



Children in Care Participation and Engagement

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council commissions CSV in Derby to deliver its Children's Rights Service. This encompasses:

The Children in Care Council (including Care Leavers)

Advocacy service for children in care

Independent visitor service for children in care

Advocacy service for children at child protection conferences

Their annual report is attached (appendix 2) and evidences a vibrant and responsive service which is well used by children and staff. It is proposed that this report should be published on the Council website.

- 1.2 The CiCC has recently undertaken a review of the implementation of the Council's Pledge to children in care. This shows that the majority of staff know of the pledge, with 74% out of the 23 randomly consulted could quote a specific point from the mission statement. A summary is attached (appendix 3).

- 1.3 Children in care have the opportunity to contribute to their own care planning and express their views, wishes and feelings at their statutory reviews. Participation rates are very high at 97.4%. Half-year summary attached (appendix 4)

The QA service has recently refreshed their strategy to promote participation, both for children in care and their parents where appropriate, but also for children subject to child protection or child in need plans, and their families. A copy is attached (appendix 5).

- 1.4 Residential homes run by the Council have and promote many opportunities where young people can contribute to the life of the home and decisions made there. This includes; their attendance and input at regular young people's meetings, one to one sessions between the young people and their key workers, complaints and/or representations directly to the Home's Manager, consultation with visiting CRS representatives and in some cases via the CiC Council directly or through representatives.

Additionally, young people are regularly consulted and their views considered in respect of specific plans/proposals, such as Phase 1 and 2 of the children's homes new build and refurbishment development plans.

- 1.5 There are other participation opportunities for children in care to get involved and have their voices heard. These include:

Voices in Action Youth Council

Youth Mayor

Project based consultation such as city centre regeneration

SEND Reform

Commissioning

Interview Panels

CSE survivors group supported by Safe and Sound

Schools Councils

The Council has an engagement strategy which set out key priority areas to enable children and young people to have a voice through different mechanisms. This has supported strategic leads in all directorates to improve service delivery and development based on children and young people's needs in order to give better value for money. The strategy is currently under review and will set out new priorities to strengthen further engagement of children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To receive these reports.
- 2.2 To make recommendations for further action by officers to promote participation and engagement where necessary.
- 2.3 To consider any further steps the Board, its members or other elected members may take to promote participation and engagement by children & young people in care and care leavers.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 As corporate parents it is beholden on elected members and officers of the Council to ask, to listen, to understand and to take account of the views, wishes and feelings of children in their care. This should inform not just decisions directly affecting that child, such as their own care plan, but also strategic decisions about services and provision in the city.
- 3.2 The need for this is self-evident, children have the right to be heard, but we also know that this leads to better quality decisions and will mean that children themselves will be better informed, better engaged, more co-operative, and will grow to become more effective citizens.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Participation by a child in care at their review may be through one or more of the following:
Attendance in person
Expression of their views in writing, including through a consultation booklet which they can complete on-line (currently under review)
Representation by an advocate
Submission of their views through the IRO, or a trusted person.
- 4.2 Unless they refuse, a child will also always see their IRO in person around the time of their review, even if they are not attending in person. The IRO will, as far as practicable, see the child at a place of their choosing, and will ensure that they understand and take account of the child's views. IROs also give their contact details to every child and will respond if the child wants to talk with them between reviews. Where necessary the IRO may also make contact with the child between reviews, but workloads and indeed the children's wishes may not make that possible or appropriate in many cases.
- 4.3 Participation by children in care is monitored regularly as above. A recent audit in relation to child protection and child in need meetings revealed that professionals do consult children and include their views and perspectives in reports, but more progress is needed in these areas to bring participation up to the same level as for children in care. A summary is attached (appendix 6).
- 4.4 A project last year collated consultation booklets completed by young people in care, this was reported to the Board. Resources have not allowed this to be continued but we are considering how a simpler version may be repeated next year.
- We are exploring ways that children may be enabled to feed back on their experiences of their reviews and other services.
- 4.5 Children placed out of area still have the opportunity to access the children's rights service and also to serve as "virtual" members of the Children in Care Council. They have the same opportunities to participate in their reviews, which take place where the child lives, but they have little opportunity to attend other forums in the city.
- 4.6 CIC have 6 monthly PEP where their voice is captured to inform their educational development and improve academic achievement from Early Years through to Secondary education.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 If resources allowed, there are increasing opportunities to engage with children and young people virtually and through electronic media. This may be particularly valuable for children placed at a distance. However it is also recognised that using some networks or media carries risks for children, and may not be secure from a data protection perspective.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

| | |
|--|---|
| Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s) | Hazel Lymberry Andrew Bunyan, Rod Jones, Adele Styles, Maggie Duggins, Sally Groves |
| For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices: | Nina Martin 01332 717818 Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Annual report 2013/14 |

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| IMPLICATIONS |
|---------------------|

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 Some of this activity is at risk due to financial pressures.

Legal

- 2.1 Some of this activity is a statutory requirement and this is compliant.

Personnel

- 3.1 None

IT

- 4.1 Technology exists to support better and more engaging means of communicating with young people and obtaining their views and feedback. There are however costs associated with this.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Children may still be disadvantaged in these processes if they do not speak English, although efforts are made to supply interpreters and translations.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 None

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 None

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 The Children in Care Council has not felt comfortable using the Council House for meetings, due to unwelcoming reception processes, difficulty accessing the toilets and lack of choice in refreshments.

Risk Management

- 9.1 none

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 Corporate parenting is a corporate priority.



'The Children's Rights Service'

As delivered by CSV on behalf of Derby City Council

Annual Report 2013/2014

About CSV:

CSV has over 50 years' experience of working with volunteers, and currently supports up to 100,000 volunteers nationwide, every year, across a wide range of programmes. CSV's vision is of a society where everyone can participate to build strong and inclusive communities.

Our Values:

Inclusion – We believe everyone has the right to be an active citizen and to contribute to their community.

Quality – We want people to lead meaningful and fulfilled lives by providing quality opportunities for everyone to be actively involved in their communities, and by developing their skills.

Learning – We aim to be a learning organisation and expect our staff to be positive, engage with volunteers and learners, be supportive, share knowledge and skills, and learn from others and their experience.

Flexibility – We aim to inspire and innovate, to adapt to change and respond to feedback.

Valuing people – We value and respect all the people with whom we engage – our volunteers and beneficiaries, our staff and our partners.

About CSV Derby:

CSV in Derby consists of a team of 4 staff members bringing together a wealth of knowledge and experience. The team consists of a Project Manager, Project Co-ordinator and two Project Support Workers. Staff members have vast experience and/or qualifications in a range of health and social care areas. Together, the team have also amassed over 15 years of voluntary experience, volunteering for agencies such as Barnados, Home-Start and NYAS.

CSV has been working alongside Derby City Council since 2001 initially through providing the Independent Visitor Service and from 2004 for the Independent

Advocacy Service. Thereafter from 2009 providing the Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference and from 2011 for The Children in Care Council. **The current contract is due to expire in 2017.**

The Project Manager and Project Co-ordinator maintain close links with the Head of Service for Quality Assurance and meet quarterly in order to provide detailed statistics and information pertaining to each service. The Project Manager also meets with the Director of Specialist Services on a twice yearly basis to ensure that a good level of communication is maintained and to discuss any problem areas. Good practice can also be on the agenda!

