

**Corporate Parenting Committee
Derby Children's Rights Service
Annual Report
April 2019– March 2020**

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Section 1 Introduction to the Derby Children's Rights Service

The Change Grow Live Derby Children's Rights Service is a partnership between Change Grow Live and Derby City Council Children Services Department. The project has been funded by Derby City Council since April 2017. Based centrally in Derby in order to meet the demands of the service, it has a nationwide reach. During 2019/2020 the project provides Independent Visitors, Independent Advocacy to looked after children and care leavers, Independent Advocacy at initial child protection conference and monthly Independent Advocacy support at Derby City residential homes.

- **Independent Visitors**

Change Grow Live recruit and train volunteers from local communities where children and young people are placed to be independent visitors. 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 2019/2020 this included recruiting and training volunteers in locations such as Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire 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 on a monthly basis with a telephone call or correspondence between visits. The aim is to provide a trusted adult, independent of the local authority with whom the child/young person may develop a lasting, stable and trusting relationship. During the visits the pair may share an interest, hobby or go on an outing together. During recruitment we encourage applicants to reflect, are they are able to commit for a minimum duration of 2 years?

- **Independent Advocacy issue based referrals**

Change Grow Live provide Independent Advocacy for all looked after children and care leavers from Derby City referred to or contacting our service. Advocacy is a safeguard to ensure wishes and feelings are heard, that young people remain at the centre of all decision making and to protect their rights. Our service is lead by a qualified advocate, with skilled volunteers and complimented by a team of experienced sessional advocates from the Change Grow Live wider workforce. Change Grow Live model their advocacy services on the The National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services 2002 (currently under review requested by the Children's Commissioner, CGL formed part of an expert advisory panel to undertake that task).

Change Grow Live strive to ensure the advocacy service is highly visible and accessible for all looked after children and care leavers by building on existing links and networks to raise public and professional awareness. Information about cases is shared with commissioning managers quarterly to ensure transparency and to enable monitoring of the quality of our service.

- **Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference**

Where a family are involved in initial child protection proceedings and the children/young people are over the age of 4 years, a referral may be made to the Change Grow Live advocacy team. Our advocates meet with the child/young person if consent of the primary carer has been obtained. The advocate meets with the child/young person at their school in order to seek their wishes and feelings which are then shared with the Child Protection manager.

- **Independent Advocacy at residential homes in Derby**

Change Grow Live advocates provide monthly clinics at the local authority residential homes in Derby. Advocates arrange with staff a convenient time to call and young people are encouraged to make contact with advocacy should the need arise. Occasionally young people self-refer if there is a matter arising, sometimes young people just wish to chat with advocate. By ensuring the same advocate attends it provides continuity and enables trusting relationships to build.

Section 2 The Independent Visitor Service

Section 2.1 Young People Figures

Referrals & Matching - Independent Visitor Service	Total
<i>Young people referred to the service</i>	25
<i>Young people newly matched 2019-20</i>	19
<i>Year-end on-going relationships in Derby</i>	16
<i>Year-end on-going relationships out of area</i>	22
<i>Referrals withdrawn due to change in circumstances</i>	12
<i>Number of match end</i>	13
<i>Young people awaiting an IV year end</i>	17

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.

Section 2.2 Young People Demographics

Young Person Matched with an Independent Visitor	
Male	16
Female	22
SEN	13
White British	32
Mixed white British	1
Black British	3
Asian	2

Change Grow Live Independent Visitor Service helps to integrate children and young people into their local community, reducing isolation by being a part of something. Drawing volunteers from the local area helps build relationships, encourages compassion and in turn improves community cohesion.

Children and young people are at the centre of our project we are passionate about providing the support they need. Upon receipt of a referral, project staff conduct an initial assessment with the child/young person to obtain a clear understanding of their wishes and an insight into their expectations. Once a match is found the relationship is reviewed by our project staff twice a year as minimum to explore how the relationship is developing.

On average, a young person can expect to be matched within 60 working days of the initial meeting with Change Grown Live Staff; the longest period of waiting time in 2019-20 was 137 days the young person was living in a very rural location, the shortest wait was just 7 days. Currently the longest waiting time is 8 months, referrals were made for a young sibling pair and it was felt that they should be matched concurrently. Our longest match is now in its 5th year. We have a number of examples where volunteers have continued to support their young person even when the young person has moved out of their local area.

