



Corporate Parenting Committee
26 July 2016

Report of the Strategic Director of People's
Services

ITEM 7

The Children's Rights Service – Annual Report 2015/16

SUMMARY

- 1.1 Provision of the Children's Rights Service is enshrined in legislation for looked after children through the Children Act 1989 and through related regulation and guidance. The Council has a statutory duty to provide advocacy services for looked after children making complaints and to appoint independent visitors.

Care Matters –Time for Change 2006 emphasised that it is important that children in care have a chance 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

- 1.2 The Children's Rights Service in Derby is made up of 4 services and delivered by Volunteering Matters, the services include;
- The Independent Visitor Service
 - The Independent Advocacy Service
 - Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference
 - The Children in Care Council.

The majority of these services are facilitated by the use of volunteers, recruited by Volunteering Matters.

1.3 **The Independent Visitor Service**

Where it is thought to be in their best interest, children and young people are asked if they would like an Independent Visitor. Independent visitors are carefully matched taking into account shared interests, location, personality and any matters raised by social care practitioners. The service agreement with Derby City Council is for 40 + matches at any one time. 2015 -16 Volunteering Matters received 21 new referrals – this is less than the previous year (33 referrals) which had seen an increase of 17% on 2012-13.

The lowest number of matches was 34 in October – due to a number of matches ending as young people turned 18 or returned to family. The highest number was 41 in June, July and December. The year ended with 40 matches, 25 of which were outside the City boundary and 12 young people on the waiting list.

Over the last 12 months, children and young people have had no less than 227 contacts with their independent visitors. Activities undertaken are varied, creative, entertaining and educational. Children that are placed out of authority and at a distance are a priority area.

The Independent Advocacy Service

Referrals can be made by anyone and once received they are responded to within two working days, allocated based on suitability, complexity, location and availability. Over the last year advocates have travelled to Shropshire and Warrington, all over Derby and Derbyshire and continue to support young people in Kent, the age range of young people accessing the service has been 10 – 18. In every case, the advocate maintains close contact with the young person, reporting back to them at each stage only ever supporting within the parameters of their agreement. Whenever possible, the advocate will encourage the young person to self-advocate.

In 2015-16 Volunteering Matters received 49 referrals: 32 from children and young people in Derby, 13 from children and young people at a distance, 4 from children and young people in Derbyshire.

In 2015 -16 non-instructed advocacy was introduced. Where a child or young person has no means of communication either due for example to severe learning disability or autism, Non-instructed advocacy is a means by which their wishes and feelings can be obtained.

In 2015-16 from September to March, Monthly advocacy clinics have been reintroduced to Derby's Children residential homes. This has generated 10 referrals.

Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference

Independent advocacy support for children/ young people at initial child protection conference. Includes meeting with the child/ young person to obtain their wishes and feelings and take these to the conference or supporting the child / young person to do so. Meetings only ever take place with the child/young person if that is their wish and with the express permission of their parents.

In 2015-16 Volunteering Matters supported 68 children/young people to participate in 38 separate conferences exceeding their target of 20 children and young people.

The Children in Care Council

The CICC is for all children and young people with care experience highlighting issues affecting them. It provides a platform where young people to speak about things that matter to them & contribute towards positive changes benefitting all. The largest project undertaken by the CICC 2015 /16 was the launch of the new Pledge. The council attended the launch event in January 2016 which was very successful.

Membership and attendance has been a big issue for the council and Volunteering Matters have been working to improve on this, however attendance on the whole has been quite low over the year.

- 1.4 2016-17 is the final year for Volunteering Matters to provide the Childrens Rights Service under the current contract. Consideration will need to be given about how the

Childrens Rights Service is provided in 2017-18 and beyond.

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| RECOMMENDATION |
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2.1 To receive the report

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| REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION |
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3.1 As part of our contract there is a requirement for the service to provide an annual report.

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| SUPPORTING INFORMATION |
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4.1 None

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| OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED |
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5.1 None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

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| Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s) | DMT- Social Care 30 th June 2016 |
| For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices: | Pervez Akhtar Corporate Parenting Lead Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – The Children Rights Service Annual Report 2015/16 |

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| IMPLICATIONS |
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Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 None arising directly from this report.

Legal Statutory obligations for this service will be contained within the report.

- 2.1 There is a statutory requirement to provide a Childrens Rights Service for children in care.

Personnel

- 3.1 None arising directly from this report.

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- 4.1 None arising directly from this report.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 None arising directly from this report.

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

Risk Management

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 The content of this report underpins the priority commitment, Protecting vulnerable children, young people, adults and older people. Making sure that we take action to safeguard vulnerable adults and children that require higher levels of support including; our looked after children and vulnerable adults with learning disabilities. This will involve early intervention and prevention wherever possible.