The Project Manager or Project Co-ordinator also attends regular team meetings with the Independent Reviewing Officers. From a quality assurance point of view this regular contact ensures that any potential problems/issues are alleviated as soon as possible. Information is shared and discussed resulting in a better and much more valuable service.

Either the Project Manager or the Project Co-ordinator also have a presence on the Children in Care Commissioning Board and The Corporate Parenting Board. On the latter, a Children in Care Council member would normally be in attendance. The Project Co-ordinator is also a board member for the Children and Young People Network (C.I.C) enabling close working relationships with other third party organisations.

About 'The Children's Rights Service'

The Children's Rights Service is made up of 4 projects:

- the Independent Visitor Service
- the Independent Advocacy Service
- Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference
- the Children in Care Council.

The majority of these projects are facilitated by the use of volunteers. We carefully recruit, vet and train all of our volunteers resulting in a large pool offering a range of ages, ethnicities and locations. Over the course of this period, The Children's Rights Service worked with over **60 volunteers**, some of whom have been volunteering with us since 2008. This is an absolutely fantastic achievement as volunteer retention can be a problem.

The Independent Visitor Service

Why do some children and young people need an Independent Visitor?

Sadly, some children and young people who are looked-after by their local authority lose all contact with adult family members; often they feel that they have no one to turn to for advice and support, or simply to have fun with. The 1989 Children Act entitles these children and young people to an Independent Visitor.

What Independent Visitors do:

Independent Visitors are matched on a one to one basis with a child or young person, taking into account such things as gender, ethnic background, location and, of course, personality. They aim to build a rewarding friendship based on trust, mutual respect and shared interests.

Independent Visitors support the young people they are matched with, helping them when they are facing difficulties in their lives, or new challenges. Independent Visitors meet their young person on a fortnightly basis and enjoy time together either by doing leisure activities or by working towards achieving goals as identified by the young person and social worker.

In the year 2013/2014, The Children's Rights Service received **28 referrals** for Independent Visitors. If a volunteer has been trained and is available, **the response time between referral and matching can be as little as one month, but in most cases is between 3 – 5 months**. A delay can be caused if the requirements for a volunteer are too specific i.e. gender or ethnicity. At all times, The Children's Rights Service will work closely with social care staff in order to provide an effective 'match'.

At any one point in time, The Children's Rights Service aim to achieve **40 live matches**. This can prove to be a challenge especially given a move towards a larger percentage of out of area referrals. For these young people, The Children's Rights Service has to identify and train a volunteer using volunteer bureaux and other CSV offices in locations around the country. This can increase the waiting time significantly. Over the past year, matches have been made in Warrington, Corby and Newark. For 2014/2015, and to meet the challenge, The Children's Rights Service will be looking in to the possibility of spot purchasing services and/or setting up reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities.

We ask that all of our volunteers commit to us for at least one year in order to offer consistency and reliability. We currently have a match that has been going for nearly 8 years!! This shows great dedication. We also have 4 matches that have been going for 4 years, with the bulk of the rest being over 18 months. On quite a few occasions our volunteers have gone on to be matched again and again proving that The Children's Rights Service is able to retain and value a higher than average percentage of volunteers.

Further referrals data can be found at Appendix A.

Evaluation of impact

Unfortunately, matches do end, but when this happens, we always contact all persons involved so that we can properly evaluate how well we are performing and to ascertain whether the service has had an impact on the service user. Over the last year, The Children's Rights Service has worked with CSV Head Office to develop a better evaluation method using the latest technology. Our evaluation forms aim to capture important data such as outcomes, but also aims to capture feedback on what was great about having a service, or possibly not so great! We are now able to offer an evaluation form in the format of a survey monkey, which can be completed either

on-line or via a mobile app. Alternatively, we are able to send out a paper copy. Evaluation is extremely important to the progress of all of our projects. We always act upon feedback received as we strive to constant improve our service delivery.

Over the course of the year, we were pleased to note that on average, **26.95%** of all evaluation requested, was either completed on-line or by paper. This is a big increase on previous years, with the next highest being 19% in 2011/2012.

An annual summary is always collated, with the following main findings / recommendations coming from this year's evaluation:

- Young people greatly appreciate that these people are giving up their free time!
- Young people enjoy a wide range of activities and learn new skills.
- Young people and volunteers feel that the time spent together has made a difference.
- Volunteers also benefit by gaining experience and confidence.
- The Children's Rights Service to ensure that all carers and referrers fully understand the role of the volunteer, paying particular attention to expectations and highlighting limitations.
- The Children's Rights Service to work with all social care staff taking in to account the young person's interests and wishes when looking for a suitable volunteer.

Please refer to Appendix B for a case study, which further demonstrates impact.

The Independent Advocacy Service

Why do some children and young people need an Independent Advocate?

A young person may request an Independent Advocate when they need support and guidance when making a complaint or need advice about other issues they may feel unhappy about. From April 2004 looked after children and children in need (for child protection conference only) have the right to independent advocacy when they are making a complaint or to ensure that their voice is heard when any decisions are being made about any part of their life. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 gives them this right.

What Independent Advocates do:

An Independent Advocate can promote and uphold the right of these children to be listened to and treated with respect, helping to ensure the child is acknowledged as a thoughtful and competent individual. An Independent Advocate will put the child at the centre of everything they do, supporting them to become involved in decisions about the future. An Independent Advocate always works within the young person's wishes and feelings as opposed to their best interests. This can sometimes prove to be difficult as the Independent Advocate may have to challenge decisions made by the local authority.

The Independent Advocacy Service is split in to 3 advocacy streams.

Case Advocates

A Case Advocate will have time limited involvement with an individual young person, who is referred to the project, or who contacts the project themselves. The volunteer will work with the young person, in accordance with their wishes and feelings towards their desired outcome.

For the period 2013/2014, The Children's Rights Service received **23 referrals** in total for case advocacy. Out of these, **7** were from young people placed out of area. In all cases from the point of referral to the point of initial contact with a young person, **The Children's Rights Service made contact within 48 hours and in most cases had an initial meeting within 72 hours.** All cases are time limited and the advocate is led solely by the wishes of the young person. The Independent Advocate wherever possible will ascertain the desired outcome and discuss available options and areas of compromise. If appropriate, the Independent Advocate will discuss consequences of a particular course of action. The Independent Advocate will promote self-advocacy at all times where appropriate and will aim to keep the young person involved in proceedings as much as possible and will feedback relevant information.

Examples of cases over the past year have included problems with placement moves, lack of education provision and contact with family. In most cases, a satisfactory conclusion/outcome was achieved by talking to all professionals involved and by actively promoting the young person's voice. **Out of the 23 referrals, only one case progressed on to become a stage one complaint.** All complaints are passed on to the complaints department within Derby City Council and the Independent Advocate will monitor the process to ensure that the complaint is dealt with as per the complaints and escalation process as set out by the complaints department at Derby City Council.