Section 2.3 Independent Visitor Activities

During 2019-2020 young people and their independent visitors have sampled a range of exciting activities, together they plan how to make best use of their budget, looking for vouchers, packing a pic-nic and arranging travel. This year in addition to meals out and the cinema the children and young people accessing our service have enjoyed 383 different outings to:

Crazy golf, Bowling, Playing pool, Lazer Quest, Go-Karting, Climbing Walls, Golf, Football, Rugby & Basketball Matches, Theatre, Nottingham Royal Concert Hall, Carsington Water, Ski-Centre, Cycle Hire, Ice-Skating, Paint a Pot & Craft village & Festive Markets

Parks including Allestree, Clumber, Wollaton, Dovedale, Shipley, Alvaston

Amerton Steam railway, Midland Railway Centre

Museums - Cannock Chase, Motor Museum, Erewash, Black Country, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Space Centre Lego Experience, Warwick Castle, Tamworth Castle, Calke Abbey, Elvaston Castle, Virtual Reality Gaming

Multi Terrain Bike Trail Park, Sherwood Pines - cycling centre

Alton Towers, Trampoline centre, Inflatable Parks

Special meals out - Nando's, Cosmos, Gurkha restaurant, Chinese restaurant, Frankie & Benny's, Slice of India

National Memorial Arboretum, London & Short journeys via train/tram, Mercia Marina - shops, cinema and narrow boats, Antiques shops & history lesson, Moira Furness - canal festival, Knife Angel sculpture in Derby, Attenborough Nature Reserve – Nottingham, National Stone Centre & Crich Tramway museum, Christmas Lantern Tour - Nottingham

Dimmingsdale Valley - walk to the 'Chained Oak' tree, Brainiac Live - mad science at Derby Theatre

Farm visits, petting farms

Library to choose books to read

Wightwick Manor, Handsworth Park, Hanbury Hall, Hadden Hall Park

Section 2. 4 Service Feedback – Independent Visitor

"I've been on lots of courses and I can honestly say it was one of the best... I never felt so engaged, throughout the training and afterwards telling my husband all about it. If I didn't understand anything on the day I asked and my question was answered. There was great interaction with all the other attendees, and the tasks were varied; I liked that we were asked to get up and go across the room for one activity. It kept everyone motivated." IV

"I was impressed by how detailed and professional the training was, and also the arrangements in place to support volunteers." IV

"She (the 10 year old YP) really enjoyed clip and climb. Though it did push her out of her comfort zone, for sure. Both of us really! I wouldn't say she is scared of heights but she was cautious to start... she did slowly grow in confidence and managed a full

climb by the end. She was proud of herself at the end and wanted a photo taking so she could show her family." IV

"I'd recommend another YP having an IV... it's like if this YP doesn't have a lot of friends, it's really good to have that person to go out with and to do fun things with. When I'm with my IV I feel like I can start a conversation on my own terms; not having someone to talk to me first. Someone you can go out with and can talk to if you have any problems." YP age 14

"If I could change anything, I'd like to go out twice a month!" YP age 14

"The best thing about the service is that I get to go out, she's always there." YP age 17

"It's helped me to be a better person, gain new skills, I get time away from my placement, can try new activities" YP age 16

When asked, If you were shopping for an IV what would be on your list? "a girl who is young funny and active and who likes fair rides, someone who loves chocolate as much as me, has patience, time and understanding, my IV has everything!" YP age 12

Section 3 The Independent Advocacy Service

Section 3.1 Child Protection Conference

We provide independent advocacy support for children in need at initial child protection conference and thereafter at reviews if requested to do so.

2019-20 we supported 63 children/young people to participate in 34 separate conferences far exceeding funders target by 26%; quite often we liaise directly with parents to reassure and explain our role, helping to aid communication between family and services. The very nature of child protection demands that the process is slick and well managed, it is not uncommon for advocates to have just two days' notice to arrange to meet with a child. Normally our involvement ends at conference, however, in one particular case care proceedings have ensued and we are working with the City Council Legal team to provide case notes and statements from the advocate involved.

Young Person Demographics Child Protection Advocacy	Total
<i>White British</i>	45
<i>White European</i>	11
<i>Asian</i>	3
<i>Black</i>	4

5 - 10 years	42
11 - 15 years	18
16 - 17 years	3
Males	47
Females	16

Section 3.2 Issue Based Advocacy

Referrals Independent Advocacy Service	Total
Young people referred to the service 2019-20	82
Young people in Derby	45
Young people out of area or at a distance	37
Visits to Derby City Residential Homes	51
Number of matters raised for young people	105
Number of matters closed for young people	76
On-going open cases at end of March 2020	27

