



Annual Report

Looked After Children Independent Service Children's Rights Team

April 2019 to March 2020

Melanie Tiernan Manager - Kirklees Looked After Children Independent Service (Children's Rights Team)
Anna Gledhill Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Social Work Lead, Children and Young People Service
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1. Introduction

Advocacy and children’s rights help to create a culture of openness where listening and responding to children’s voices is an integral part of everyday practice.

The Kirklees Looked After Children Independent Service (Children’s Rights Team) offer advocacy, advice and representation to children and young people who are Looked After by Kirklees Local Authority residing within the borough, or in external placements in host authorities.

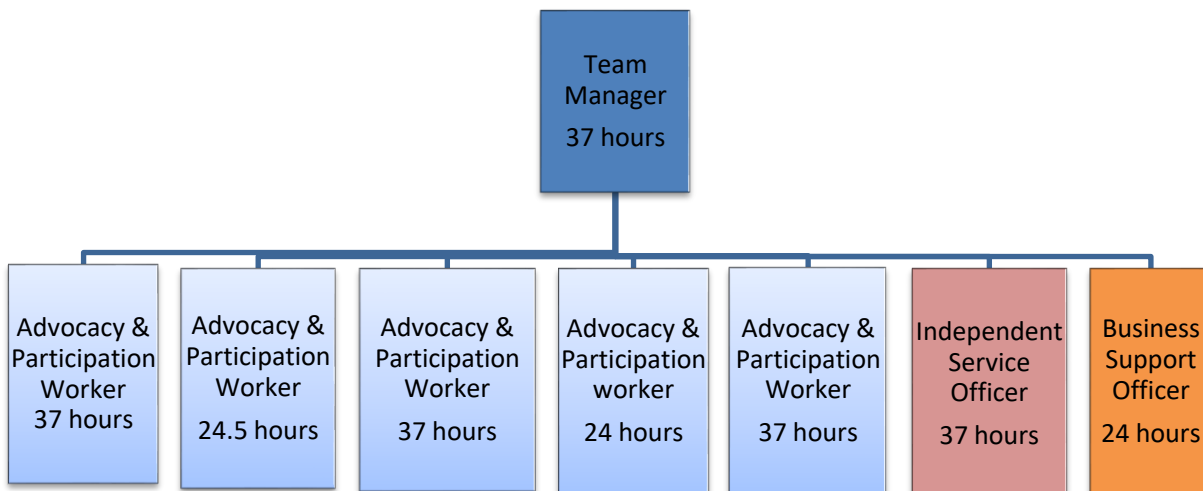
This report covers the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 therefore the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic was in its early stages and is therefore not fully reflected in this report. A six-monthly report covering the period April 2020 to September 2020 will contain more content about the longer-term impact of working throughout Covid-19.

2. The Aim of the Children’s Rights Team

The aim of the Children’s Rights team is to:

- Promote and support the rights of all children and young people Looked After by Kirklees Local Authority within the current framework of legislation, incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (UNCRC)
- Support the empowerment of children and young people Looked After by Kirklees Local Authority, to help enable them to engage in meaningful participation in respect of decision-making that affects them, individually and collectively.
- Provide a quality assurance function in respect of services received by children Looked After by Kirklees Local Authority.
- Support children and young people involved in the child protection process to be enable them to voice their opinions.

3. Children’s Rights Team Structure

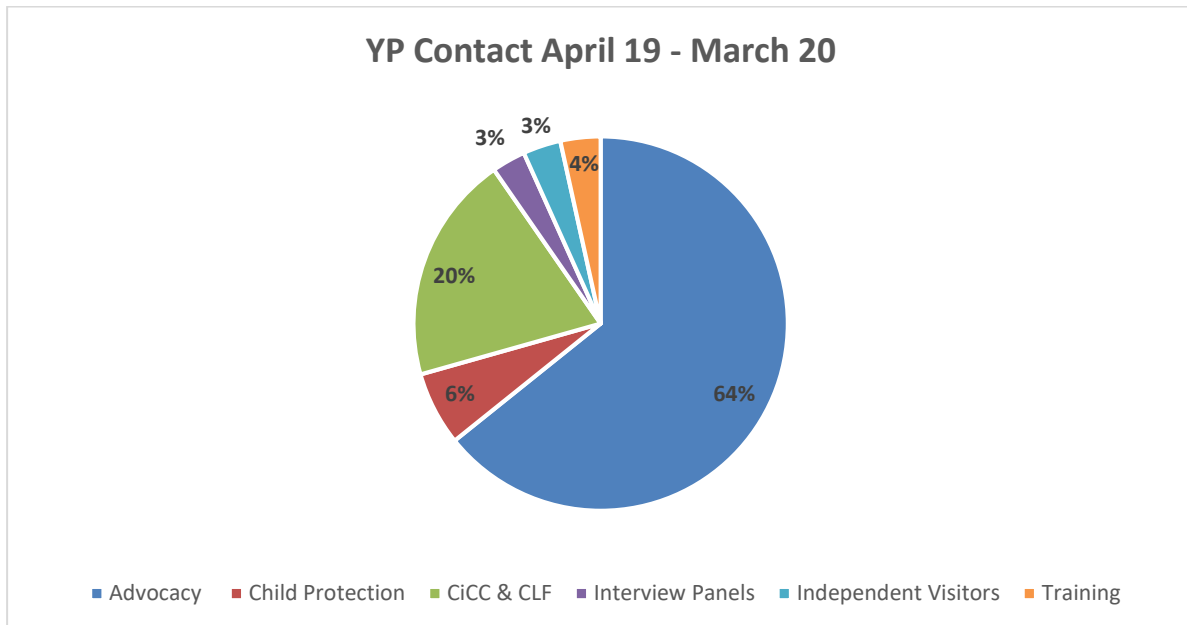


4. Children's Rights Team Overview

- 4.1 The Children's Rights team works collaboratively with Children's Social Care /Children's Services to ensure views and opinions of children Looked After are heard and considered in respect of service delivery and policy development. The service also supports children and young people aged ten and over when they are subject to a Child Protection plan.
- 4.2 The Children's Rights team deliver a number of other functions which include, supporting children and young people to use the complaints process, training and supporting children and young people to enable them to undertake a meaningful role in the Kirklees recruitment process and to deliver their own training session to practitioners and professionals (Total Respect Training); this helps practitioners and professionals to consider what the barriers for participation of children are, and why it's important to listen to what children and young people say.
- 4.3 Every child or young person who is new into care (or when they reach the age of 7) receives an 'Initial Visit' from a Children's Rights team, Advocacy & Participation Worker. During this visit the child or young person is informed about the service, what support that they can receive, and what participation opportunities they can become involved in.
- 4.4 An Advocacy & Participation Worker in the team has the responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF). The CiCC and CLF enable children and young people Looked After by the Local Authority and who are care leavers to come together to work on projects, and to meet with Senior Managers to enable their voices to be heard and influence service provision. Appendix 1 of this report provides an outline of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum activities undertaken during 2019 to 2020.
- 4.5 The Children's Rights team also has a full time Officer who co-ordinates the Independent Visitors Scheme. This scheme matches children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority with volunteers who spend time with the child or young person they are matched with; supporting and listening to them, as well as undertaking positive activities. A separate annual report is produced for this scheme and this can be found at appendix 2.

