

SOVA End of Year Report 2017-18

Derby Children's Rights Service

Since 1975 Sova have been supporting people to develop their skills and confidence to take control of their lives and develop their full potential. With over 40 years hands on experience and an understanding of the complex needs of the people we support our approach continues to evolve. The passion that drives our staff and volunteers combined with the respect and positivity we demonstrate is how Sova get results.

Quality Assurance

Sova are committed to delivering high quality, safe and cost effective services.

During 2017-2018 Sova continued to operate under the following quality frameworks and approved provider standards;



The Children's Rights Service Derby

In April 2017 SOVA were commissioned to deliver the Children's Rights Service on behalf of Derby City Council. Incorporating:

- The Independent Visitor Service
- Issue based Independent Advocacy
- Independent Advocacy at initial child protection conference
- Independent Advocacy at residential children's homes

SOVA have built and maintained a positive professional partnership with Derby City Council by providing quarterly statistics and meeting with the corporate parenting lead and commissioning managers regularly to ensure close monitoring and review of the Children's Rights Service.

Sova Volunteers DCRS

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Sova have more than 40 projects across England and Wales, and operate a comprehensive user friendly website providing the public with direct access to information about all projects. By registering with volunteer services, local universities and local Churches members of the public are drawn to the Sova.

Interested volunteers follow a strict step by step process designed to filter out those not fully committed to volunteering:

- Initial interest / application form
- Interview
- References x 2 & DBS
- Two day training including core elements and project specific information.
- Shadowing (if advocacy)
- Completion of work book
- Second interview
- Additional Online safeguarding (DCC e-learning)

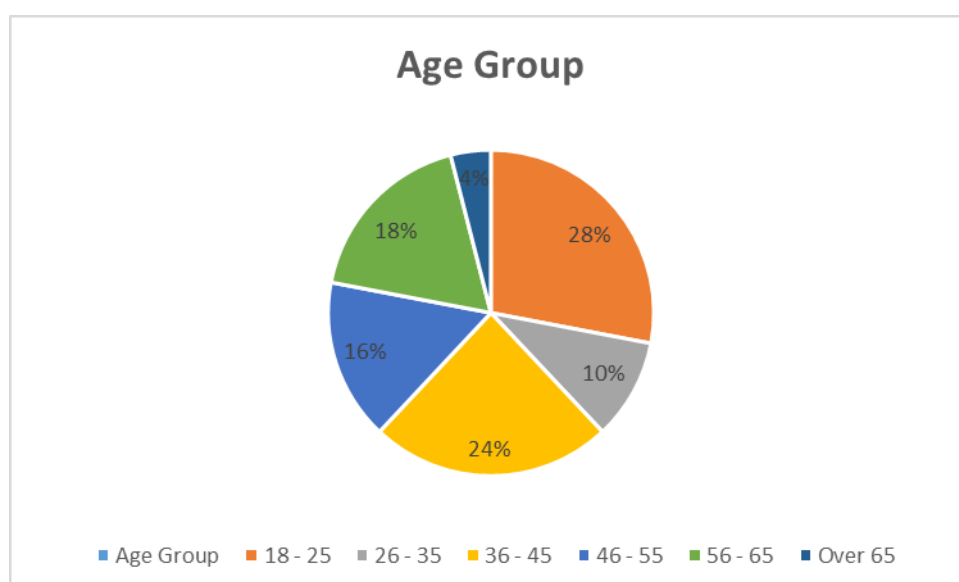
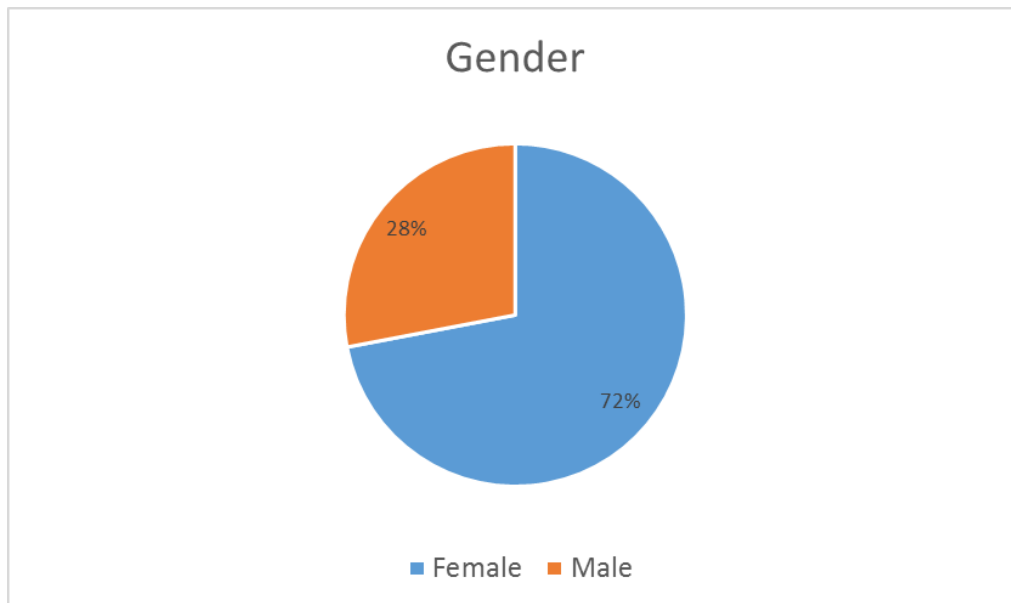
Once volunteers have progressed through each stage, they are provided with an ID badge and matched with a young person.