Placement Advocates

Independent Advocates will also meet groups of children and young people in residential homes or other places where young people get together. Independent Advocates will either deal with issues as they arise in group situations or involve another Independent Advocate as necessary. **These meetings take place on a quarterly basis. Since reducing the service in 2012 from a monthly basis,** The Children's Rights Service has seen a significant reduction in the amount of referrals from such meetings. Feedback from staff and residents of these homes has indicated that 3 months is too lengthy when in some cases the turnover of residents can be quite high. In order to build trusting and meaningful meetings a regular presence is required. For 2014/2015, alternative methods for providing regular advocacy meetings will be investigated.

Advocacy at Child Protection Conferences

Independent Advocates again will have a time limited involvement with the child or young person and ensure the child or young person participates in the conference in a way they decide. The advocate will:

- Contact the child or young person within two working days of the referral.
- Ensure the young person understands what the advocacy role is, being clear that the advocate is there to assist the young person in expressing their wishes and feelings, not questioning them about the facts.
- Give the young person all the information needed so they can decide which way they choose to participate.
- Liaise with both the social care worker and the chair throughout.
- Attend the conference either with or on behalf of the young person.

As at 31st March 2014, The Children's Rights Service had supported **81** young people to participate in their conference. **Year on year, this stream of advocacy shows the biggest area of growth.** Demand is steadily growing and at times has proved difficult to meet when met with other constraints such as language barriers and the amount of young people involved in one case conference. The participation of the 81 young people was facilitated by either supporting the young person to attend or by putting forward their wishes and feelings. In most cases, the information provided by the young person has proved invaluable. On occasion, this has resulted in a conference outcome/decision being changed when presented with additional information.

Evaluation of impact

Evaluation for all advocacy work is undertaken on a case by case basis. Volunteers establish with the young person whom they are working with how they are feeling on a sliding scale from one to ten with ten being the happiest before any work is undertaken. The Independent Advocate will identify with their young person what actions/outcomes would be required in order to increase their number. The Independent Advocate will also discuss acceptable options and outcomes identifying potential consequences for any course of action taken. After the final meeting/an acceptable outcome has been achieved, the Independent Advocate will re-visit the young person and again establish whether the intervention of an advocate has been beneficial.

In most cases, the evaluation is completed whilst in the presence of the young person, however if this is not appropriate, an evaluation form will be sent.

An annual summary is always collated, with the following main findings coming from this year's evaluation:

- On the whole, having an independent advocate has been greatly beneficial. The young person has felt heard and included in decision making.
- Having an advocate has resulted in a change being made that has made the life of a young person better.

- Having someone independent to talk to has meant that young people have felt less isolated.

Children in Care Council

The Purpose of a Children in Care Council

It is important that children and young people have an opportunity to shape and influence the parenting that they receive at every level – from expressing their wishes and feelings about the individual care they receive in their placements, through to helping to shape the overall strategy for children in their area through a Children in Care Council.

Children in Care Councils have the potential to contribute to transforming the lives of those involved.

Who we are

The Derby City Children in Care Council represents the views of Derby City looked after children, young people and care leavers. The group meets on a monthly basis throughout the year and are involved in decision making and service development along with informing the Corporate Parenting Board. A representative from the Children in Care Council regularly attends the Corporate Parenting Board meetings. The group works alongside Derby City Council to try and make things better for the children and young people within their care.

Currently, the Children in Care Council is only open to Derby City looked after children, young people and care leavers, although in 2014/2015 we may consider how to make the Council accessible to other children and young people placed in Derby.

Over the course of 2013/2014, a core group of **8** dedicated young people attended every month. This was supplemented by at least 2 young people attending each meeting. The majority of young people were in foster care, with a minority being either care leavers or from a residential home. In 2014/2015 stronger links will be made with all residential homes to encourage a representative from each home to attend on a regular basis. Issues from residential home meetings can then be passed on to the Children in Care Council if the young person so wishes.

The Children's Rights Service produces a newsletter on a quarterly basis that is sent out to all Derby City looked after children and young people aged 8 to 18 years. This newsletter is produced jointly with members of the Children in Care Council and is filled with news and views from the members along with changes in legislation and any other newsworthy item.

We encourage young people that are not able to enjoy a physical presence to participate in any way that they feel comfortable. We are able to offer the use of skype, email or conference call. We also offer the option of the young person being used for consultation purposes when the need arises. This can take the form of a paper questionnaire or survey monkey. For 2014/2015, The Children's Rights Service will investigate safe mediums of communication/promotion so that as many young people as possible are able to take part/be aware of the work and the value of the Derby City Children in Care Council.

Over the course of 2013/2014, the Children in Care Council invited guest speakers to attend their monthly meetings. Guests are invited to attend if they add value to the meeting and if the young people are in agreement. It is pleasing to note that the Director of Specialist Services and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attended the meeting at least once a quarter. This also enabled regular updates to be given on the issues that were foremost in the minds of the young people. Other guests included representatives from Derby Homes, The National Careers Service and members of the Independent Reviewing Team.

The number one issue over this period and carried forward in to the next year was the lack of internet access within a residential home when compared to that of a foster placement. The Children in Care Council still await a successful outcome and note that this issue has not been resolved nearly 2 years after it was first raised.

The members of the Children in Care Council are also offered the opportunity to take part in events and activities that are both beneficial to them as individuals and as council members. In May 2013 and again in February 2014, two young people attended 'Passport to Parliament' events organised by The Who Cares Trust charity. The aim of these sessions is to provide young people with the skills and encouragement to lobby their MPs for change. Representatives at these meetings can then be invited to attend the 'All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers' held at Portcullis House in Westminster. For 2014/2015, The Children's Rights Service will investigate to ascertain if this is a viable opportunity.

At the beginning of 2012, the Children in Care Council along with The Children's Rights Service successfully launched the 'Children in Care Pledge'. The pledge is a promise made by Derby City Council to all Derby children and young people in care and leaving care. The Pledge is part of Derby's commitment to give children and young people in care and leaving care the best opportunities they can have in life. All adults who work for and with the Council will make a commitment to work to this Pledge at all times. Promotional material is regularly sent out to all looked after children, young people and social care staff. Posters are displayed in all social care offices and can regularly be seen on the electronic notice boards throughout the Council House. **In August 2013, two members of the Children in Care Council spent time auditing the Pledge and it was pleasing to note that out of 20 phone**

calls made to differing social care teams and offices, 18 staff members were aware of/and or worked to the Pledge. In 2014/2015, another audit will be undertaken by the young members and more detailed analysis will be sought.

Future Plans for the Children in Care Council

- Through regular house visits to all of the residential homes, improve the links with the young people and staff to ensure that a representative from each home is visible on the Children in Care Council
- Hold elections within the Children in Care Council to allow the members to take ownership of the Council
- Identify alternative venues to hold the monthly meetings in order to keep the meetings interesting and enjoyable. Identify venues that are located throughout the city and contact all young people living in the identified areas issuing a personal invitation to come along
- Ensure that consultation is always followed up with feedback
- Ensure a close working relationship with the Corporate Parenting Board
- Audit the 'Pledge' and 'Care Leavers Charter'
- Establish a clear work programme for the year ahead. Book guests that add value to the meeting
- Attend children's homes inspections with Councillors
- Meet with other Children in Care Councils to discuss good practice/areas for improvements
- Sit on interview panels for senior posts within Derby City Council

Discoveries/Key Issues for the Children in Care Council

- Recruitment and retention of Children in Care Council members is a problem nationwide
- Out of area young people should have the same opportunity to participate
- Although we participate in consultation events, we very rarely receive feedback regarding whether our input has made a difference

Summary

2013/2014 was a successful year for The Children's Rights Service. Despite the challenges faced regarding finding suitable Independent Visitors for out of area young people within an acceptable time frame and the increasing demand for Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference, The Children's Rights Service has managed to deliver a very good level of service.

