



**The Children's Rights Service Annual Report**

**Who are Volunteering Matters?**

Volunteering Matters, formerly known as CSV, is a national charity leading UK volunteering in policy and practice. Our vision is of a society where everyone can participate in their local community through volunteering and social action. Our mission is to invest in people through volunteering and social action; to reduce inequalities and isolation, improve health and wellbeing and so build a stronger more inclusive society.

Volunteering Matters in Derby were funded until March 2017 to facilitate and deliver The Children's Rights Service for looked after children and care leavers of Derby. A small staff team, led by the Regional manager recruit, train, deploy and supervise volunteers in the delivery of four separate services:

- The Independent Visitor Service
- The Independent Advocacy Service
- Advocacy at Child Protection Conferences
- The Children in Care Council

**Close working relations and regular consultation with our funders – Derby City Council**

Throughout the year, the regional manager and project coordinator meet with the Corporate Parenting lead and commissioning manager to ensure close monitoring of the service. Regular review ensures a two way communication, matters are discussed and swiftly resolved; Furthermore, the project coordinator together with representatives from the Children In Care Council attend the Corporate Parenting Committee thus enabling the Children's Rights Service to remain up to speed with developments impacting upon looked after children of Derby.

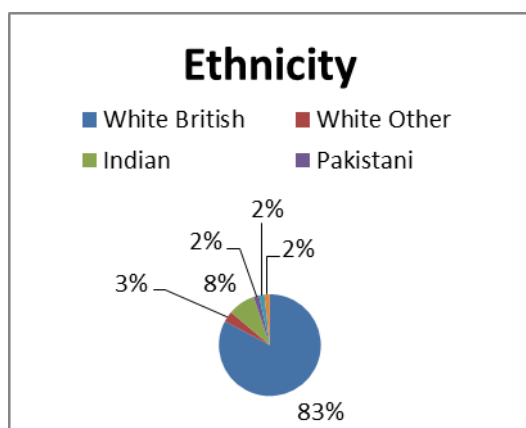
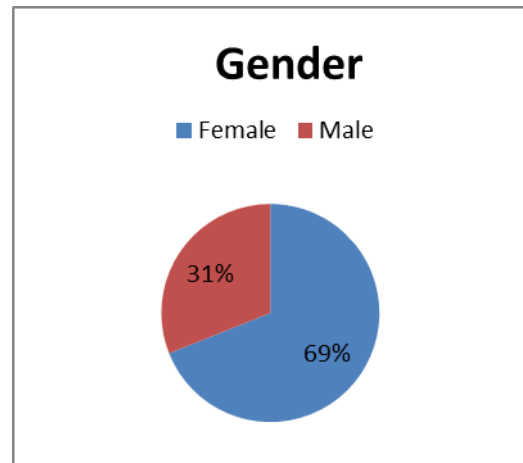
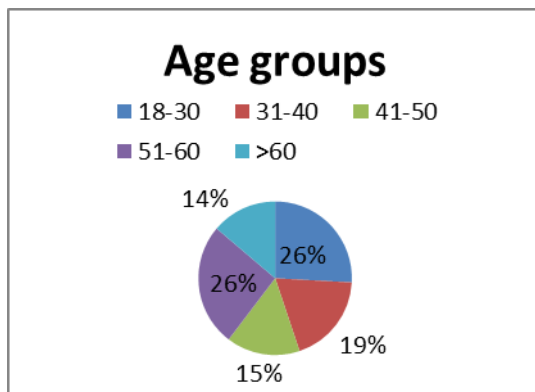
**Our Volunteer Team & Participation of Children and Young People in service development**

As major stakeholders, we consider it essential that the young people we support feed into our service delivery. We therefore invite them to be involved in training volunteers, recruitment of staff and seek their views through regular monitoring. This year three young people formed part of interview panels in the recruitment of our Project Officer and two young people participated in the IV training.

Volunteers are vetted and assessed during a two day bespoke training programme. In addition, those wishing to become advocates are required to submit two case studies and undertake shadowing. Until we are completely satisfied of their commitment and suitability a volunteer does not undertake a role with us. Once operational, volunteers are required to submit diary sheets and telephone if they have any concerns after contact with a young person enabling staff to closely monitor activities.

## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

We have 53 volunteers 7 of which are dual role (independent visitors and advocates). We are proud of the diversity of our volunteers, applicants are encouraged from all age and ethnic backgrounds; the majority are white British, but include Black, Caribbean, Latvian, German, Austrian, Pakistani and dual heritage. The age range is 19 – 71.