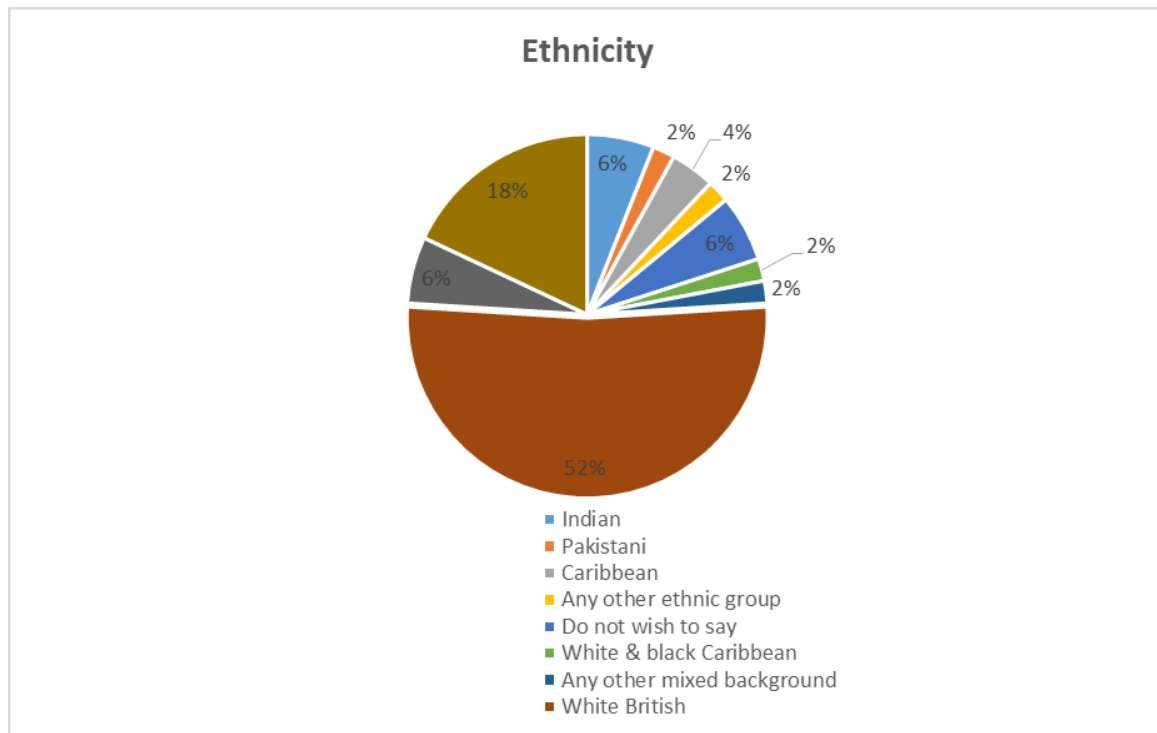
Once matched, volunteers submit contact sheets and expense sheets after each visit. This ensures staff are able to closely monitor the activities of volunteers and frequency of visits.