The staff members within The Children's Rights Service are dedicated to providing a service that is of a very good quality and meets the needs of its service users. They are also committed to working with Derby City Council to improve any areas that are

identified through the quarterly monitoring process and through any feedback/evaluation received.

For 2014/2015, key priority areas are identified throughout the report, but specifically the following

- Increase the membership of the Children in Care Council, paying particular attention to those placed out of area and in residential homes
- Investigate the use of other types of communication to alleviate possible barriers to participation for all services
- Identify and make links with other Independent Visitor Services throughout the country in order to spot purchase as and when required
- Promote and evaluate all services and continue to build strong links with key personnel

The Children's Rights Service looks forward to 2014/2015 and meeting any new challenges that arise.

Report provided by Sally Groves, Project Co-ordinator.

Statistics

For all projects, and for every young person that accesses one of our services, we collect data including their gender, age and ethnicity. Over the year 2013/2014, the following number of referrals were received for each of our projects:

The Independent Visitor Service: **28**

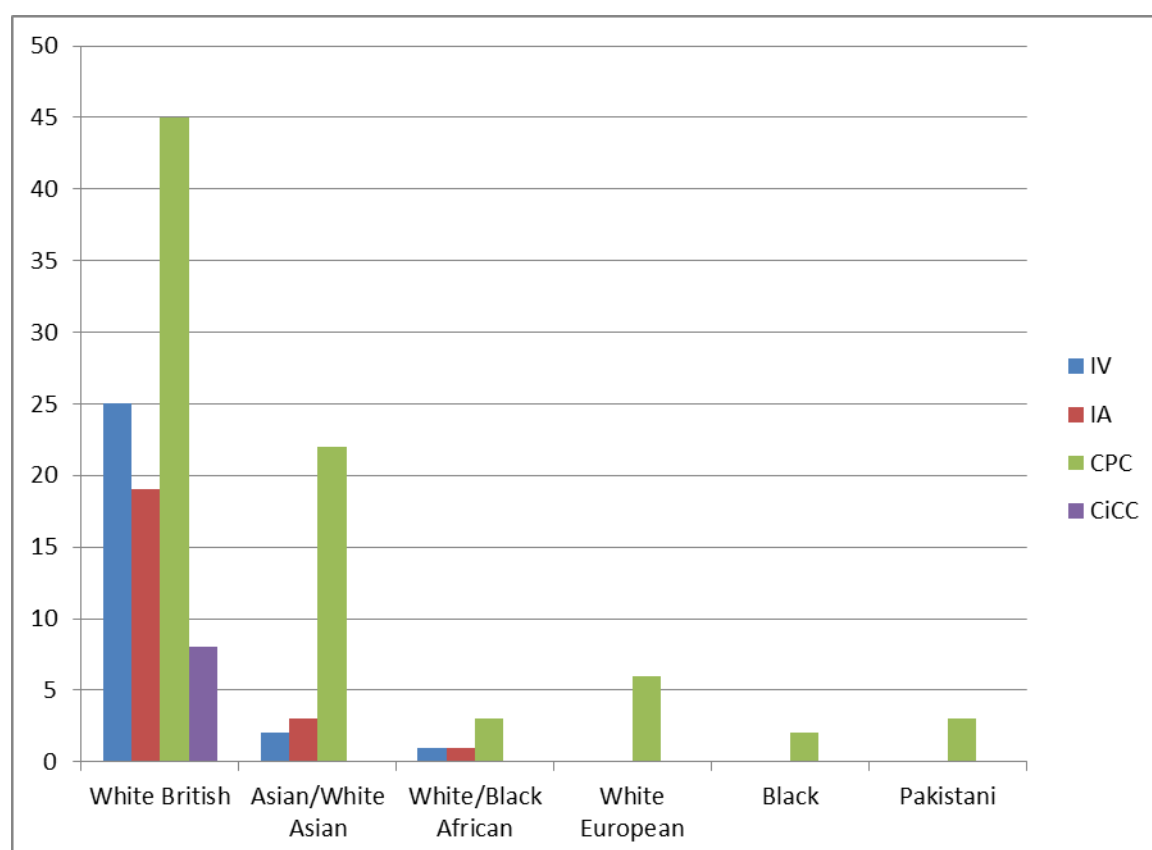
The Independent Advocacy Service: **23**

Advocacy at Child Protection Conference: **81**

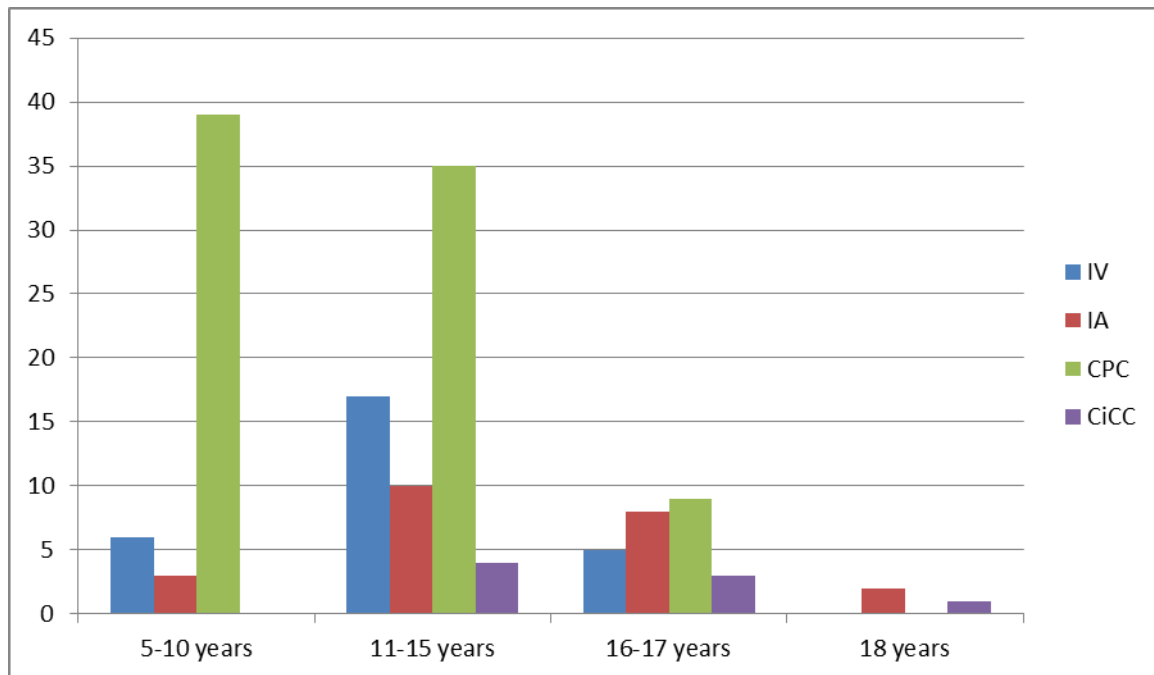
Children in Care Council:
(new members only) **08**

The following charts reflect the data we have been able to collect, broken down in to each service area, in order to provide a comparison for the year.