5. Contact with young people

- 5.1 Every child Looked After by the Local Authority has the right to an independent advocate. The Children Act 1989 placed a duty on Local Authorities to provide advocacy for children and young people Looked After, who wish to make a complaint. Subsequent updates and other legislation such as The Adoption and Children Act 2002, extended this to include care leavers, and to children and young people outside of the complaints procedure when decisions are being made that affect their lives.
- 5.2 The chart below shows that the highest proportion of work undertaken by the Children Rights team between April 2019 and March 2020, related to advocacy for children and young people Looked After (CLA) or care leavers (67%).



- 5.3 In the period between March 2019 and April 2020, in addition to referrals received directly from children and young people the team received 40 referrals for advocacy support for children and young people from professionals and carers.
- 5.4 The training that young people deliver is always well received and young people delivered 2 Total Respect sessions and 6 Skills to Foster sessions.
- 5.5 During 2019/20, the service has supported 22 children and young people in care, who have a physical or learning disability, on 48 separate occasions. For a small number of these children / young people the support offered was non instructed advocacy. This is provided when a young person does not have the capacity to clearly communicate their wishes or have an appropriate level of understanding. For these children / young people their Advocate will gather information from a range of sources such as parents / carers / professionals, to assess if the best interests of the child are being considered in any decisions that are made. The Advocate also ensures that the rights of the child are being upheld.
- 5.6 The majority of children and young people have received support from the team on more than one occasion, with the most common support being for their Children Looked After Review (CLA Review) or other meetings.
- 5.7 The service continues to receive more requests relating to girls and young women; within this reporting period the service supported 310 girls and young women and 197 boys and young men.

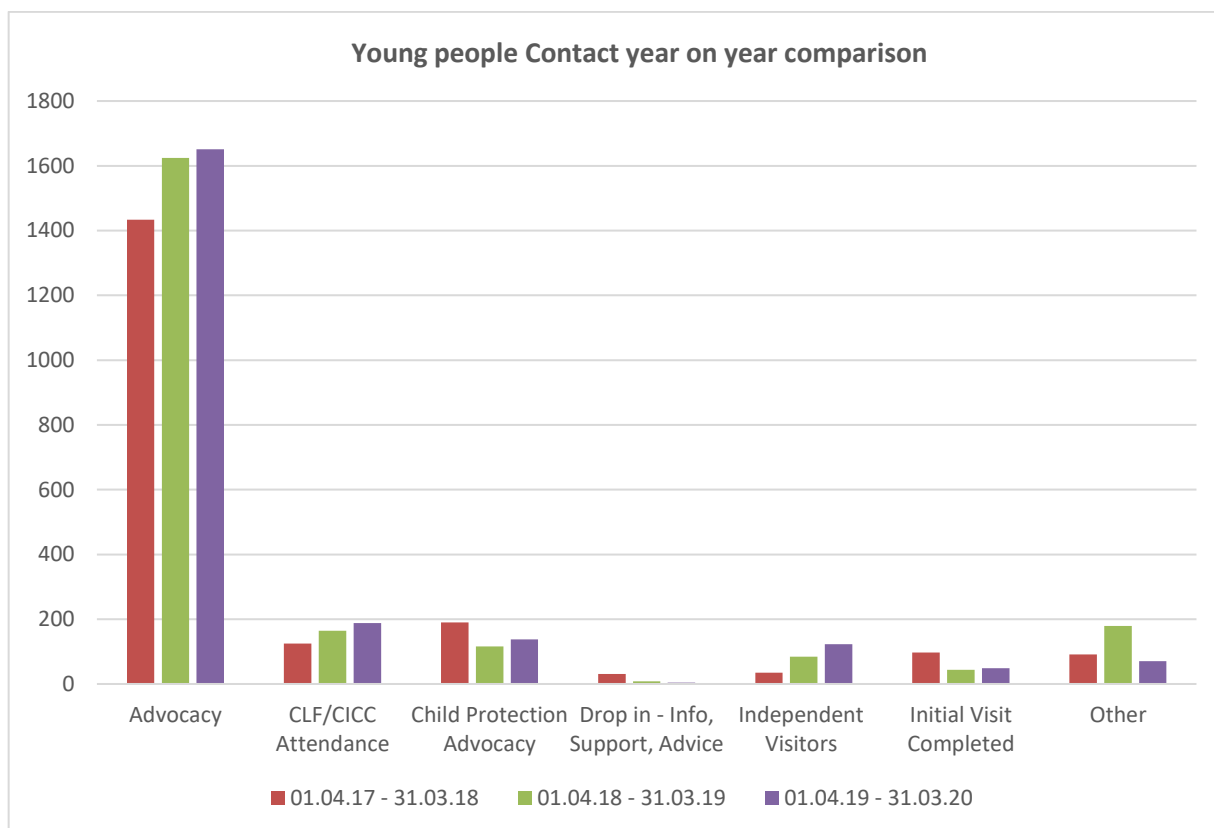
6. Comparison over a 3-year period

- 6.1 The chart below shows that contact relating to advocacy provided to children Looked After and care leavers continues to be the highest proportion of work that the team undertakes. There has been an increase in the amount of advocacy undertaken with children and young people subject to the Child Protection process over this reporting period. The increase of contact with regard to the Independent Visitors Scheme is indicative of the

continued growth of provision of this part of the service to young people and requests for volunteers to be matched with young people continue to be received.