2017-18

- Sova delivered six training sessions across projects.
- Four volunteer support meetings.
- Four Newsletters
- Supervision twice for each volunteer

The current volunteer make-up is:





Independent Advocacy

The Children Act 1989 introduced the right to independent advocacy for looked after children. The advocate's role is to empower the child/young person by supporting them to express their wishes and feelings. By ensuring children/young people have access to independent advocacy it is possible that difficulties are resolved successfully at an early stage avoiding the need for formal complaint.

Adopting a person centred approach in accordance with the National Standards for Independent Advocacy, the advocate seeks resolution on behalf of the child/young person in accordance with their wishes. The advocate listens to the child/young person and helping them to understand their rights and options. Sometimes this may include making a formal complaint if the child/young person feels it is necessary. The advocate aims to ensure the voice of the child/young person is at the centre of all decision making echoing the principles of the European convention of the rights of the child.

Referrals to our service

A key principle of advocacy is accessibility. Accordingly, referrals may be made at any point by anyone regarding any issue. The single most important factor is the consent of the child/young person.

SOVA accept referrals by telephone, email or self-referral. In 2017-18 we have seen a rise in the number of self-referrals as a result of the advocacy clinics.

Sova advocacy service is provided by a combination of permanent staff, volunteers and sessional staff. All advocates are closely supervised by our Service Lead who is trained to level 4 advocacy and has 10 years' experience as an independent advocate. Allocation is dependent upon location and complexity. The age range of those accessing the service is 7 – 18 years and includes children in foster care, s20 voluntary placement orders, full care orders, care leavers and young people in private foster care arrangements. Sova receive calls from foster carers, residential care workers, social workers and independent reviewing officers seeking advice on how best to assist their young person. The advocate is led by the child/young person and will liaise

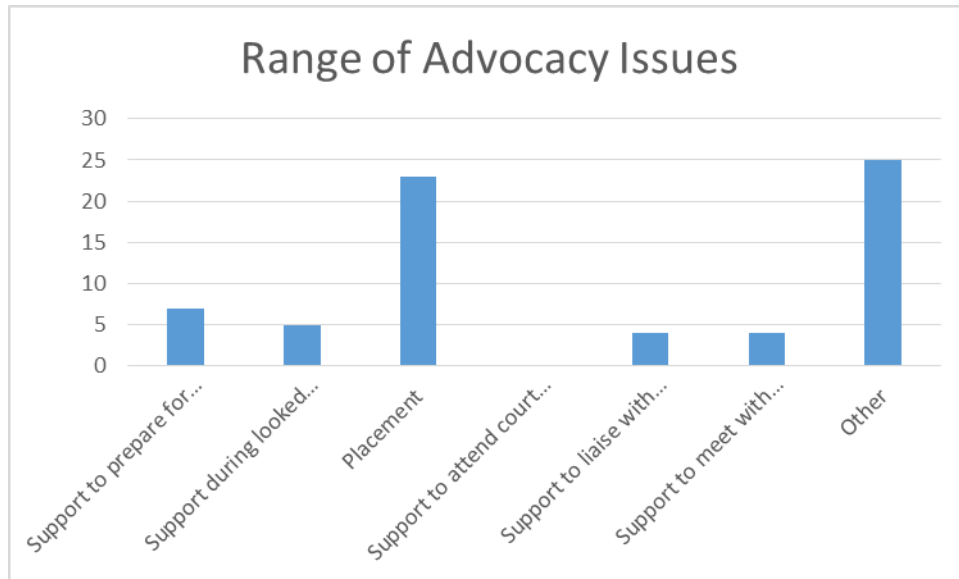
with them in the manner that suits them best whether that be in person, by telephone or by email.