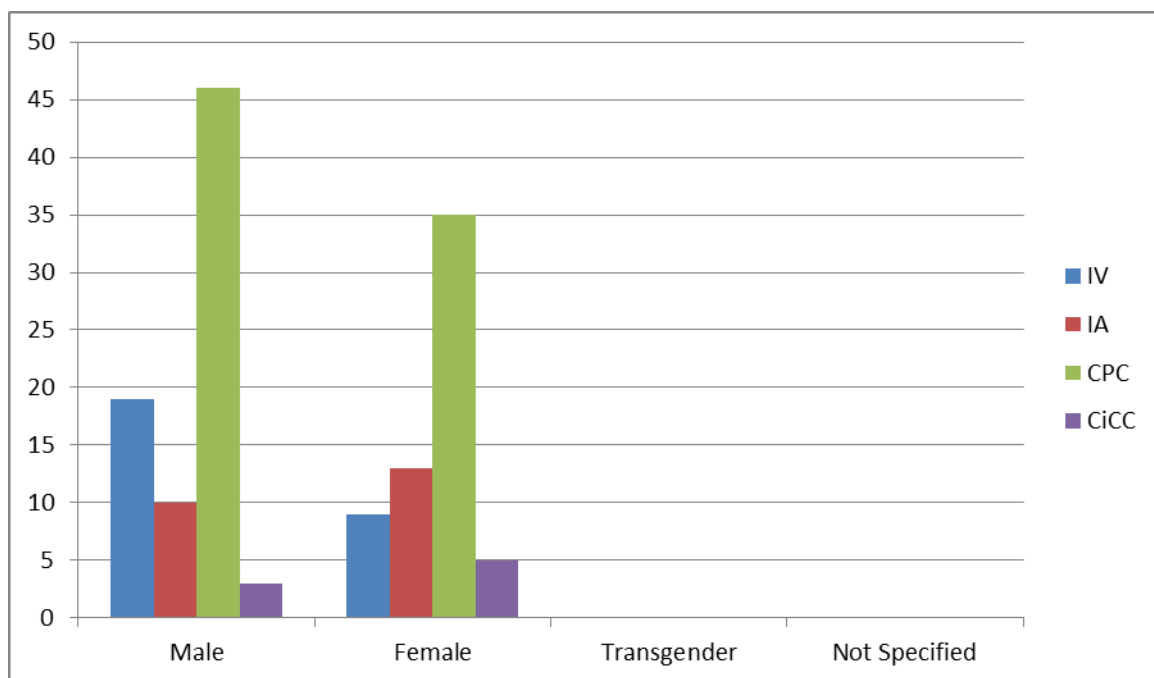
Ethnicity



Age



Gender



Case Study 1

Independent Visitor Project – Increasing confidence

Independent Visitors are matched with a child or young person, taking into account such things as gender, ethnic background, location and, of course, personality. They build a rewarding friendship based on trust, mutual respect and shared interests.

Independent Visitors support the young person they are matched with, helping them when they are facing difficulties in their lives, or new challenges. Volunteers tell us that listening to young people, finding out what they want and helping them to achieve it by encouraging them to speak for themselves is an extremely rewarding experience.

A male aged 15 years at the time of his referral lives in the largest children's home in the city. He has very recently been taken in to care and has really struggled to adapt. He now has very limited contact with his family and has not been able to make any new friends within the home. He is extremely self-conscious and nervous and prefers the company of adults rather than peers.

On his referral form, it is identified that he **'struggles in social settings and maintaining relationships'** **'doesn't always make healthy choices'** and that **'he has very limited outside interests and has limited independent skills for his age'**.

A possible volunteer is identified from the pool available; a male in his early 60's. The volunteer is extremely friendly, but also slightly nervous as volunteering with young people is something entirely different to what he has done previously and by his own admission he is not sure that he has a lot to offer.

We recommend that the match start slowly as both the young person and volunteer are wary.

Over the coming months, the relationship steadily grows and grows. The volunteer is patient and through gentle persuasion encourages the young person to try lots of new activities. Together they go roller skating, ice skating, bowling and to the cinema. The volunteer arranges for the young person to borrow a bicycle and over time go on bike rides around Carsington Water and along the Cloud and Tissington Trail. They go on day trips to London and York and plan to go to the seaside. All of which the young person has never seen before.

The young person admits that he enjoys cooking, but does not want to share this with other residents as he fears criticism. The volunteer encourages the young person to plan a menu, budget and shop for ingredients. The young person formally invites the

volunteer to the home for a meal. This is a resounding success. The young person is extremely proud to introduce the volunteer to other young people as his friend.

This match has now been active for nearly 2 years. The young person really looks forward to his outings and is really keen to suggest new places to go and things to do. He talks openly about the things that are bothering him asking for suggestions and guidance around schooling and life choices after leaving care.

The young person's social worker and staff at the home cannot believe the difference this volunteer has made. The volunteer is modest and claims that he has benefitted just as much. The young person has developed in many ways least of all in confidence and fitness. He now enjoys life and acknowledges that there are other avenues to take. He greatly appreciates everything the volunteer has done for him and advises that he will be forever grateful. He sincerely hopes that the friendship will last.



Children in Care Council Pledge Audit

October 2014

Summary

The Pledge is a promise made by Derby City Council to all Derby City children in care and leaving care. The Pledge is part of Derby's commitment to give children in care and leaving care the best opportunities they can have in life. All adults who work for and with the Council will make a commitment to work to the Pledge at all times.

The Pledge was conceived by the Derby City Children in Care Council throughout 2012 and was originally sent out to all looked after children and young people in November 2012 and again in November 2013. Another round of leaflets will be sent out again in December 2014 with the quarterly 'Focus on Us' newsletter. Posters and leaflets have been sent out at regular intervals to all Derby City Council offices and can be seen displayed on actual and electronic notice boards around the city.

Following this audit, a further round of leaflets and posters will be sent to all relevant teams and offices working with children and young people in care.

On 30th October 2014, 3 young members of the Children in Care Council were invited in to the CSV offices to conduct an audit of the Pledge. The purpose of the audit was to undertake a review of how well known the Pledge is and if staff are able to give any indication of how well they have read, understood and implement the contents. The young people were also curious to know about how well the audit would be received by the staff answering the telephone.

29 telephone numbers were selected at random from teams working with children and young people in care. The breakdown of these were as follows:

- 16 Social Workers
- 5 Residential Homes
- 1 Independent Reviewing Officer
- 3 Deputy Head of Service/Team Managers
- 2 Director of Specialist Services
- 1 Leaving Care Worker
- 1 Education Department

Out of these 29 telephone calls made, 23 calls were answered. No messages were able to be left on the remaining 6 numbers despite leaving the phone to ring for at least 7 rings.

