



Annual Report
Children's Rights Team
April 2022 to March 2023

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Dated	April 2023

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Mission Statement

'The Children's Rights Team strives to empower children and young people to have their voice heard in decisions affecting them, raise aspirations and create positive change'.

1. Introduction

The Kirklees Children Looked After Independent Service (Children's Rights Team) offer advocacy, advice and representation to children and young people who are Looked After by Kirklees Local Authority.

Empowerment of children and young people should be central in advocacy. This underlies the values of the work of an Advocate, including supporting children, being child or young person led, sharing knowledge and information, being empathetic to individual experiences, and listening to the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people.

In 2002, the Department of Health released national standards for all advocacy providers and those providers involved in all decision-making processes for children. The Children's Rights Team works in line with these standards:

- Advocacy is led by the views and wishes of children and young people.
- Advocacy champions the rights and needs of children and young people.
- All advocacy services have clear policies to promote equalities issues and monitor services that ensure no young person is being discriminated against due to age, gender, race, culture, religion, language, disability, or sexual orientation.
- Advocacy is well-publicised, accessible, and easy to use.
- Advocacy gives help and advice quickly when they are requested.
- Advocacy works exclusively for children and young people.
- Advocacy services are confidential.
- Advocates to listen to the views and ideas of young people to improve the service provided.
- Advocacy services must have an effective and easy to use complaints procedure.
- Advocacy services must be well managed and good value for money.

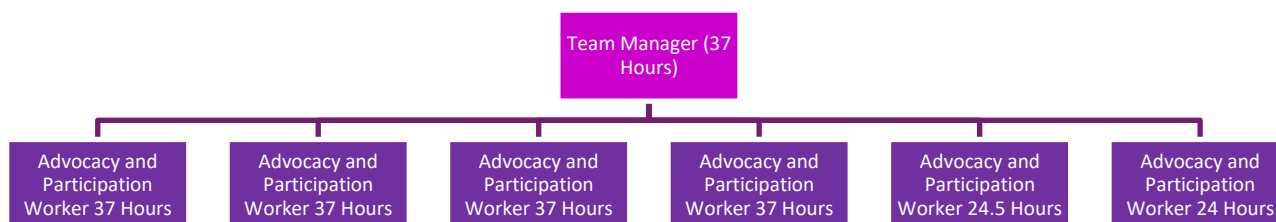
In May 2022, the Independent Review of Children's Social Care was published. This included plans to 'reset' children's advocacy. Following this the government published its strategy and consultation on children's social care, Stable Homes, Build on love in February 2023; consultation in respect of these publications is currently ongoing.

2.The Aims of the Children's Rights Team

- Communicate the wishes and feelings of any child or young person 'Looked After' by Kirklees Council.
- Uphold children and young people's legal rights and human rights, ensuring that they are fairly treated, current framework of legislation, incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Easily explain information or processes that are happening in a way children and young people understand.

- Assist children and young people in making a complaint.
- Attend decision making meetings with the Local Authority or school.
- Signpost to relevant services.
- Support the empowerment of children and young people looked after to assist them to engage in meaningful participation in respect of decision-making which affects them, both individually and collectively.

3.Children’s Rights Team Structure *



(The team structure was correct at the time of the report being prepared, however please note that this is under review)

4.Children’s Rights Service Overview

4.1 The service works collaboratively with Children’s Social Care /Children’s Services to ensure that the views, wishes, feelings and opinions of children Looked After are heard and considered individually and in respect of service delivery and policy development. Additionally, the team supports children and young people to navigate and use the complaints process.

4.2 The service works with children and young people through training and supporting them to undertake a meaningful role in the recruitment process of professionals and supports children and young people to deliver their own training session to practitioners and professionals (Total Respect Training). This training helps practitioners and professionals to consider the barriers for children and young people’s participation, and why it is important to listen to what children and young people say.

4.3 Children and young people who are new into care (or when they reach the age of 10 if already Looked After) receive information about the service, or as required a visit from an Advocate. This is undertaken with consideration to the child’s individual needs and circumstances. The purpose of this is to share information about what support that they can receive, and what participation opportunities they can become involved in.

4.4 Two Advocacy & Participation Workers co-ordinate and support the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF). The CiCC and CLF enable children and young people Looked After and care leavers to come together to work on projects, and /or 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 2022 to 2023.

4.5 The service aims to offer support to children and young people over the age of ten, subject to the Child Protection process; however, how this can be fully incorporated into Service Provision, to provide a consistent offer requires further exploration with colleagues in the Child Protection and Review unit.

4.6 The Independent Visitors Scheme sits within the Children's Rights; the scheme matches children and young people who are in the care of the local authority with adult volunteers who spend time with the child or young person they are matched with, supporting, and listening to them, and undertaking positive activities.

A separate annual report for the Independent Visitors Scheme can be found in Appendix 2

6. Contact with Young People

6.1 Advocacy must be easily accessible to children and young people and children; this involves ensuring children and young people are informed about the availability of Advocacy services, and that these services are delivered in places that are 'child or young person friendly', including being convenient, safe, and private. Access to advocacy services also needs to consider disability, language and communication, culture, an/or access to technology. These should be considered on an individual basis, taking the lead from the child's or young person's wishes and needs wherever possible.