2017 – 18 Sova received 62 referrals 12% were from children and young people outside of Derby.

Advocacy Matters...

Sova reported on issues raised by young people. Derby City Council identified a number of themes:

- Support to prepare for looked after child reviews
- Support during looked after reviews
- Placement
- Support to attend court proceedings
- Support to liaise with leaving care workers
- Support to meet with school/education
- Other



Category “other” includes issues:

- change of name,
- access to health services,
- finance access to bank accounts,
- complaint against residential staff,
- complaint against the police and
- contact with family (representing c.6% of referrals overall)

34% of referrals related to “placement” issues include:

- Placement not meeting the young person’s needs
- Bullying within the residential home between residents
- Disagreements between young people and staff regarding management of issues arising between young people
- Transition from care, preparing for independent living
- Facilities at placement
- Stability / uncertainty of placement
- Wish to change placement
- Staying put

2017-18 five complaints were raised against DCC on behalf of young people; four were resolved to the young person's satisfaction. Two watching briefs were submitted on behalf of young people with significant learning disabilities, one relating to transition, the other to placement.

Advocacy at Residential Children's Homes

Sova provided monthly advocacy clinics at all residential homes with two advocates in attendance enabling continuity for the young people. Advocates were warmly welcomed by staff and young people; occasionally advocates stayed for tea. On occasion a PAT dog also attended to aid communication and rapport with young people.

2017-18 saw 27 self-referrals arising from clinics, (43% of advocacy referrals overall).

"Sova introductions were good, explaining your service, your roles and responsibilities in a caring approach which makes the whole process and levels of understanding easier for the young people. I would definitely recommend you, you do a Fantastic service keep up the good work!"
Homes Manager Children's Home Peoples Services Directorate

Advocacy at Initial Child Protection Conference

Sova provide independent advocacy support for children/ young people at initial child protection conference. Meeting with the child/ young person to obtain their wishes and feelings and delivering those to conference or supporting the child / young person to do so. Sova meet with the child/young person if that is their wish and with the express permission of their parents.

Within a short time frame (sometimes as little as one day notice), Sova respond to demand, contacting the social worker to obtain details, instructing advocates and meeting with the child/young person at their school.

2017-18 Sova worked in partnership with Derby University providing volunteering opportunities for students studying for a social worker degree. In training them to be volunteer advocates students received first-hand experience of the conference process and in turn swelled the number of available advocates.

With the assistance of the Children in Care Council Sova developed an information “post card” to be handed to children/young people using the service; designed to clearly explain to both child and parent the purpose of the independent advocacy service.

2017-18 Sova supported **73** children/young people to participate in 38 separate conferences far exceeding funders target;

What the professionals say about our service:

“I like the respectful way you share the information, asking permission of parents and working with the sensitivity and needs of the children. Being explicit with what the child said ‘bringing their voice to life’. Punctuality in attending conference is always good. Distinguishing the child’s voice to the opinion of the advocate. Useful in informing assessment on the non-verbal.” **Child Protection Manager**

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"I have had advocate attend a number of my ICPC and this has been very positive, they clearly spend time with the child and the range of views does include both what they are happy about but also worries.