The young people had decided in agreement with CSV staff, the questions that would be asked. They wanted to give staff the opportunity to answer a couple of easy and hard questions.

Q1. Do you know about the Children in Care Pledge? Have you read it thoroughly?

| | Social Workers | Residential Homes | IRO | Deputy Head/Team Manager | Directors | Leaving Care Worker | Education Dept | TOTAL |
|-----|----------------|-------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| YES | 7 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 19 |
| NO | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| | 10 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 23 |

Q2. Have you seen a copy of it recently? What colour is it?

(The answer is mainly white, blue and pink)

| | Social Workers | Residential Homes | IRO | Deputy Head/Team Manager | Directors | Leaving Care Worker | Education Dept | TOTAL |
|-----|----------------|-------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| YES | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 17 |
| NO | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| | 10 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 23 |

Q3. On the Pledge, there is a timescale within which you should be contacted by your social worker if you need them. Do you know how long this is?

(The answer is 48 hours)

| | Social Workers | Residential Homes | IRO | Deputy Head/Team Manager | Directors | Leaving Care Worker | Education Dept | TOTAL |
|-----|----------------|-------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| YES | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 18 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| NO | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| | 10 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 23 |

Q4. There are 3 main points to the mission statement. Can you name one?

(Choices are:

- We will ensure that you are listened to and your views are taken seriously.
- We will treat you fairly, equally and with respect at all times.
- We will support you and ensure you have access to an independent advocate if you need one.)

| | Social Workers | Residential Homes | IRO | Deputy Head/Team Manager | Directors | Leaving Care Worker | Education Dept | TOTAL |
|-----|----------------|-------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| YES | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 17 |
| NO | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| | 10 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 23 |

As mentioned previously, the young people were also curious to note whether the professional speaking to them did so in a friendly and welcoming manner. Whilst 12 out of the 22 people consulted spoke to the young people in a friendly manner and 6 in an extremely helpful and friendly manner, it is disappointing to note that 4 were noted as being unfriendly with 1 being noted as rude and unhelpful.

The young people were particularly pleased to note that whilst social workers and residential staff may work within the Pledge on a daily basis, the more senior managers were amongst those most knowledgeable and friendly.

Children in Care (aged 4- 17 years) Participation in LAC Reviews – Half year summary 2014

Overview

The Independent Reviewing Officers Service (IRO Service) tries to ensure that every single child in the care of Derby City Council is involved in the review process to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are listened to and acted upon.

The children are encouraged to attend their review meeting or to meet with the IRO before or after the review meeting. If they do not want to attend, or don't wish to see the IRO in person, then they can write their views on a consultation form or speak to the IRO by telephone or write a text message or an email if they wish.

For younger children, they may not understand what the review process is for but the IRO ensures that they are seen, preferably in their placement, to see how they communicate with their carers and how they are being cared for. The IRO may just play a game with them or do a drawing, and in this way, use their social work skills to assess how the child is feeling.

Many children prefer to complete a consultation form, giving their views. Even when they do this, the IRO will still aim to see them in person, unless the child states that they do not want to do this. The consultation forms are being re-designed as the previous form was felt to be too lengthy and many children refused to complete it.

Children can ask to see their IRO in between reviews and some like to phone them very often (one child phones almost every week). IROs can be a consistent person in a looked after child's life when the other professionals change quite often. This builds up a trusting relationship, allowing the child to feel that someone, separate from their social worker, carer or teacher, is there to support them if necessary.

Current situation

As at 30.09.14. there were **348** children in care aged 4-17, who had been in care for 4 weeks or more. The number of these children who communicated their views for each of their statutory reviews between 01.04.14 and 30.09.14 was **339**.

The percentage of children participating in all their reviews at 30/09/2014 = 97.4%

Previous year's figures were:

2011-12 : 81.9%

2102-2013: 95.1%

2013-2014: 95.7%

There has been a gradual increase in ensuring that children are included in the reviewing process as this has been a priority for the IRO service.

The IRO service carried out 450 reviews of these children between 01.04.14 and 30.09.14

| By Review Type | Ics – 4 week Statutory Review | Ics – 3 month Statutory Review | Ics 6 Month Statutory Review |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Children Participating | 42 | 43 | 346 |
| Reviews Completed | 47 | 44 | 359 |
| Percentage Participating | 89.4% | 97.7% | 96.4% |

When children first come into care, a LAC review has to be arranged within 20 working days. It is sometimes difficult to ensure the child is present at this meeting, some older children refuse to attend (two of these cases were of young people on remand; one was in hospital due to a self harm incident the night before the review and the other refused to attend as it was the 1st day of Eid). One young person was absconding from her residential placement repeatedly and was not available even when the IRO arranged to see her separately.

| Monthly figures | Apr/14 | May/14 | Jun/14 | Jul/14 | Aug/14 | Sep/14 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Children Participating | 72 | 80 | 91 | 86 | 36 | 66 |
| Reviews Completed | 76 | 86 | 93 | 92 | 37 | 66 |
| Percentage Participating | 94.7% | 93.0% | 97.8% | 93.5% | 97.3% | 100.0% |

| Participation methods | Reviews | Percentage |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Participation not recorded (Respite review - not LAC) | 1 | 0.2 % |
| PN1 Attended review and speaks | 234 | 52 % |
| PN2 Attended review and advocate speaks | 1 | 0.2 % |
| PN5 Did not attend but briefed advocate | 108 | 24 % |
| PN6 Did not attend but expressed views in other ways | 93 | 20.7 % |
| PN7 Did not attend nor were views conveyed | 13 | 2.9 % |
| Total | 450 | 100.0 % |

Out of the 13 cases whereby the child/YP did not participate, 7 were of young people refusing to engage in the whole process. If a child is deemed Fraser Competent, then we have to respect their wishes to not be involved. However, many attempts are made to engage them in some way, even if it is just by telephone etc.

Other situations here are of three children (aged between 4-5 years) who were with their adopters in other parts of the country and the Adoption Order had been agreed in Court but the judge would not grant the order for 28 days to give birth parents the right to challenge the judgement. It was not

deemed to be in these children's best interest , or a practical use of IRO time to travel to their placement to hold the reviews and so the meetings were held with professionals in Derby.

Maggie Duggins, Senior IRO

7/11/14

Appendix 5

Derby Children & Young People Department Quality Assurance

Service user participation strategy

Principles

The Quality Assurance Service endorses and adopts in full the Children in Care Pledge, the CYP Engagement strategy and Council policy with regard to user consultation.

This means in practice all meetings, decisions and plans should be informed by the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people, their parents (mothers and fathers) and carers. Wherever possible and appropriate they will be supported and enabled to participate in those meetings and decisions.

We will also seek the views of service users about their experience of the QA service, and use this to inform and improve our practice.

Participation

Children, young people, their fathers, mothers and carers may participate in different ways, and we will promote participation in the way best suited to those individuals and their circumstances.

Participation may be through:

- Attendance in person
- Representation by an advocate
- consultation forms and booklets
- Sending in views in other ways
- Consultation & representation of views by others

Feedback

We will develop easy ways for service users to give feedback on the services they receive from us, and will treat any complaints seriously, in accordance with the Council Complaints Policy.