We recognise the commitment gifted by our volunteers and work hard to ensure they feel valued and share pride in the service delivered. To achieve this we:

- Provide ongoing mentoring and supervision on a case by case basis.
- Share regular newsletters about Volunteering Matters nationally and changes within our local service.
- Provide an annual social event
- Hold quarterly peer meetings and focus groups to ensure peer support is available and utilised.
- Encourage personal development by sign posting to relevant training and where we identify a wider need facilitate training ourselves.

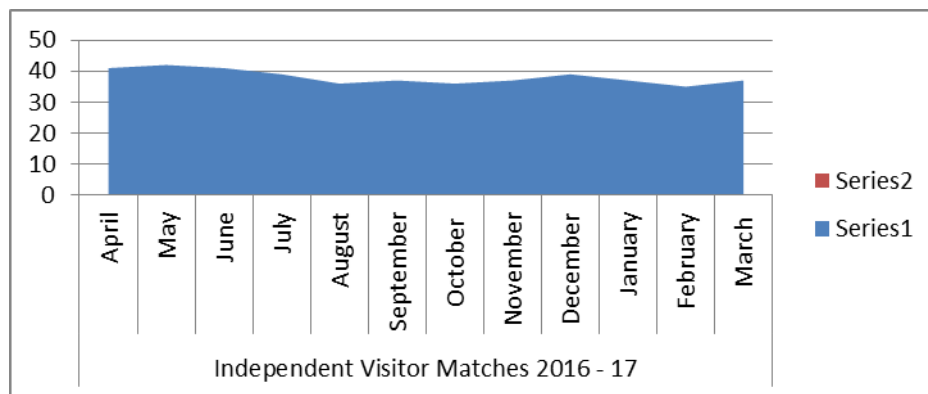
## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

### The Projects

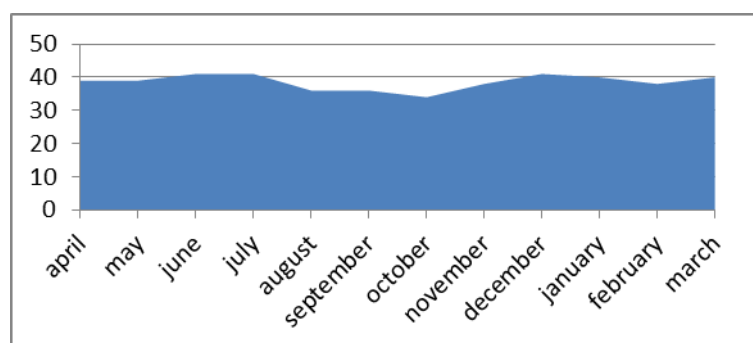
#### **1. The Independent Visitor Service**

Independent visitors are carefully matched taking into account shared interests, location, personality and any matters raised by social care practitioners for example, the social worker may highlight that a child or young person would benefit from a positive male role model. The service agreement with Derby City Council is for 40 + matches at any one time.

2016 -17 VM received 23 new referrals – in line with 2015. Our lowest number of matches was 35 in February due to a number of matches ending as young people turned 18 or social workers felt that the service was not appropriate. The highest number was 42 in May.



Independent Visitors 2015 - 16



#### **Referrals**

Referrals may be made at any point once a child/young person is looked after by the local authority and it is considered in their best interest. The child must be in agreement with the referral being made. Once a referral is received we adhere to the priority criteria set by Derby City Council:

- A child/young person placed outside of the City boundary

## **VOLUNTEERING MATTERS**

- Lifestyle of the child/young person i.e. whether they are already engaged in extra curricular activities or are experiencing social isolation
- Concerns raised by the social worker (e.g. recent trauma)
- Personality traits (e.g. Child/young person has low self esteem, lacking confidence)
- Contact with birth family

During training we emphasize the importance of longevity of matches, ensuring that the child/young person has continuity and stability in what can sometimes be an uncertain lifestyle. Activities undertaken are varied, creative, entertaining and educational. As part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation, we regularly seek the views of our stake holders – this is essential for continued service development and sharing good practice, some comments this year:

"B's independent visitor enables her to go out and experience activities that she would not otherwise be able to do on her own or in a group. You provide an excellent service, many thanks and keep up the good work!" – Foster carer

"Having an independent visitor has enabled him to access lots of different activities and new skills which helps improve his confidence and self worth" – foster carer

"It's good for my young person to do things with his IV that I sometimes am unable to do, he has someone for himself" – foster carer

"Now I have an IV I get to do different activities and I am less worried about other things in my life" young person aged 9 yrs.