6.2 Work undertaken under the heading of 'other' includes:

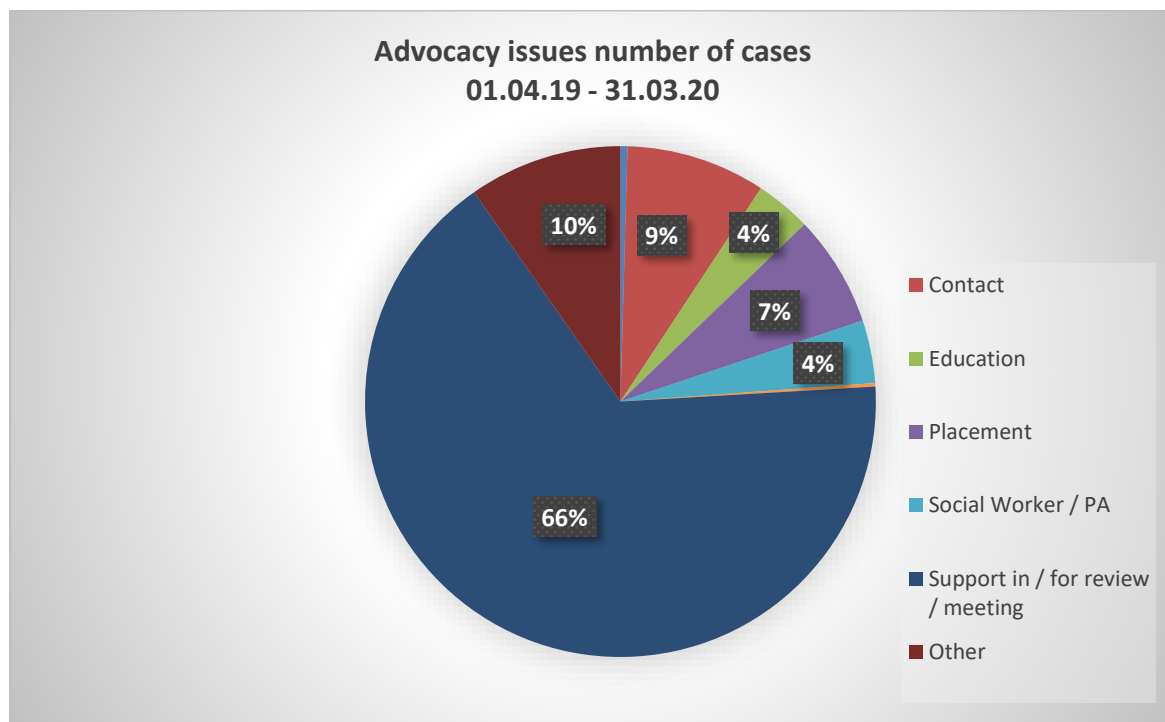
- Training and supporting children and young people to undertake interview panels as part of the Kirklees recruitment process
- Supporting children and young people to deliver training
- Monthly visits to the Kirklees Local Authority children's homes
- Weekly attendance at 'Number 11' and 'Number 12'; the Care Leavers Drop in facilities



7. Advocacy Issues for children and young people who are Looked After

7.1 The pie chart below shows that after support at their Child Looked After Review or other meetings, the highest number of advocacy issues for children and young people have related to contact and placement. The 'other' section relates to a number of individual issues that children and young people have raised such as:

- personal belongings
- residential day to day issues
- finance (including pocket money or celebratory allowance issues or requests for additional financial support)



- 7.2 In addition to the children and young people who were supported at their children Looked After review or other meetings, 112 issues were sorted to the satisfaction of children and young people and 31 felt that some sort of compromise had been reached; there were 27 issues for which children and young people reported that they did not get a satisfactory outcome. When identifying themes in relation to this, of these; 8 related to requests for additional family time (contact) which were turned down and 8 were in relation to care leavers financial support.
- 7.3 Children and young people Looked After who are placed in a host local authority, are some of our most vulnerable children, and over the last twelve months Advocacy support has been provided on 196 occasions to children and young people who live outside of the Kirklees area. This has been in respect of 79 individual children and young people. Children and young people were supported in 119 instances at their Child Looked After review meetings and a total of 77 other issues were also recorded, over half of which (45) children and young people felt they had achieved a positive or compromise outcome.
- 7.4 There were 40 issues in total relating to requests to see family or friends, 19 of these relating to children and young people placed in a host local authority. Of these; 20 young people were satisfied with the outcome and 10 felt they had achieved a compromise; this indicates that the views and feelings of young people have in the main been heard and taken into consideration when advocacy support has been provided.
- 7.5 Issues raised in terms of education included requesting a change of school, spending of the pupil premium, additional support in school and / or supplying of equipment. Only two of these related to children and young people who live in a host local authority. Of the 16 issues raised, 10 children or young people received a positive outcome or compromise and 3 issues were withdrawn, which again indicates the benefit and value of advocacy support for young people in reaching a positive outcome.
- 7.6 There were 27 issues relating to finance, 19 of these for children and young people living in a host local authority. Positive outcomes were achieved in the following areas; Support at university, savings, providing a bus pass for an out of area young person to travel within

Kirklees when seeing family and friends, birthday / holiday allowances, accessing Leaving Care Grant, maternity support and support with claiming child benefit and budgeting for payment of bills. In total, 13 young people were satisfied with the outcome or felt a compromise had been reached. There were no particular themes or issues for those not satisfied, although recording shows increased issues not resolved for young people living out of area. These related to young people not being exempt from paying council tax (whereas care leavers living in Kirklees are exempt up to the age of 21) and not receiving a gym pass.

- 7.7 5 issues relating to health all received a positive outcome which included support to attend appointments and accessing the Placement Support Mental Health Worker. 2 of these related to a young person who lived in a host local authority.
- 7.8 Out of 13 issues regarding personal belongings, 6 were pertaining to children and young people who live in a host local authority area. Of the 13; 8 young people received a positive outcome or a compromise; 4 issues were withdrawn, and 1 young person was not satisfied.
- 7.9 There were 32 instances of support provided in relation to where young people live, 8 of which were for young people living in a host local authority area. 8 of these related to Advocates finding out the wishes of young people in relation to where they lived / wanted to live so that this could be considered in the process for long term provision, 13 young people were happy with the outcome achieved, which included them not moving and for 5 a move being agreed.
- 7.10 In terms of 18 issues raised with regards to Social Workers / Personal Advisors, 6 were in relation to children and young people living in a host local authority area. 11 children and young people felt they had received a positive outcome or a compromise; this included better communication with their Social Worker / Personal Advisor, re-allocation and extension of support given. Other young people did not proceed with their issue and for two young people their Personal Advisor did not change.
- 7.11 Whilst Advocates in the team make every endeavour to resolve issues for children and young people quickly by using an informal process, there have been occasions when this has not led to an outcome which the child or young person was happy with, or the child or young person has said from the outset that they wished to make a formal complaint. It is the right of all children and young people to make a formal complaint if they wish and they are supported to do so if this is their choice. Overall, of the number of advocacy cases dealt with in this reporting year, 23 of these involved supporting a child or young person to make a formal complaint which is more than 50% less than in the previous 12 months. This indicates that more issues are being resolved for children and young people using informal methods rather than having to proceed to a complaint. There are no broad themes to be drawn from the complaints. The issues supported were evenly split between:

Social Worker / Personal Advisor (6):

- requesting a new Social Worker / Personal Advisor
- the length of time without an allocated Social Worker
- Not being kept updated about their situation
- Response and advice given.