A few weeks ago, the advocate asked that mum does not listen to the views, the child was worried what mum would say-this was clearly appropriate and showed the child's wishes were adhered too"

Child Protection Manager | Peoples Support Service (Childrens) | Specialist Services

Extending our service – helping you support the young people of Derby

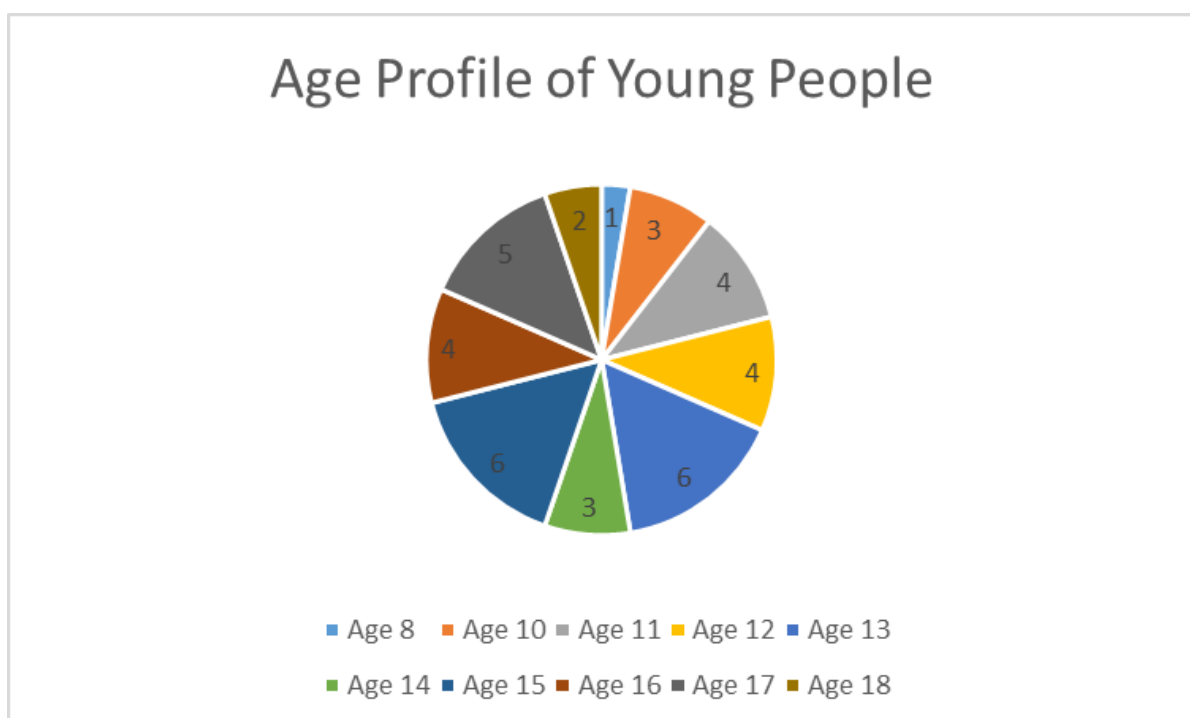
In 2017, Sova were delighted to assist Derby City Council by expanding the service to offer independent advocacy support to children and young people in private foster arrangements. At the time of writing we have received one such request. We are pleased to extend the service in this way offering support to young people in line with article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in that *"Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously"*.