Young Person Demographics Independent Advocacy	Total
White British	63
White European	5
Mixed (White Caribbean)	2
Mixed (White Black African)	1
Mixed (White Asian)	2
Pakistani	5
Asian	1
Black	3

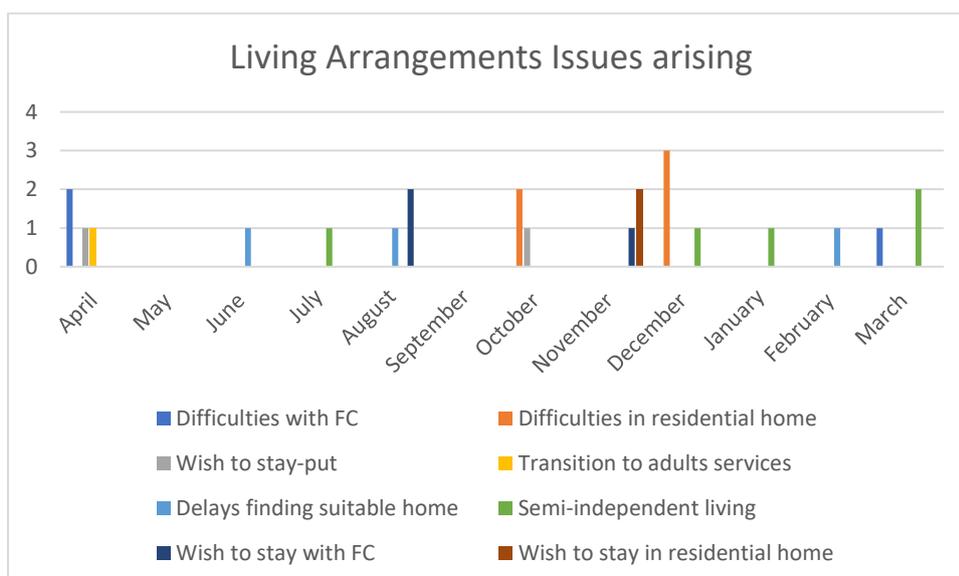
Age 5 - 10 years	23
Age 11 - 15 years	28
Age 16 - 17 years	25
Care Leaver	6

Section 3.3 Matters Raised by Children and Young People

Issues raised - Independent Advocacy Service	Total
Support to prepare for a review	22
Support during a review	18
Support with leaving care workers & transition	7
Education	10
Home – living arrangements	23
Other	25

Matters defined as “**other**” are varied and include signposting to services such as health, independent visitors, solicitors, support obtaining a passport, support to change family name, matters of a financial nature, request to change social worker, support during transition into adult services, to raise a complaint, support to express wishes and feelings to their social worker to assist in care proceedings, contact with family or live story work.

Overall, the largest number of matters arose relating to living arrangements falling into eight categories.



Section 3.4 Formal Complaints

Whenever possible, advocates seek resolution on behalf of the young person however, occasionally young person choose to raise a formal complaint. During 2019-20 six young people were supported to raise formal complaints;

1. Suitability of placement

The young person remains in placement, but the local authority have agreed to complete an assessment of need thus the matter is in part resolved.

2. Suitability of placement

The issues raised were addressed to the young person's satisfaction.

3. Restrictions of personal liberty

The young person is represented by solicitors the case is ongoing.

4. Delays in processing relevant paperwork & passport application

Children's services arranged meetings with the young person and offered explanations regarding the delays; they continue to update him on their progress.

5. Delays in obtaining a suitable Education Health Care Plan

A non-instructed advocacy case on behalf of a young person with severe autism. Steps were taken by the local authority to expedite the plan from Derbyshire County Council.

6. Delays in processing relevant paperwork & passport application

A time line and explanations were offered to the young person to explain delays in paperwork being obtained and the positive impact of additional solicitors at the Council House. The matter is unresolved.

Section 3. 4 Service Feedback – Independent Advocacy

“As the young person did not attend the meeting as planned, it was extremely helpful having your input. You managed to get a very helpful and detailed account of the young person's views which was powerful and meaningful. There isn't anything I can think of that you could have done better and I would recommend your service”. Social worker Locality 2

The staff have passion and enthusiasm for the service – it is all about the children. Training is good and you keep us up to date on things”. Volunteer Advocate.

“The Advocacy service has allowed vulnerable young people to express their views and feelings when at times they have not been able to. I have worked with this service with a few of my customers and have always found it to be a positive experience. They have travelled out of the city to see customers and have fed back with consent at all times. There is usually a specific reason for advocacy and it is really helpful to have an external unbiased person involved. The Advocate always worked in the favour of the customer and has been effective. There have been some difficult situations when the advocate has had to speak out against several professionals in the wishes of the customer”. Social Worker preparing for adulthood team.