"Me and my IV go to different places, now I feel less scared doing new things and I've met new people and started to have more to do outside of school" young person age 13 yrs.

"My IV takes me to new places and it's great! We go out and do stuff I feel more confident now" young person age 11 yrs.

"My IV and I talk about what we would like to do then agree together, my English is a lot better now I can talk to people more easily, I now ask if I hear a word that I don't understand" young person age 10yrs.

"Now I have an IV I go out more and I've learnt new things" young person age 11 yrs.

"I get to do activities I love and try new things when I am with my IV" young person age 13 yrs.

"I get to go out on a one to one, I like that." young person age 9 yrs.

"I do things I have never done before and it gets me out of the house. " young person age 14 yrs.

"The best thing about it is making a new friend" young person age 15yrs.

## **VOLUNTEERING** **MATTERS**

### **Adventures enjoyed by young people & IV's 2016 – 17**

#### Popular places for having a meal or coffee

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cosmo</li><li>• Pubs</li><li>• Dragon</li><li>• McDonalds</li><li>• Nando's</li><li>• Pizza Hut</li><li>• Inferno</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harvester</li><li>• Prezzo</li><li>• Costa</li><li>• Starbucks</li><li>• Patisserie Valerie</li></ul> |
|---|---|



#### Museums & Exhibitions

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Snibston discovery museum</li><li>• Leicester national space centre</li><li>• Castle Donnington</li><li>• Visiting an old mine</li><li>• Nottingham contemporary gallery</li><li>• Bolsover castle</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Warhammer Museum at Games Workshop factory</li><li>• Great Central Railway</li><li>• History of children's TV exhibition</li><li>• Memorial Arboretum</li><li>• Cannock chase visitors centre</li></ul> |
|--|---|



#### Theatres/shows

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Watching Ellie Goulding</li><li>• Derby theatre</li><li>• Cinema</li><li>• Pantomime</li></ul> |
|--|

#### Games/physical indoor activities

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bowling</li><li>• Going to the arcade</li><li>• Trampoline Parks (e.g. Planet Bounce, Bouncy castle)</li><li>• Pool and games at Tenpin Nottingham</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Swimming in the Victoria Baths</li><li>• Tennis</li><li>• Snooker</li><li>• Climbing wall</li><li>• Escapologic (escape room game)</li></ul> |
|--|--|



## **VOLUNTEERING** **MATTERS**

### Events

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Woodland festival at Elvaston castle</li><li>• Chocolate fair</li><li>• Auction at Hanson's Auctioneers</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comic con</li><li>• Medieval joust at Bolsover castle</li><li>• Liverpool – Albert Dock</li></ul> |
|---|---|

### Other Activities

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Going shopping (Intu centre, Nottingham, etc.)</li><li>• Getting nails done together</li><li>• Reading stories in the library</li><li>• Searching for a job together</li><li>• Football mash up</li></ul> |
|---|



### Outdoor Activities

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marcia Marina Christmas Market</li><li>• Ice skating</li><li>• Nottingham forest fireworks display</li><li>• Picnic at Elvaston Castle</li><li>• Jogging</li><li>• Playing football</li><li>• Going to a park</li><li>• Cannock chase military history weekend</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Toboggan</li><li>• Heights of Abraham</li><li>• Pirate adventure golf</li><li>• Horse riding</li><li>• Skate park</li><li>• Photography of landscapes</li><li>• Snow tubing</li><li>• Geocaching</li></ul> |
|--|--|