Equality

We recognise that some individuals are at risk of not having the same opportunities to participate, for a range of reasons. We will promote participation by all and will take steps to remove any barriers. Where children, young people, their mothers, fathers or carers have additional needs they may be supported by an advocate and an

interpreter will be provided where they are not confident in English. Venues will be chosen to take account of any disability needs. Participation by fathers will be actively promoted, and arrangements made for consultation with any absent or excluded parent before the meeting as appropriate.

Children in Care

Please also refer to Derby CYP procedures and Care Planning Regulations. All children in care will be supported to attend their statutory review in full or in part. Our IROs will talk with the child about their review, where they would like it to be held, who they would like to attend or not attend. The social worker should also confirm this with the child before each review. Where necessary the review can be conducted in different parts to allow for their wishes.

Where a child does not wish to attend, the IRO will meet with them before and/or after the review to ensure they fully understand their wishes and feelings. A child may also have an advocate attend the meeting if they prefer.

We have a consultation booklet which all children are encouraged to complete, and/or they can be helped by their social worker or carer to do letters, drawings, videos etc to be shared with the IRO or at the review.

Decisions and plans agreed at reviews will always take account of the child's wishes and feelings.

Children in care can contact or ask to speak with their IRO at any time, if there is anything they are not happy about. They can also have access to an advocate through the Children's Rights Service if they wish, including for support if they wish to make a complaint.

Parents' role in a statutory review will depend on the child's legal status and care plan. There is an expectation that all those with parental responsibility will have their views and wishes taken into account. They will be supported to participate, usually attending the review in person or through completion of the consultation booklet if this is not appropriate. They may also send in letters or other comments. Where it is not appropriate for them to attend, this will be discussed with them by the social worker.

There is an expectation the child's current carers (including family carers) will attend the review and their views will also be taken into account.

Child protection

Please also refer to DSCB Safeguarding Procedures.

All children should be supported to participate in some way in any child protection conference relating to them. Given the nature of many safeguarding concerns, practitioners may feel it is not appropriate for children to attend, however attendance can be managed in a way which allows the child's voice to be heard without exposing them to a potentially distressing or even abusive situation. There is an expectation

that children over 12 years will be offered the opportunity to attend part of the meeting. Usual arrangements would be for an individual to be identified as a supporter for the child at the meeting. The Child Protection Manager will meet with the child before conference and the child attends a confidential section (without parent) at the beginning of the meeting before being taken off site by their supporter. It will be rare for children under twelve to attend.

Regardless of attendance, children must be supported to participate. The Children's Rights Service can arrange an advocate to meet the children before the conference and attend with them or on their behalf, or an individual known to the child can be assisted to act as an advocate. We have a "wishes and feelings" form which all children should be supported to complete by their social worker or another trusted adult, or children may do drawings or letters; all input from the child will be considered at the conference. Additionally, we expect social workers to always consult children and reflect their views, wishes and feelings in their report. We have a leaflet for children to explain the conference process which should be shared with them in advance of the meeting.

Fathers and mothers should be supported to attend child protection conferences; this includes anyone with PR, and current carers. There may often be sensitivities and sometimes restrictions on attendance or information sharing amongst these individuals; these should be discussed with the chair in advance and arrangements for managing this agreed. Any mother or father not able to attend should be consulted by the social worker in advance of the meeting, and their views represented verbally or in writing. It may also be appropriate to hold separate confidential sections in the meeting, or for the chair to meet separately with an excluded parent. It would not however be appropriate to repeat a meeting to allow both parents to attend.

Where parents attend, they will be met separately by the chair before the meeting starts to explain the process and answer any concerns or questions. They may be supported by an advocate (including a solicitor) or a family member or friend, although consideration needs to be given to confidentiality for the children or other individuals. The conference chair may sometimes ask a family member or friend to wait outside for some or all of a meeting. We have a leaflet for parents to explain the conference process which should be shared with them in advance of the meeting.

Other safeguarding meetings

With sexual exploitation (CSE) meetings, the full engagement of the young person is critical, and the meeting will be managed in a way which allows them to participate throughout. If it is necessary to share information about others, this should be done in a confidential section after the main meeting, or briefly towards the end of the meeting if significant to the outcome. Young people will not be expected to wait outside a meeting alone or for more than a few minutes. Information leaflets are available for parents and young people attending CSE meetings, and feedback obtained from them following the meetings.

Strategy meetings held under safeguarding procedures will rarely include either parents or children, although those attending should have established their views and report them to the meeting.

Subjects of allegations cannot attend those strategy meetings (LADO). Previous discussions between the LADO or delegate, the Police and employer will have confirmed what information should be shared with the subject. The employer has responsibility for giving information to the subject and obtaining and reporting their views to the meeting. Leaflets are available for both employers and subjects to advise about the process. Where an individual child is involved, they will have been seen by a social worker who will reflect their wishes and feelings into the meeting, where relevant.

Child in need reviews

Please also refer to Derby CYP procedures.

All children should be supported to participate in some way in any child in need review. There is an expectation that children over 12 years will be offered the opportunity to attend all or part of the meeting, which should be arranged to facilitate this, eg at school or a community venue. It will be rare for children under twelve to attend.

We have a "wishes and feelings" form which all children should be supported to complete by their worker or another trusted adult, or children may do drawings or letters; all input from the child will be considered at the review. Additionally, workers will always consult children and reflect their views, wishes and feelings in their report and at the meeting.

Fathers, mothers or others who currently have care of the children will be supported to attend the review and are central to the process. It will be less common for parents who are not part of the child's household to attend a review, but this should be promoted if they are able to make a contribution to supporting the child. Timing and venue are important in promoting attendance by all significant adults.

August 2014

Audit of participation by children and young people in their Child in Need Reviews or Child Protection Conferences May/July 2014

The Quality Assurance service has for some time been promoting participation by children and young people. There is evidence that participation is not only valued by the young people, but also contributes to better and more child-focused decision making.

Participation can take place in different ways:

- Being consulted by professionals, who then represent the child's views in their reports
- Having family members representing the child's views
- Expressing views directly to the meeting, by means of consultation forms, letters, pictures, poems, audio or video recordings.
- Having an advocate
- Attending in person.

Action taken to promote participation 2013/14

Since June 2013, the Child Protection Manager and CiN clerk has sent a standard e-mail when a conference or review is booked, reminding the worker about the need to secure participation by the child and attaching the "wishes and feelings" consultation form. The Children's Rights Service is notified of all initial conferences and contacts the social worker to promote the use of advocates (initial child protection conference only).

Revised DSCB procedures from March 2014 specify that children's participation in conferences should be supported, with an expectation that children over 12yrs should be offered the opportunity to attend, and that all children should have the opportunity to express their views to conference.

The QA team has recently agreed a participation strategy, to ensure all QA staff are promoting participation. This also establishes how we will make attendance less distressing for children, by inviting them in at the beginning of a meeting and requesting that someone is available to return them home or to school, so they do not have to wait, although this has not always been possible.