Contact / Family time (4)

- 3 of the 4 issues related to requests for additional family time, and which 1 issue was in relation to a request for a new Contact/Family Time worker.

Placement (5)

- 4 of the 5 complaints were in respect of children or young people wishing to remain in their placement where they were settled rather than move somewhere else with their sibling.

Finance (6)

- All 6 issues related to Leaving Care finance; and although none of the young people were satisfied with the outcome as they did not receive the full financial support that they had requested, when looking at the decisions made it is clear that some financial support or alternate support was offered in each case.

Other (3)

- 2 young people withdrew their complaints, and one young person wanted to better understand why they were in care.

8. Child Protection Conference Advocacy

8.1 The Children Rights team have been notified of 301 initial Child Protection conferences and 339 Child Protection review conferences since April 2019 and 103 children / young people were visited or spoken to on the telephone; 99 accepted the support offered to have their views heard at the Child Protection conference meeting(s). 68 of these were for initial child protection conferences.

8.2 Due to capacity of the team, there were a number of children and young people who did not receive support at the initial conference stage, however, the level of support provided was an increase on the previous two years, this was achieved due to the team being fully staffed from July 2019, and there has been slightly less CLA advocacy cases in this reporting period which has allowed the team some additional capacity to undertake Child Protection conference advocacy.

8.3 When the team are advised of a Child Protection review conference, if the team have been unable to support the child or young person at the initial conference then a letter is sent to parents asking them to get in touch with the team if they would like their child or young person to have this support at the review conference. Such contact is rarely received but on occasions a Social Worker or Conference Chair will approach the team directly to support a young person at their Review conference.

9. Children's Rights

9.1 The team works to ensure that the rights of the child in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are upheld for all children and young people who are Looked After by Kirklees. This includes ensuring that the voice of the child is heard within care planning and as stated in point 4.1 above, this is particularly important with regard to non-instructed advocacy.

10. Participation Opportunities

10.1 The Children's rights team works with children and young people in a number of ways to support participation opportunities, these include:

- Children in Care Council (CiCC): The council consists of children and young people Looked After aged between 12 and 16, who meet to consider issues relevant to being Looked After, and to work with professionals to promote the views of children and young people to inform change and best practice. See appendix 1 for more details.
- The Care Leavers Forum (CLF): This is for young people aged 16 and over, in which young people work with professionals to ensure that their views are heard when considering how best to deliver Care Leaver service provision. See appendix 1 for more details.
- Professional Interview Panels: The Children's Rights Team support services with the involvement of children and young people in the recruitment process for roles such as Social Workers, Team or Service Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers.
- Total Respect training: Two sessions have been delivered by young people to professionals in the past year. Evaluation from the training indicates that professionals find attending the course worthwhile, with feedback highlighting that it impacts on consideration being given to how professionals can improve their daily practice. The challenge remains with regards to attendance as the course is usually fully booked but up to 50% of attendees fail to turn up on the day. In 2019 an adapted session of Total Respect training was also delivered to Council Members in order to promote their knowledge with regard to children and young people who are Looked After or who are care leavers. Numbers booked onto the course were low (12) with a couple of attendees needing to leave early but again evaluation indicated that the training had been enjoyable, valuable and that it had increased attendees knowledge with regard to this group of young people who form part of their constituency.
- Skills to Foster training: Five sessions of this training have been delivered by young people to potential new Foster Carers. Training is held on a weekend; as with the Total Respect training, the Skills to Foster training continues to be well received. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, the March session had to be cancelled. Consideration will be given going forward as to how young people's involvement can continue if the training is to be held virtually because of Covid-19.

11. Quality Assurance

11.1 The Children's Right team continues to work closely with the Child Protection and Review Unit (CPRU) to support positive outcomes for young people and to share information, such as trends from Advocacy.

11.2 In addition to this, the Children's Rights Team Manager meets regularly with the Complaints Manager(s) to discuss ongoing complaints and cater for joint working to resolve these. The Children's Rights Team Manager also meets regularly with the Head of Corporate Parenting (Children Looked After and Care Leavers Services) to discuss trends in advocacy and / or individual cases as required.

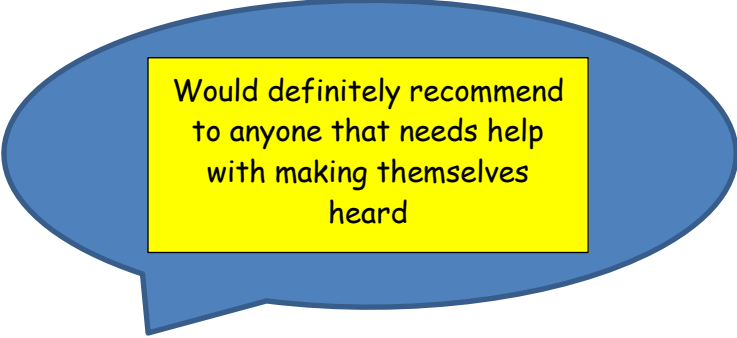
11.3 A Childrens Rights Team monthly report is completed regarding data, including themes and patterns relating to advocacy issues. The information within this report is used to inform the Improvement Board and the Corporate Parenting Board.

11.4 Every three months the Childrens Rights team writes to children and young people who have received advocacy in the previous three-month period to ask for feedback about their experience and any suggestions for improvement. There is an incentive to complete the form of a draw to win a high Street Voucher. Whilst this does not produce a 100% return, of those which are returned feedback continues to indicate that children and young people are happy with the support and services that they receive. Please see the next section for examples of comments.


12. Young People's Voice

12.1 Following the completion of any advocacy provision, children and young people are asked to complete an evaluation feedback form to share their views on what went well, and how or if the service could be improved.

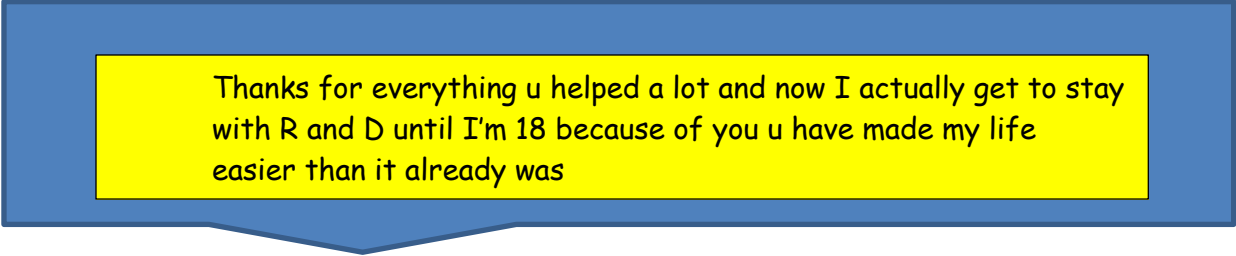
12.2 In addition to the 'formal' feedback route, how much children and young people value the service they receive can be measured in other ways, such as direct comments to Advocates and /or thank you cards, or by what children and young people say about the service to others. Some direct quotes from young people can be seen below:




Would definitely recommend to anyone that needs help with making themselves heard



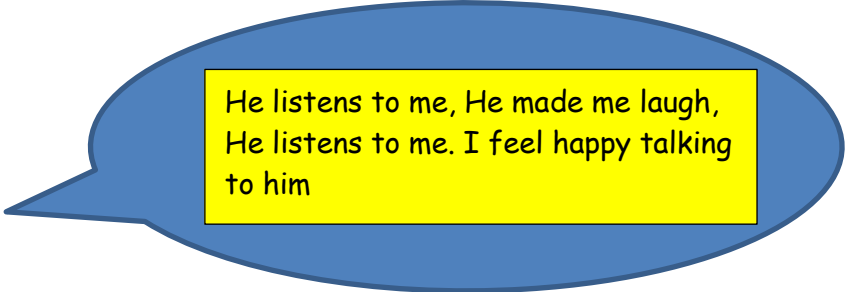
You have been great to me. I just want to say thank you



Thanks for everything u helped a lot and now I actually get to stay with R and D until I'm 18 because of you u have made my life easier than it already was



My Advocate is amazing!
She supported me and helped me through hard times



He listens to me, He made me laugh,
He listens to me. I feel happy talking to him

13. Independent Visitors Scheme

- 13.1 Whilst this scheme is one of the functions of the Children's Rights Team a separate annual report prepared by the scheme Co-ordinator is available at appendix 2. In summary, demand for the scheme continues and the number of volunteers who are matched with a young person, has increased during 2019/20. However, the scheme requires additional resources to enable it to be developed to fully meet demand.

14. Conclusion

- 14.1 Within this reporting period the majority of issues raised by children and young people were resolved informally, rather than through the formal complaints process.
- 14.2 The team increased the support provided to Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan from the previous year.
- 14.3 The team continued to facilitate Young People's recruitment interview panels, which has supported recruitment to the Children's Services workforce.
- 14.4 The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum continue to have fluctuating numbers but with a small core group of members. The Children in Care Council has a larger core group of 8 young people whereas the Care Leavers Forum has only 4 young people in the core group which meets regularly. To ensure a more balanced representation of children / young people views, the team will continue work to encourage new young people to join the groups and look at developing other effective mechanisms for gathering the views of other children and young people who do not wish to attend.
- 14.5 Demand for the Independent Visitors Scheme has continued. However, capacity to develop the scheme further is limited; how to build capacity to meet demand is under review.

15. Key areas of development (2019 to 2020) – What was achieved

- 15.1 To evaluate the effectiveness of student social work placements (to both students and the team). - There were elements of learning from this experience and definite positives that could be built on, and when the opportunity arises the team would therefore like to offer placements again.
- 15.2 To continue to develop links between Senior Managers, the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Groups, with clear pathways that enable young people to present their views clearly and influence service provision. - This has been achieved, including Senior managers meeting with young people, to gain their views about their experiences and how to develop services.
- 15.3 To increase the direct membership of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum and to also develop ways to capture the views of children / young people who do not attend the groups, to influence service development and provision. - Membership

of both groups has continued to fluctuate with some young people leaving and others joining the group.

- 15.4 To increase the offer of advocacy support to children and young people aged ten and over, subject to a child protection plan. – This has been achieved due to the team being fully staffed the number of young people aged ten or over who have been represented at child protection conferences has nearly doubled from 51 to 99.
- 15.5 As per the annual report / action plan for the Independent Visitors Scheme, develop guidance for Independent Visitors who are supporting young people over the age of 18 years old, this objective was achieved.

16. Key areas for development

- To ensure that virtual methods of communication are developed and are used effectively with children and young people.
- To update social media platforms regularly with relevant and interesting information to enable the service to reach more children and young people.
- To develop a young people's Challenge project to be undertaken throughout the Covid-19 lockdown period to help maintain contact with children and young people.
- To increase the membership of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum and to also to develop virtual methods to help capture the views of children / young people who do not attend the groups, to influence service development and provision including those who live out of the Kirklees area.
- To increase the offer of advocacy support to children and young people aged ten and over, subject to a Child Protection plan.
- Development of the Independent Visitor Scheme
- To develop the Independent Visitor training package to make it relevant to delivering training to smaller groups / or individuals virtually.

Appendix 1

Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF)

The Children in Care Council meets bi-weekly on a Monday evening and is a meeting for children and young people aged 12 to 15 who are in the care of the Local Authority. The aim of the group is to discuss the issues for children and young people who are in care, and to work with professionals to try to improve services, to ensure that they meet the needs of those who are in receipt of them.

The Care Leavers Forum is for young people aged 16 to 21 (or 25 if still in full time education) and the remit is to discuss the issues that young people face as they prepare to leave care and move into independence. Again, young people work with professionals to try to improve services and ensure that these meet their needs. This group meets bi-weekly on a Wednesday evening.

Both the CiCC and CLF now have a small number of core members who are working towards a specific action plan. During this reporting period they have been involved in the following pieces of work / activities:

- Undertaking of a graffiti project. A graffiti artist worked with the groups to produce art work which explored and presented some of the issues for children and young people in care and / or leaving care. The artwork was presented to Senior Managers and Council Members and at the annual Care Leavers Celebration of Achievement Event.
- The groups have met with a number of Senior Managers and the Lead Member for Children's Services throughout the last twelve months in order to take part in consultations and share their views on the following:
 - What life is like being in care, including producing a video to be used in training
 - Fostering Service
 - Semi-independent living
 - Leaving Care Team Financial support
 - Health Assessments
 - Regional events including a residential
 - Informational evenings at Huddersfield University including a tour of the Holocaust Museum, trip to the Student's Union and listening to the Author / Poet, Lemn Sissay
 - Reward trips to Bradley Woods and a Christmas meal out
- A music project began at the beginning of 2020 to work in a recording studio with a recording artist to produce a music CD on which young people talk about their experiences of being in care with their words put to a backing sound track. The groups will also record an audio / visual DVD on which they tell their stories about being in care and again share their thoughts about the positives and the challenges about being in care and leaving care. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the project will take longer to complete than originally agreed.

What do we want to improve?

- To increase the membership of both the Council and the Forum, to ensure that both are representative of all groups of children and young people.
- To establish virtual sessions for young people who live in a host local authority to enable them to share their thoughts / views / ideas into the two groups.
- Continue to develop links with the managers of services, to ensure that there is an effective mechanism for communication and the development of services which are led by children

and young people, whilst also providing a forum for managers to consult children and young people.

