

Appendix 1



Advocacy and Independent Visitor Report

January 2016 – December 2016

Sue Preston

Service Manager for The Children's Society



**OVERVIEW OF
SERVICE**

The Children's Society delivers the Children's Rights and Participation Service for Cheshire East. This report is an overview of the contract from January to December 2016. We are in our 4th year of delivery and over time we have worked alongside Cheshire East colleagues to develop and improve provision.

The service comprises of:

Issue Based Advocacy

Advocacy guidance from HM Govt (2010) Working together to safeguard children p.236 suggests:

'Advocates provide independent and confidential information, advice, representation and support and can play a vital role in ensuring children have appropriate information and support to communicate their views in formal settings such as Child Protection Conferences'.

Criteria:

- Children and young people in care 0 -21 years inclusive
- Children moving on from care to adult life and who are entitled to a service under Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and young people subject to a child protection plan
- Young homeless people aged 16/17
- Children and young people making a complaint about a social work service
- Disabled children and young people 0 -18 years irrespective of whether they have a current service plan
- Disabled young people after their 18th birthday receiving transition services

- Children and young people seeking asylum

Child Protection Advocacy

In February to May 2015, in partnership with CE, we carried out a pilot to test out a service to increase the referral rate for children and young people on Child Protection Plans. Following the success of this pilot in November 2015 we moved to an automatic referral for all children and young people on a Child Protection plan 5 and over to be referred for advocacy (*if you would like to see the evaluation of this service please see Child Protection Evaluation Report November 15 – September 16 for further information*)

Actions in CP plan as a result of advocacy Plan confirmed. *Evidence from child's input that he was afraid of the dark. (Children had been left home alone)*

Independent Visiting

The Children Act 1989 (schedule 2, paragraph 17) places a duty on 'the Council' to appoint an independent visitor in respect of any Cared for Children if:

- Communication between the child and parent or any person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility has been infrequent
- The child has not been visited (or has not lived with) a parent, or any person with PR for the child during the preceding 12 months.
- The child or young person agrees to an Independent Visitor being appointed.
- Where it appears to be in the child's best interests to do so

Independent Visitors are volunteers

Independent of the care system, and their role is to visit, advise and befriend

the young people allocated to them and to take a long-term interest in their welfare and development.

(If you would like to see the evaluation of this service please see Independent Visitor Report January 2016 - December 2016 for further information)

Referrals in 2016

We had the following Issue Based referrals in 2016:

74 Issue Based advocacy referrals

Of which were the following:

49 Children in Care

10 Disability

7 Care Leavers

6 Private Fostering

2 were on CP but also needed issue based Advocacy

The advocates use a “toolkit” of equipment when working with children and young people in order to represent their views. Work was always child and young person led. Where a child or young person had disabilities or specific needs in relation to communication, the advocate works to enable the child's wishes and feelings to be represented.

We had the following Child Protection referrals in 2016:

109 Child Protection referrals which included 222 individual children and young people.

The categories were:

47 Neglect

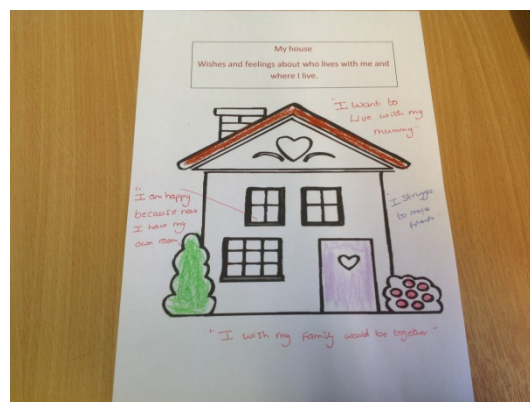
38 Emotional Abuse

12 Physical Abuse

9 Sexual Abuse

3 on CSE plans

The advocates make visual representations of the child and young person's wishes and feelings which are presented at Child Protection Conferences. This gives all present a better understanding of the lived experience of that individual child.



The CP IRO Chairs have been very positive about the involvement of the Advocates in the Child Protection Process and they consider the Advocates are getting increasingly skilled in the role. (Shirley Jordon CP IRO Chair)

We had the following Independent Visitor Referrals in 2016:

Out of the 24 referrals that came in 2016 we had the following:

- 16 Boys and 8 Girls
- 11 of those children and young people had disabilities
- 7 of the children and young people lived out of borough
- 18 lived in Foster Care
- 4 lived in residential
- 1 was on a full care order but lived with their parent and had respite
- 1 was on a full care order and lived with their parent.



We follow the National Advocacy standards in regards to our advocacy service.

Independent Visitor Standards

We follow the new Independent Visitor Standards in regards to our IV service. These were developed and launched in 2014 by The Children's Society, Barnardos, Coram Voice and NYAS.

The IV standards have now been developed by children and young people into a more user friendly format.

Since being matched, A and his volunteer have shared great times together doing things such as going to the cinema, visiting the Science and Industry Museum, bowling and going out for meals. They have a good time together, laugh a lot and A is continuing to open up to the volunteer.

National Advocacy Standards

Future Developments

- ✚ **Develop the service in line with the recent Development Review we had with members of the Safeguarding Children and Quality Assurance Unit in February 2017** *See paper written by Kate Rose on 21.2.17 for more detailed information*
- ✚ **Develop an action plan to make progress towards achieving the vision for the service following the Development session sighted above**
- ✚ **Continue to listen to children and young people and share their views and advocate where needed.**
- ✚ **Promote the Independent Visitor Standards with colleagues children and young people**
- ✚ **Devise a Recruitment campaign for 2017 in order to recruit more new volunteers for our children and young people to benefit from having an Independent Visitor**



M asked advocate "Where is my sister living, "I'm worried she has nowhere to live and scared if she was homeless."

"I like living here because I have my own room"

Listening to 'little voices' may not be as easy as it sounds, and many people do not do it naturally.

Essentially, a whole new style of listening is required. Every time a young child says something,

He or she is opening a door to their experience of the world about which they are the world's foremost expert.

You can either keep the door open and learn something of value by asking more and more questions, or you can close it by assuming you have heard everything worth hearing.

If you keep the door open, you are in for a surprise children's worlds are as rich and complex as your own."

Grossman