“The Advocate allowed the children's views to be shared impartially and echoed Social Care concerns. It captured the moment and how the children had shared the information. I would recommend this service. It provides children with an opportunity to share their wishes and feelings and they can be represented unbiasedly. It's a good service”. Social worker Locality 1/5

“The manager has been an immense help to me from the beginning of my new role. Despite having a heavy workload, she is always willing to talk things through with me if I am stuck or suggest a different way of trying something. Because of this approach, I have felt able to share when I haven't done things as well as I would like and to discuss how I could do them differently next time. The result is that my confidence has grown immensely over the year and, although I still have loads to learn, I feel as if I am able to support young people appropriately now”. Sessional advocate

“I like everything about my advocate, she is just a proper nice person, always picks up the phone”. Young person age 13yrs.

“She listened to me and helped get things done. When she said she was going to do something, she did it straight away”. Young person age 14yrs.

“You feel empowered, I've already recommended the service to two other people”. Foster carer, non-instructed case

“She helped me when I needed it. I'd recommend having an advocate to other young people”. Young person age 18 yrs.

“She listens to me and is very easy to talk to about things, I'd definitely recommend it”. Young person age 16yrs.

“I felt listened to and helped and she was on the phone when I needed her. I'd recommend it (having an advocate) to other children and young people”. Young person age 16 yrs.

Section 4 Communication

Section 4.1 Commissioners

The project has been providing a service in partnership with Derby City Council for 3 years, during that time we have built a strong positive relationship with professionals in a variety of different roles/teams.

Joint quarterly meetings are held with our partners from the local authority where monitoring information is scrutinised and case studies shared. Partnership working is an opportunity to highlight strengths and identify solutions should improvement or development be required.

Section 4.2 Networking

We network with Community Action in Derby who share opportunities regarding training, grants and networking events. We participate in the children and young people network meetings facilitated by Derby City Council. We present to first year social work students at Derby University raising awareness about Children's Rights. Similarly, we attended Sheffield University to speak with third year nursing students. We attend volunteer recruitment events around the Midlands. We are members of the MCA Dols subgroup attending meeting quarterly.

Section 4.3 Children and Young People

Change Grow Live recognise that participation is key to our success in 2019-20, we:

- Attended the Children in Care Council sharing existing leaflets about our service and gathered ideas on how the service could be better advertised.
- Facilitated young people to participate in the National Independent Visitors Network event in London 21st October 2019
- Invited children and young people (with their independent visitor), to participate in our training, sharing their own experience with potential volunteers is invaluable.
- We keep in touch with young people both awaiting a match and those already matched twice a year to obtain their feedback about our service.
- All young people are invited to complete and return a questionnaire about Change Grow Live – all participants are entered into a prize drawer.
- All children and Young people were invited to assist in interviewing potential volunteers, or, help design appropriate questions, inserting "young person question" into our interview format.

Section 5 Best Practice

Referrals 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 regional network of Independent Visitors, meeting quarterly with other providers to share best practice, ideas, experience and to network forging positive links. We adhere to the National Standards for the provision of independent visitors. We attend the National Advocacy Conference hosted by Black Belt Advocacy to discuss, share and create lasting improvements within advocacy. 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.

Referrals Independent Advocacy Service: Change Grow Live accept referrals from any source on behalf of looked after children, including self-referrals, foster carers, social workers, independent reviewing officers, social workers, health professionals, residential support workers or teachers. Change Grow Live adhere to the standards for advocacy offering a confidential and independent service to children and young people.

Recording Data: Information is securely stored on our data management system CRiis. We store all relevant information including basic details, contacts with professionals, risk assessments, contact sheets from volunteers and monitoring information. Only project staff and higher level management have access. Regular alerts are in place to ensure checks and responses are completed in a timely manner ensuring continuous monitoring.

Independence: We are an independent service and strive to ensure the child/young person 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. Advocates strictly adhere to the principles of advocacy, empowering the voice and rights of the child/young person they support.

Volunteers: Volunteers are trained under the Change Grow Live Safer Volunteer Recruitment (SVR) process a commitment to anti-discriminatory law, policy and practice. SVR is a seven stage process including; application form, first interview,

classroom training, enhanced DBS check, references, assessment pack and second interview. Volunteers are not permitted to meet with a child/young person until all stages are complete.

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.

COVID-19: During March 2020, Government guidance prompted adaptations to working methods to enable the Derby Children's Rights 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.