## **Independent Advocacy**

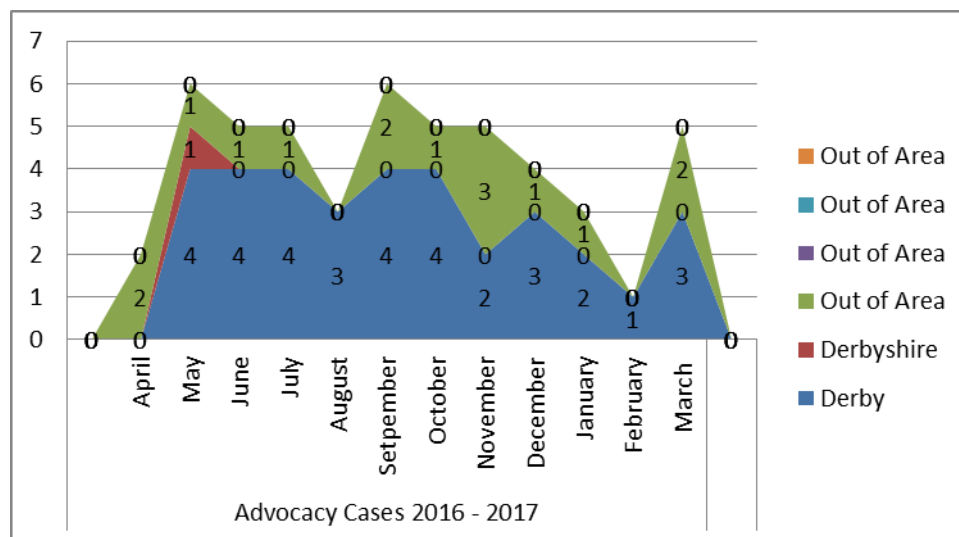
Working closely within the national standards for the provision of children's advocacy we endeavour to make certain that children and young people are empowered, their rights respected and that their views and wishes are properly considered during the decision making process. We deliver a person centred service striving to ensure that children and young people feel valued and comfortable raising their concerns no matter how large or small those concerns may appear. Children and young people benefit from committed, enthusiastic and well-trained volunteers or staff members motivated to deliver effective support.

## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

### Number of referrals made:

Referrals can be made by anyone at any point and once received they are responded to within two working days, allocated based on suitability, complexity, location and availability. The age range of young people accessing the service has been 7 – 21. 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.

**2016 – 17** we received 49 referrals; 34 from children and young people in Derby; 14 from children and young people at a distance and 1 from a child in Derbyshire. These numbers are consistent with 2015-16 when 49 referrals were received 32 from children and young people in Derby. Comparable with 2014/15 which had seen a massive increase of 121% on previous years.



### Advocacy Matters

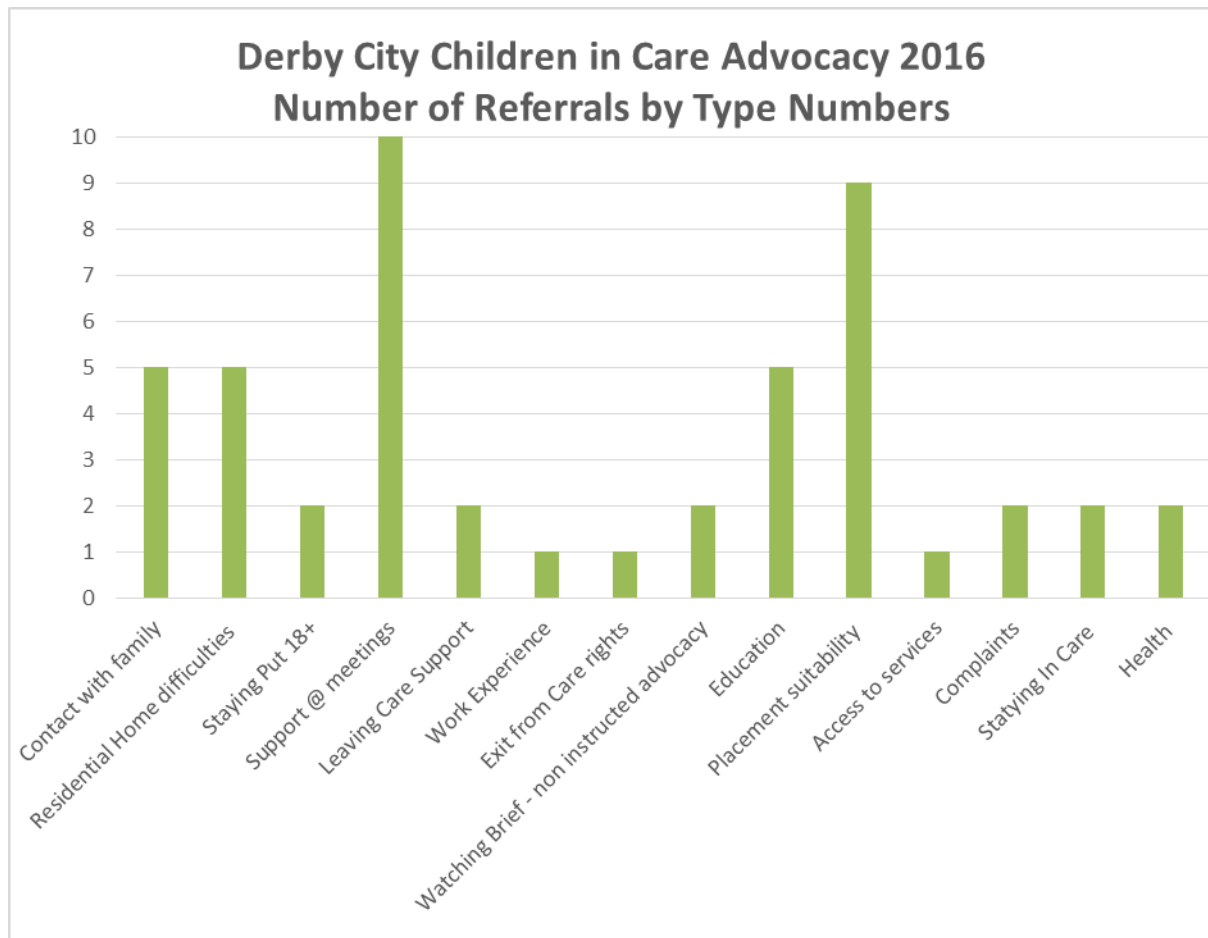
The matters raised by young people, though varied fall into similar categories. For example 20% of referrals relate to support at meetings, the meeting purpose varies and includes