The Independent Visitor Service

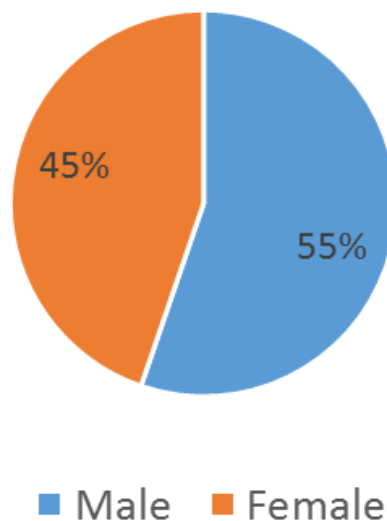


The Independent Visitor Service was introduced by the Children Act 1989. The role is to provide a child/young person living in the care of their local authority access to an independent person offering a long term supportive relationship. The Independent Visitor is a reliable adult volunteer – a positive role model. The independent visitor provides continuity and a supportive relationship. They meet with the child/young person on a monthly basis and engage in activities they both enjoy with a view to raising the self-esteem of the child/young person and help their confidence to grow. Sova currently provide ten independent visitor services across England.

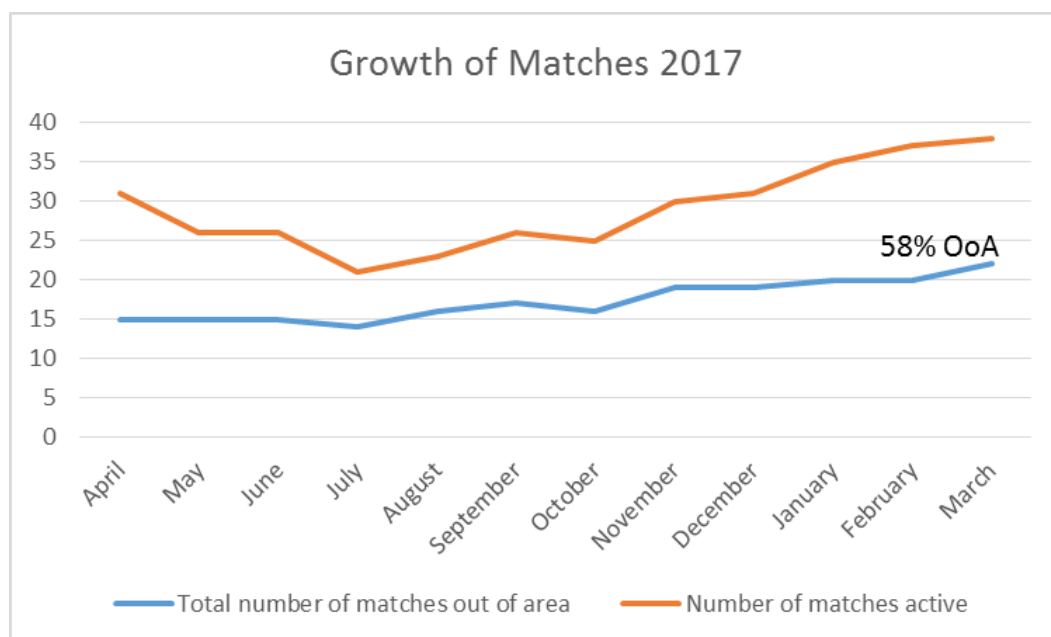
DCRS Young People Matched with Independent visitors



Gender of Young Person



2017-18 Sova received 28 referrals. Though anyone can enquire about an having an independent visitor, referrals ultimately come from the child/young person's social worker. July saw the lowest number of matches, due to a number of young people turning 18yrs. However, thereafter the number steadily rose and the year ended with 38 young people matched. Three relationships have been running since 2013.



22 of current matches are for young people placed out of area, including Burton on Trent, Litchfield, Newark, Sheffield, Corby and Ilkeston. Independent visitors and their young people engage in all manner of activities including the Zoo, cinema, theatre, trampolines, climbing, pic-nic, CV writing, painting, walking, cycling, castles, dog walking – independent visitors provide feedback after each visit to Sova:

"We have some good common ground and humour. My YP wanted to try some drumming so I found a free taster session for us together and she was a natural - think she's found a great hobby there! The training you delivered was really good preparation and I have those key messages you gave us in my head when I go on IV meetings" young person age 16yrs