Appendix 2

Kirklees Independent Visitor Scheme (IV)

Children Act 1989 Section 23ZB requires that:

(1) A local authority looking after a child must appoint an independent person to be the child's visitor if—

- (a) the child falls within a description prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State; or
- (b) in any other case, it appears to them that it would be in the child's interests to do so.

1 Introduction

1.1 Kirklees Independent Visitors Scheme, also known as Care2Listen, is a Local Authority funded scheme which sits within the Looked After Children Independent Service. The Scheme was established in its current format seven years ago. The scheme is coordinated by an Independent Service Officer and day to day administration is provided through Business Support within the team.

1.2 The scheme provides independent adult volunteers who befriend young people in care; to spend time with them on a one to one basis, undertaking activities and developing a positive relationship with a trusted, responsible adult. The volunteers are someone who the young person can talk to, seek advice, guidance, and support from and have fun with, in an informal setting.

1.3 Volunteers undergo a rigorous recruitment and selection programme which includes submitting a formal volunteer's application, adult and young person interview panel, and bespoke training package; tailored to equip and inform volunteers for the role of an Independent Visitor. Enhanced DBS checks are carried out together with employment checks and two references are taken up.

1.4 Young people are referred to the Scheme by either their Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO has a duty to discuss the Scheme at a young persons' Looked After review. Young people are also encouraged to express an interest themselves in having an Independent Visitor and can apply through the Children's Rights webpage or they can discuss this directly with the Scheme Coordinator, their Social Worker, key worker or carer.

2. Current position

2.1 There are currently 43 trained volunteers. 40 Independent visitors are matched with a young person on a one to one basis. One experienced Independent Visitor has chosen to support

two young people who are seen separately. The total number of young people currently benefiting from the support of an Independent Visitor is therefore 41.

2.2 Seven Independent Visitors have left the scheme in the past 12 months. Independent Visitors who have chosen to leave are encouraged to have an exit discussion. An analysis of the reasons does not show any pattern which can be influenced through development of the scheme or support to Independent Visitor's. The main reasons given are work pressures, change of job, and moving area.

2.3 The last recruitment drive was between November 2018 and January 2019 and 11 volunteers completed training in April 2019. 10 have been matched with a young person. The remaining Independent Visitor decided not to be matched immediately.

2.4 There are currently 15 young people referred and waiting for an Independent Visitor. The details of those that are waiting are; 4 live in a host local authority area a number of miles away or it is assessed they would benefit from specialised volunteer; 4 young people live in host local authority area more local to Kirklees; and 7 young people live in Kirklees.

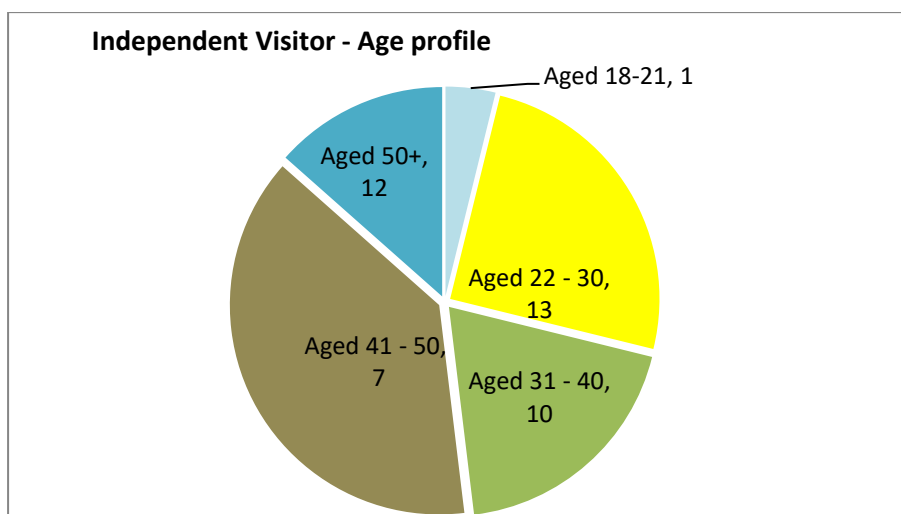
2.5 Once the existing three available volunteers are matched, the waiting times for young people who remain on the waiting list may increase as the Scheme would benefit from additional capacity to sustain additional volunteers. Due to current Covid-19 restrictions, it is difficult to say when the remaining 3 available Independent Visitors will be matched.