- Support to prepare for looked after child reviews
- Support during looked after child reviews
- Support to liaise with children's services
- Support to attend Court proceedings
- Support to liaise with leaving care workers
- Support to meet with school / education

Similarly, 18% of referrals relate to placement matters – this one category covers a diverse range of issues including;

## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

- a young person in foster care sought reassurance that no other young people would be moved into his home,
- a young person was at risk of losing his placement due to risk taking behaviour,
- a young person felt that the placement was not meeting his needs,
- A young person concerned that funded would cease and he would lose his specialised placement.
- A young person being moved between residential homes and not wishing to



### **Advocacy Clinics at Residential Homes**

In September 2015, it was agreed to re-instate the monthly advocacy clinics and monitor impact. These are now firmly established, this has helped to promote access to all services providing young people and staff opportunity to ask questions about the Children In care Council and Independent visitor service.

#### **Trisha – Children's Home Advocate**

"We are a totally independent presence and as our visits are regular it helps the young people get to know us and if a problem arises they trust us to help them and take this forward. By talking to the young people in a safe environment we can usually get them to



## **VOLUNTEERING MATTERS**

open up and tell us their views and what outcome would make them feel more involved in the decision being made about them they are more likely to be engaged and make things work”

Rob - Advocate

“During my years as an advocate I have discovered that young people are often not really able to take an active role in how their life takes shape. Along comes a voice for them without any judgement – giving support and care without any agenda often giving time and empathy to put the young person's view and thoughts first, giving them some kind of control, after all, it's their life”.

### **2. Advocacy support at Initial Child Protection Conference**

We provide independent advocacy support for children/ young people at initial child protection conference. We meet with the child/ young person to obtain their wishes and feelings and take those to the conference ourselves or support the child / young person to do so. We would only ever meet with the child/young person if that is their wish and with the express permission of their parents.

Within a very short time frame (sometimes as little as three days notice), we operate a well organised and coordinated service whereby we contact the social worker, schools and sometimes parents – obtaining brief case detail and instructing advocates to meet with the child/young person. Where ever possible, advocates attend in pairs –to aid communication ensuring complete transparency and accurate note taking.

Advocates meet with the child/young person, explain their role and the purpose of their visit, they speak to them about the conference and help them to express the wishes and feelings they would like to share. Advocates meet with children as young as five years tailoring their style accordingly.

In 2016-17 we supported 52 children/young people to participate in 21 separate conferences. Though we continue to exceed our target of 20 children and young people this is a considerable reduction on 2015-16 when we supported 68 children/young people to participate in 38 separate conferences. This should be addressed by promoting the service to the DHOS for First Contact and Reception teams.