"Just wanted to say thanks for being such a good match-maker! I've enjoyed meeting O, we've had two really good outings together and are looking forward to more - we went sledging together! I thought my sledging days were over, well I am in my 60's! It was the first time for O, we laughed a lot!" young person aged 10yrs

"It has taken a long time to get to the place where we are today, we were matched in 2015. We "get on" really well and I enjoy his company. In the early days it was extremely challenging, as though he expected me to walk away and he was pushing for that to happen. The journey was 30-40 minutes each way, so we discovered we both like music and now he plays me new tunes he likes, and we sing to old songs like Wonderwall. I am about to move to a new house soon - towards Alfreton and it will be a longer journey to see him. However, when I asked him if he would like a new IV he was pretty clear he wouldn't! We both like the theatre and he is quite adventurous - even wants to see a ballet. Films are our go-to place and I think he has finally accepted I'm not sporty and don't want to do things like paintballing. He has made a real difference to my life and I am delighted to have had the opportunity to be an IV" young person age 14yrs

"we were talking about what he might do when he leaves school, thinking about the qualifications he has, he is interested in the army and so I arranged to take him to find out more, I could see how excited he was about this! We then went for a Nepalese meal, I wanted to show him something he hadn't tried before"

"My young person is turning 18 soon, We have spent the last few months talking about independent living. She is concerned that she will get bored living on her own so we talked about the different things she can do. We also talked about the importance of budgeting. It has helped because over the years we have always worked through our activities together - looked at the funds available and made our decisions based on that"

"Its early days but already my YP has starting to relax. She said this is getting her out of the house more than before and we are enjoying monthly activities. We are gradually going to busier places to build up her confidence and reduce her anxiety in busy public spaces. She is opening up, eating with more comfort and enjoyment. I got her rap song its first radio airplay - a proud moment but also a step towards engaging with the world more and getting her music out there" young person age 16yrs

Conclusion

Sova values of passion, fairness, integrity and focus shine through our recruitment, training and service delivery.

2017-18 has been an exciting year for Sova and incredibly successful year for the Children's Rights service. In April 2017 Sova faced a number of challenges, reassuring existing volunteers that the service remained unaltered, chasing outstanding paperwork and ensuring all volunteers had up to date training; inevitably we said goodbye to some volunteers as they took the opportunity to exit from the role in those early months. In addition, chasing referrals and risk assessments for young people from social workers as data protection allowed only very limited information to move between providers.

However, these challenges were balanced by the tenacious approach of staff ensuring the successful and smooth transition of service and recruitment of volunteers – the commitment and passion towards the rights of children and young people shines through at training and motivates volunteers to get on board. Sova welcome the second year of contract by supporting a young person and his Independent visitor to attend a national event, the young person had recently encouraged others in his residential home to request the

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service telling them how much he had gained from it. Sova will continue to work closely with stake holders to ensure they deliver the highest possible standard of service and look forward to continuing to exceed the expectations of commissioners.

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APPENDIX

you.plus

Sova

Derby Children's Rights Service – Young Person Survey

Please look at the sentences below
Think about yourself and your visits with our volunteer
Which of the boxes would you say is most like you?
Tick one box against each question

				
		Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me
1	"I look forward to seeing my Independent Visitor (IV)"			
2	"My IV listens to me, we choose where we go"			
3	"My IV and I choose together how we spend our time"			
4	"I understand what my IV can and can't do" <i>e.g. budget, frequency of meetings, personal boundaries</i>			
5	"I would recommend having an IV to other young people"			
6	"I feel better about myself since having an IV"			
7	"I am more able to speak up since having my IV"			
8	"I have tried new things since having my IV"			
9	"If I need help or want something to change, I feel more able to ask others if needed."			
10	"Overall – I feel more confident since having an IV"			
11	"Overall – I have developed new skills since having an IV"			
12	"Overall – I feel better about myself since having an IV"			

DCRS ver. 3 – Oct. 2017 Page 1