2.6 Consideration is being given to the development of the Independent Visitor Scheme.

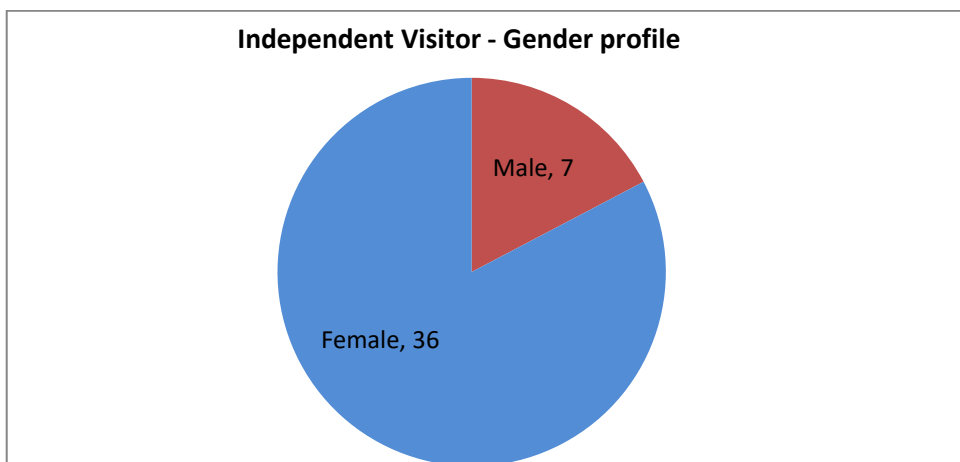
3. Volunteers and Young Person Profile

3.1 Volunteer profile

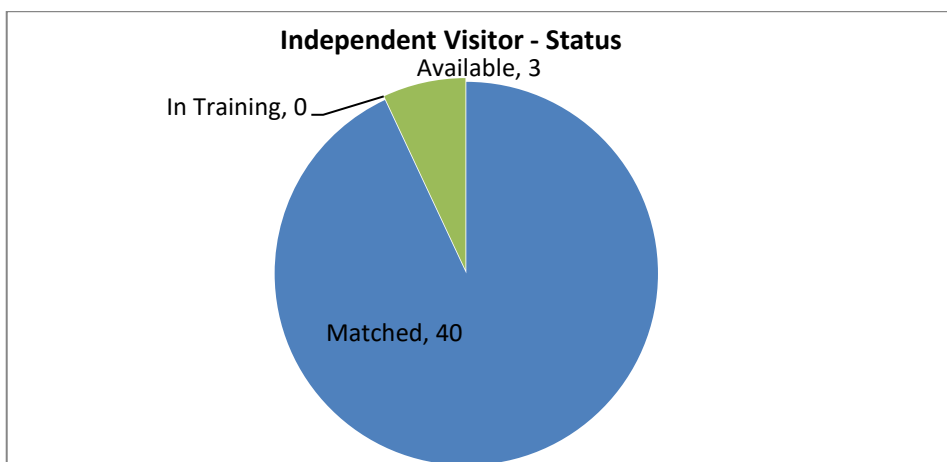
The Independent Visitor scheme has a diverse range of volunteers. Volunteers have to be aged 18 or over, with a minimum 5-year age gap between the adult volunteer and the young person they are matched to. Volunteers in the youngest age range are accepted only if they are able to demonstrate a degree of maturity appropriate to managing the challenges which young people may present.



84% (36) of the current volunteers are female and 16% (7) male. This is a similar cohort as seen in other regional schemes. Previously, attempts have been made to specifically identify and recruit more male volunteers with targeted advertising, however this has had little success. In practice, although some young people have specified that they would like a male volunteer, many have accepted a female volunteer and these relationships have been sustained.



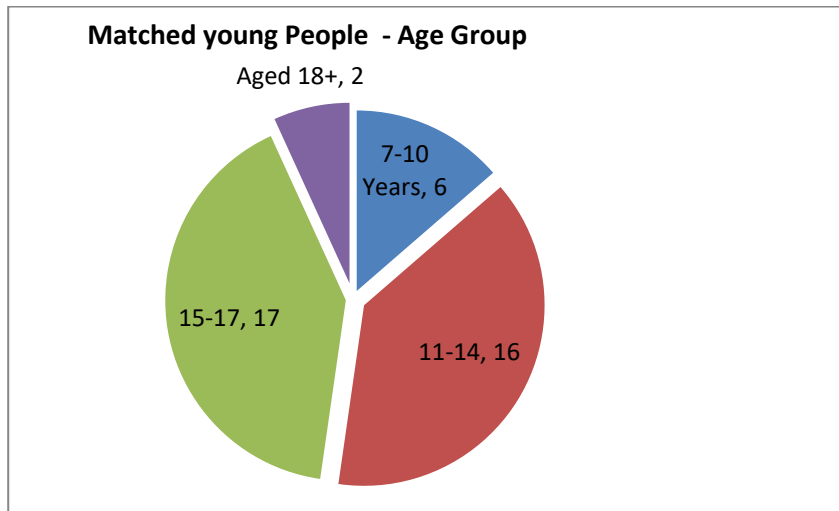
The scheme seeks to match volunteers within 8 weeks with a young person who meets their preference in terms of placement location, age and gender. This is challenging with the number of available trained volunteers depleted and the number of new referrals increasing.



3.2 Young Person Profile

There are currently 41 young people matched with an IV. There are more girls (56%) than boys (44%) benefitting from the scheme.

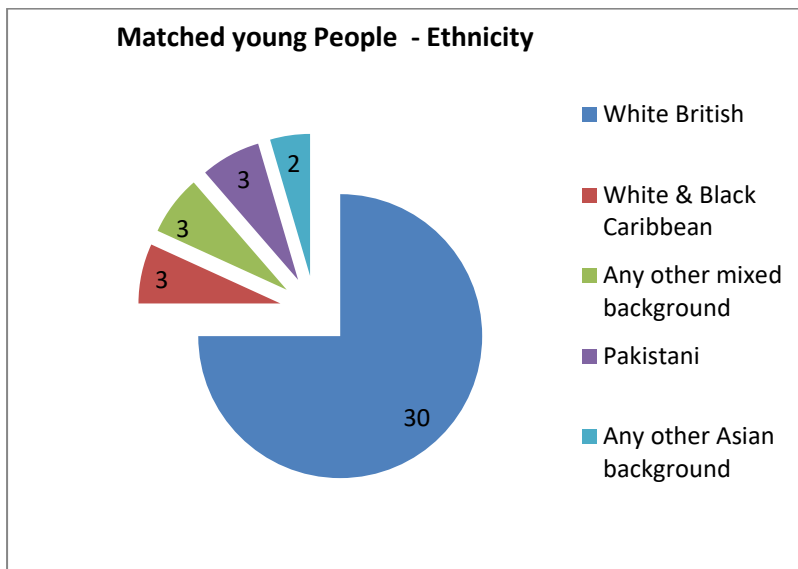
With regards to age, 17 older teenagers (15-17 years old) and 16 young people aged 11-14 currently have an Independent Visitor. There are 6 under 11s and 2 young adults over 18 being supported. Whilst some volunteer / young person relationships have ended shortly after a young persons' 18th birthday, the 2 young adults over 18 have each had their Independent Visitor for a number of years and continue to benefit from the support and guidance offered by their Independent Visitor.



• **41 young people are matched with an Independent Visitor**

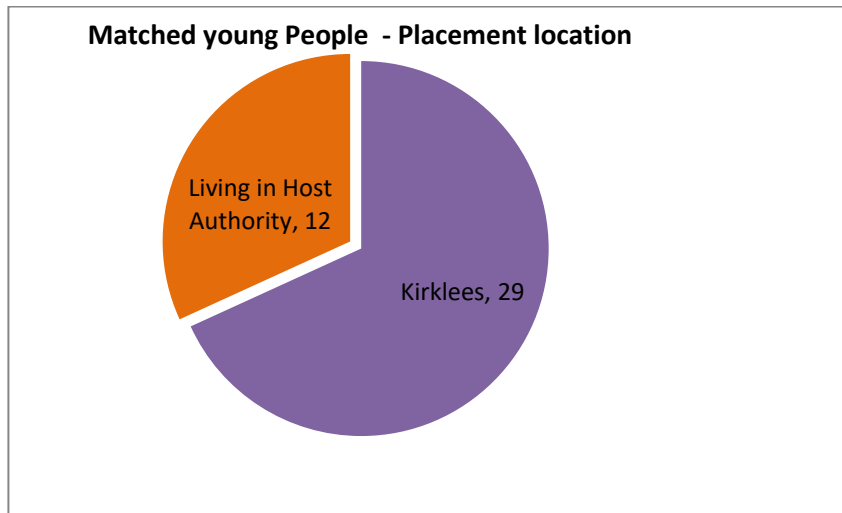
- 23 Boys and 18 girls
- 17 are aged 15-17
- 16 are aged 11-14 years old
- 6 are under the age of 11, and
- 2 are over the age of 18