### **3. The Children In Care Council (CiCC)**

The CiCC is for all children and young people with care experience highlighting issues that affect them. It provides a platform where young people may speak about things that matter to them & they can contribute towards positive change benefitting all. The meetings are fun & functional. Meetings have a structure, designed to enhance skills and to be child friendly. Each meeting follows a similar format with an agenda and ground rules agreed. Led by the young people, members take turns to Chair. Any guests are present with the agreement of the members and together they decide

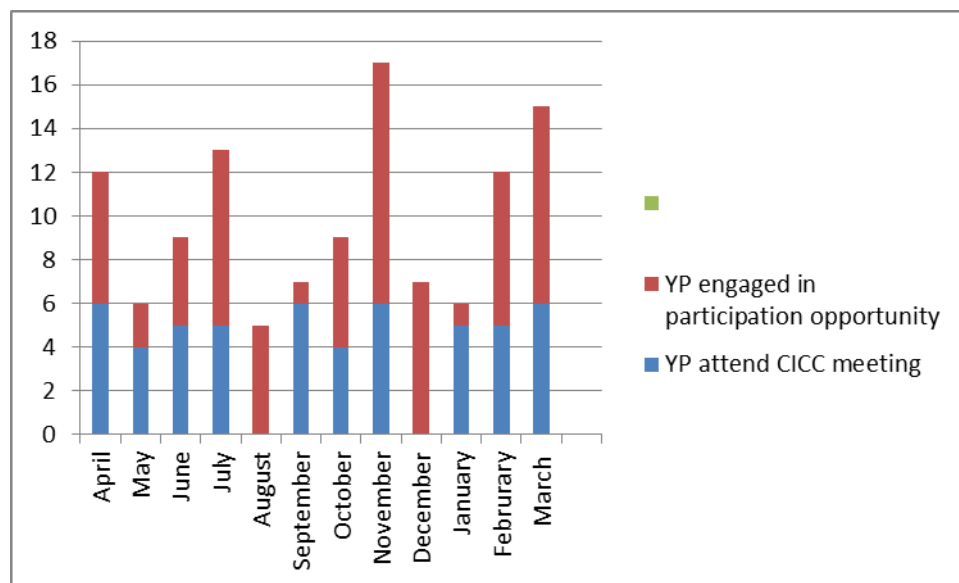


## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

what matters & what needs to change; Minutes are taken and distributed by post or email.

Members expressed an interest in learning more about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child members select two countries and sample food, flags and facts about those countries as well as looking at the rights. Members discuss at the close of each meeting who should be awarded the flag, encouraging skills of negotiation, communication and democracy.

Attendance at the CICC meetings has stabilized, there are regular participation opportunities. We are proud that the members have embraced the purpose and function of the CICC and the opportunities that arise.



The CICC are proud of all of their achievements in 2016-17, through hard work and dedication they have made a difference to the lives of all looked after children from Derby including:

- Building close links with their corporate parent through regular attendance at the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- Ensuring their corporate parent adhere to the Pledge (launched in January 2016) by attending special meetings to hold their corporate parent to account.
- Actively involved with the recruitment of DCC staff by attendance at interview panel or drafting appropriate questions.
- Creating a children's and young person's version of the Looked After Child Strategy for Derby City Council
- Providing feedback to Derby City Council about their residential Children's homes
- Campaigning for changes to be made to transport available in residential care.

## **VOLUNTEERING MATTERS**

- Provided constructive feedback to their corporate parent on how to effectively consult with young people as part of the "Consultation Carrousel"
- Conducting a mystery shop to test awareness of their corporate parent on their knowledge and understanding of the Pledge.
- Assisted in the naming of a new health and wellbeing service for looked after children
  - Created a DVD to promote the CICC to other young people and their carers alike.
- Attended Voices In Action to link with other young people across the City and report back to the CICC members.
  - Provided feedback and experience to assist in foster care training.
- Requesting that an invitation be extended to all looked after children placed in Derby
- Working in partnership with the Children's Commissioner for England to embrace the Take Over Challenge providing a diverse range of opportunities for all.



## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS



### In conclusion

2016-17 has been a successful year for the children's rights service where Volunteering Matters have continued to deliver a high quality service. Responding to all referrals within a strict 48 hour time frame, keeping up to date with social workers to ensure we keep abreast of changes impacting young people on our waiting list and working in close partnership with Derby City Council to assist them in raising standards for looked after children in their care. It is with regret that we will no longer be leading on this service, however, we are proud to have made a positive difference to the lives we have touched over the preceding 14 years of service.