Audit process

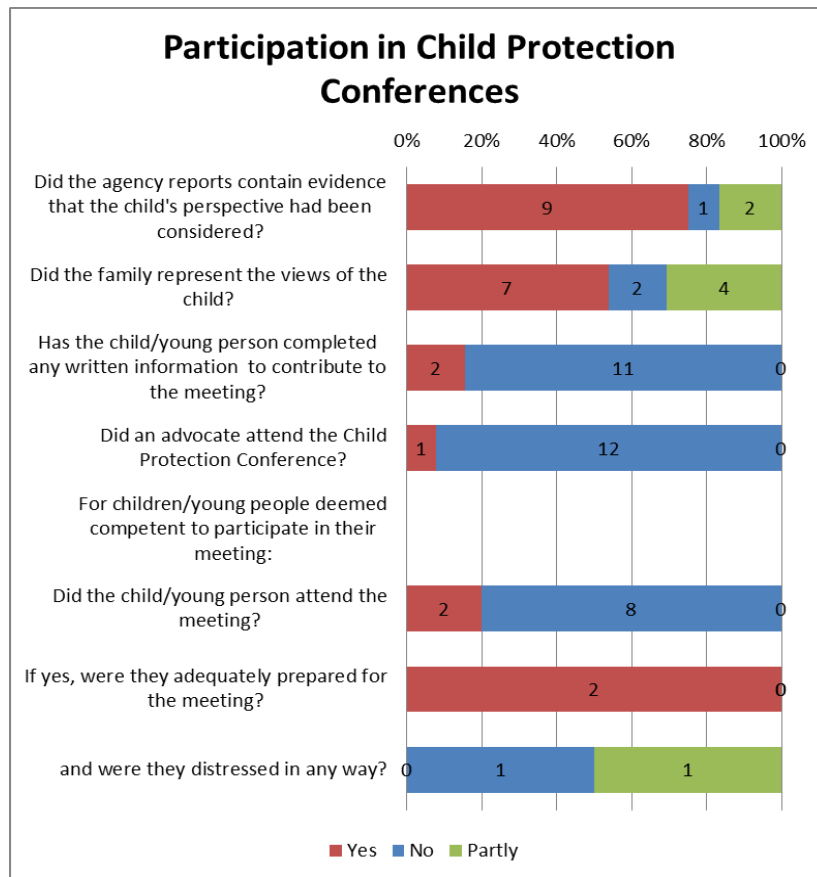
The audit sample was taken from all child in need reviews during May 2014 for children over 4yrs (n=16) and all child protection conferences during July 2014, again for children over 4yrs (n=13). The majority of CiN reviews were first reviews, whilst conferences were a mix of initial and reviews. A questionnaire was completed at the end of the meeting by the chair, based on their observation and interpretation of the meeting and reports.

A similar audit was undertaken in June/July last year of 12 conferences only, the results are at appendix 1.

Audit findings

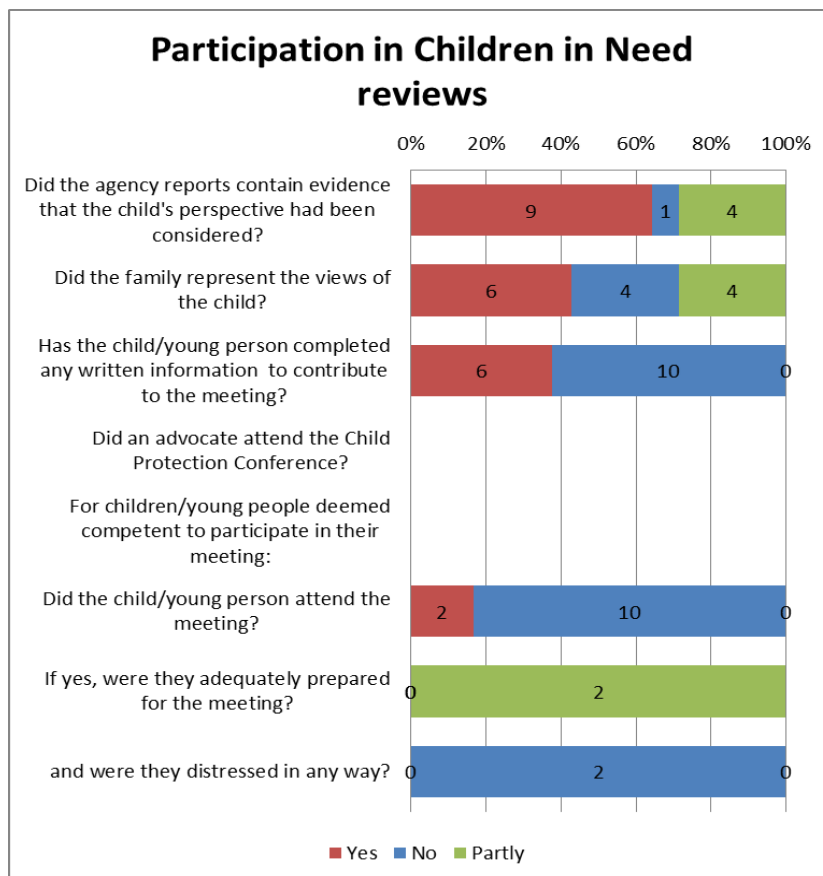
In CP conferences, nearly 70% of reports reflected the views of the children well. In 54% of conferences, family represented the views of the children, but only two (15%) had access to any writing or pictures from the child. An advocate attended only one meeting (8%) and children attended only two (15%).

In the sample last year, only 33% of reports were felt to adequately reflect the child's perspective, so this is a marked improvement. 50% of families represented their child's views, albeit only partly – which may suggest either better preparation or more focus during meetings. However in last year's sample, four children attended (33%), three contributed writing or pictures (25%) and three had an advocate (25%). Whilst the sample is small, there is certainly no indication of any improvement in more direct participation by children and young people.



In CiN reviews, 56% of reports reflected the views of children well, and in 38% of reviews, family represented the views of the children. This may reflect that these are usually first reviews, however 38% of reviews had access to writing or pictures from the child which is encouraging. Children attended only two (13%).

Where they attended, three children had been well prepared, one less so, and three were not distressed at all, one slightly (NB not the same child).



Barriers to participation

The advocacy service has been promoted heavily and this sample does not reflect the level of use, which by September was already exceeding the specified service level.

Conferences are currently still held at Eastmead despite long awaited plans for a move to more suitable premises. Waiting and reception facilities are inadequate and the building is not in the least child-friendly.

Workers identify insufficient time to undertake the necessary work with children, to either prepare them to attend or to encourage them to contribute in other ways.

Recommendations

Further action needs to be taken to extend participation. The QA service will:

- Circulate the QA Participation Strategy

- Focus on written and picture contributions by children and attendance of young people, promoting and following the agreed guidance when children do attend
- Re-issue guidance and reminders to staff on children's participation when booking meetings
- Challenge any occasion when children have not been supported to participate appropriately, escalating as necessary
- Categorise and monitor participation by children and young people 1 week in 4 and conduct more detailed audit 4 weeks per year
- Work with Children's Rights Service to ensure sufficient access to advocates as appropriate
- On relocation of service, ensure the environment is user friendly with sufficient appropriate waiting and small meeting areas

Operational teams are also asked to note the findings of this audit and consider ways to ensure staff promote participation in its various forms.

Nina Martin

September 2014