stuck in the house all the time”

“She’s kind... fun... easy to talk to.”

*When asked in a recent survey “would you recommend having an Independent visitor to others” all YP completed answers .... Yes!*

## 3. Communication

### i. Commissioners

The project has been providing a service in partnership with Nottingham City Council since October 2017: 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.

### ii. Networking

We network with Community Action in Nottingham City who share opportunities regarding training, grants and networking events. Aswell as Community action in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. We attend volunteer recruitment events around the Midlands at Universities, such as Derby, Nottingham Trent, Sheffield Hallam.

## 4. Children and Young People

Change Grow Live recognise that participation is key to our success in 2020-21, we:

- Previous years invited children and young people (with their independent visitor), to participate in our training; sharing their own experience with potential volunteers is invaluable. However, due to pandemic, and moving the IV training courses online, this has not been practical or possible, though we are not considering re-instating this in whatever form might take.
- 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.

### i. Best Practice

**Referrals Independent Visitor Service:** 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.

**Practice:** Change Grow Live are members of the National Independent Visitor Network (NIVN), meeting quarterly with other providers to share best practice, ideas, experience and forging positive links. We adhere to the National Standards for the provision of Independent Visitors. We are members of Article 39 raising awareness about the promotion of the protection of children living in institutional settings in England. We attend specialist training delivered by third party organisations to improve our skills and update our knowledge.

**Recording Data:** We follow GDPR regulations with regard to data protection i.e. we only collect data (information) if we need it, keep the data we hold up-to-date, only hold data as long as is necessary, make sure we share data safely and appropriately. We let staff, volunteers and service users know what we are doing to keep their data safe.

Confidential information, including referrals received via Egress, 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 using our services understand 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 pre-commencement interview. Volunteers are not permitted to meet with a child/young person until all stages are complete.

**Confidentiality:** Independent visitors 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 independent visitor returns a contact sheet and expense form to project staff – stored on CRiS. Information is not shared with third parties unless a safeguarding situation occurs. Similarly, advocates respect the privacy of the young person they support, agreeing with them an advocacy action plan, the young person remains in control of the relationship at all times and information is not shared with third parties without permission of the young person.

## ii. COVID-19

During the last year, Government guidance prompted adaptations to working methods to enable the Nottingham Independent visitor Service to continue operation during the lockdown period. All direct face to face work was suspended in order to minimise risk to staff, volunteers and young people. Communication via phone calls, text message, emails, and video calls have continued.

Prior to the pandemic, Change Grow Live would carry out face-to-face interviewing of volunteers, with successful applicants trained in groups of 10 or 12 in central locations or at our main office base within Derby City. As of March 2020 that was all suspended and Change Grow Live had to quickly adapt their processes; initial interviews were carried out over the telephone; Trainers adapted their paper based training to provide online training, and after the implementation of Microsoft Teams capabilities the Independent Visitor volunteer training restarted in June 2020.