The ethnic background of young people who have an Independent Visitor is broadly representative of the wider Kirklees community. ¹



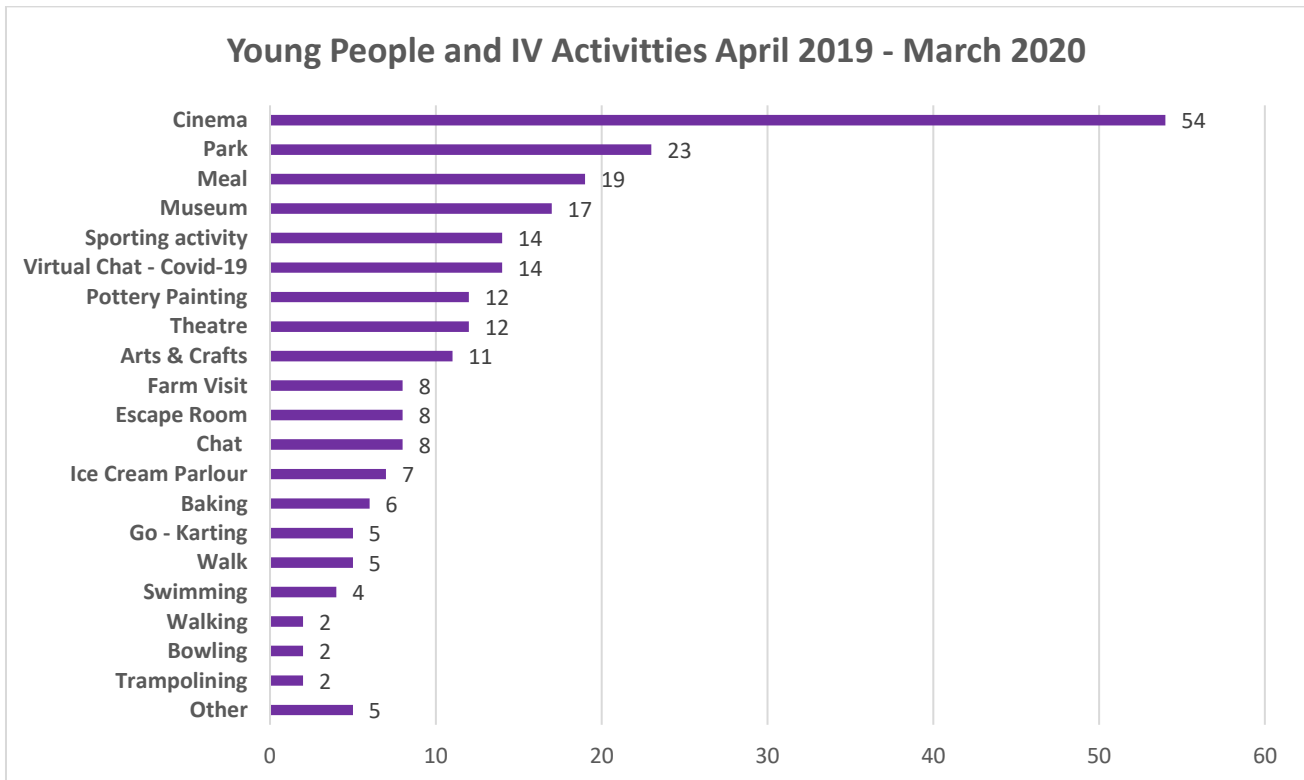
29% of matched young people live in a host local authority; with a high proportion living in neighbouring authorities i.e. Leeds, Calderdale, and Bradford.

¹ <http://observatory.kirklees.gov.uk/profiles/ethnicorigin>



4. Making a difference.

Independent Visitors are required to submit a short feedback form following each visit/contact with a young person. An analysis of these shows a total of 799 volunteering hours and 238 activities were undertaken with young people during the year.



5. Feedback from young people

A questionnaire was sent in March 2020 to all young people with an allocated Independent Visitor. The questionnaire asked young people if they were finding it helpful in having an Independent Visitor and, if so, how being part of the Independent Visitor scheme was helping and supporting them.

12 young people responded to the questionnaire. A summary of the responses is below:

- All but one young person said that they met up with their Independent Visitor at least monthly.

- Five young people said that they would like more visits. This may be because of the current climate due to Covid-19.
- All respondents said that they were found it helpful to have an Independent Visitor.
- Young People were asked how having an Independent Visitor has helped them. Young people responded:

<i>Improvement on my fitness</i>	<i>Tried new things</i>	<i>With my self confidence</i>	<i>Given good advice</i>
<i>Talked about how I'm feeling</i>	<i>Talked about things that are worrying me</i>	<i>Nice to talk with her and she understands me</i>	<i>With school exams</i>

Comments from young people:

- *My independent visitor is really nice. She is kind and I can talk to her about anything, also we have lots of fun and laughs.*
- *I get on with 'A' very well.*
- *Nothing (to change), it's great how it is.*
- *I would like 'K' to stay safe during this pandemic.*
- *He's great, He's the best IV.*
- *He is very kind, he came to my passing out parade and presentation evening at cadets.*
- *Its nice to meet new people and to get to know them. He's really kind.*

6. Responding to Coronavirus

Following the announcement from the UK Government on 23 March imposing restrictions on travel and social distancing; Independent Visitors were advised in line with Government guidance and local lockdown restrictions in relation to contact with children and young people.

Guidance was issued setting out plans for Independent Visitors and young people to keep in touch during the lockdown. The plan included a range of options depending on what the young person wanted and what the Independent Visitor was willing and able to provide. The options included writing a letter or sending a card to the young person or making arrangements for regular Skype / Whatsapp /Face -Time calls between the Independent Visitor and young person.

The response from Independent Visitors has been encouraging with the majority contacting their young person / carer and starting to establish regular virtual contact with their young person.

7. Support to Independent Visitors

The Scheme Coordinator is in regular contact with Independent Visitors and maintains a log of the date and type of contact. Peer Group meetings are held approximately every 6 weeks with occasional guest speakers invited to enhance the Independent Visitor's knowledge. Virtual Peer Group meetings are being planned to ensure that an appropriate level of contact and communication with Independent Visitors and the Scheme Coordinator is maintained during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Independent Visitor's receive supervision at 6 monthly intervals or more frequently if requested or required by the Scheme. Independent Visitors receive an Annual Review and discuss how the relationship with their matched young person is going, relationships with carers and any professional development requirements or opportunities.

8. Virtual Training

Due to Coronavirus, in person training of new Independent Visitors has not been possible. The intention is for the Scheme Coordinator to explore new ways to provide a suitable level of training for small groups or individual volunteers applying to become Independent Visitors in the future. It is anticipated that this training will be delivered by providing Independent Visitor training workbooks and supplemented through using Microsoft Teams or Skype training sessions.