6.2 Information about the Children's Rights service is provided in a variety of ways and promoted in places that young people use, in addition the team also provides:

- **Link Visits** – Advocates maintain links with all the Kirklees residential Children's Homes, visiting each one separately, and at least monthly, ensuring a presence whilst also providing relevant information and literature in respect of the Children's Rights Service to the young people.
- **Drop-In Sessions** - The Children's Rights Team offer weekly Drop-in sessions at Brian Jackson House for Care Leavers and children and young people who are Looked After, to support and enable them to access support, guidance, and assistance from an Advocate.
- **Initial Visit/Contact** – The service aims to offer a visit and/or send information to every child and young person over the age of 10 years old who is new into care, or who becomes 10 years old whilst Looked After.
- **Birthday/Celebration Cards** - Currently children and young people Looked After are sent birthday cards and a card at Christmas, both which also contain information about the Children's Rights team and the contact details for the service.

7.Children and Young People who are Looked After/Care Leavers Advocacy

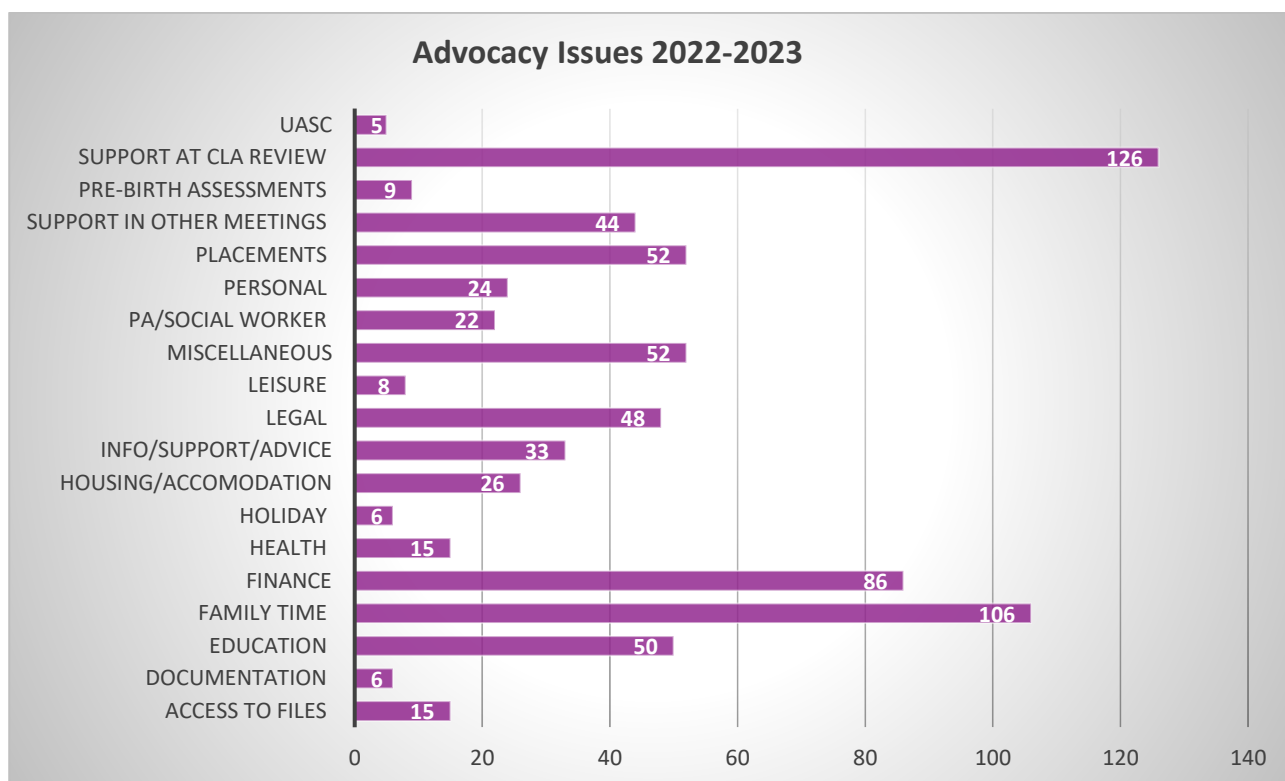
7.1 Every child Looked After by the Local Authority has the right to an independent Advocate. This is defined in the Children Act 1989, which placed a duty on Local Authorities to provide advocacy for children and young people Looked After, who wish to make a complaint.

Subsequent updates and other legislation, including The Adoption and Children Act 2002, extended this to include Care Leavers, and to children and young people outside of the complaint's procedure, when decisions are being made which affects their lives.

7.2 Due to the variety of circumstances and complexities encountered in advocacy referrals, it can be difficult to capture the specifics of each individual issue raised. Children and young people who are Looked After and care leavers approach the team with a wide range of issues. In this reporting period **133** individual children and young people were supported by the Children's Rights Team and **733** separate pieces of advocacy were undertaken. This shows that children and young people may experience multiple issues and that they feel confident to seek support from their Advocate or contact the service on multiple occasions.

7.3 The majority of the advocacy work undertaken (498) pieces related to working with females, indicating that girls/young women are more likely to contact the service when they are experiencing issues or require advocacy support. The remaining 235 pieces of advocacy work related to the service working with males or children /young people who identified as 'other'.

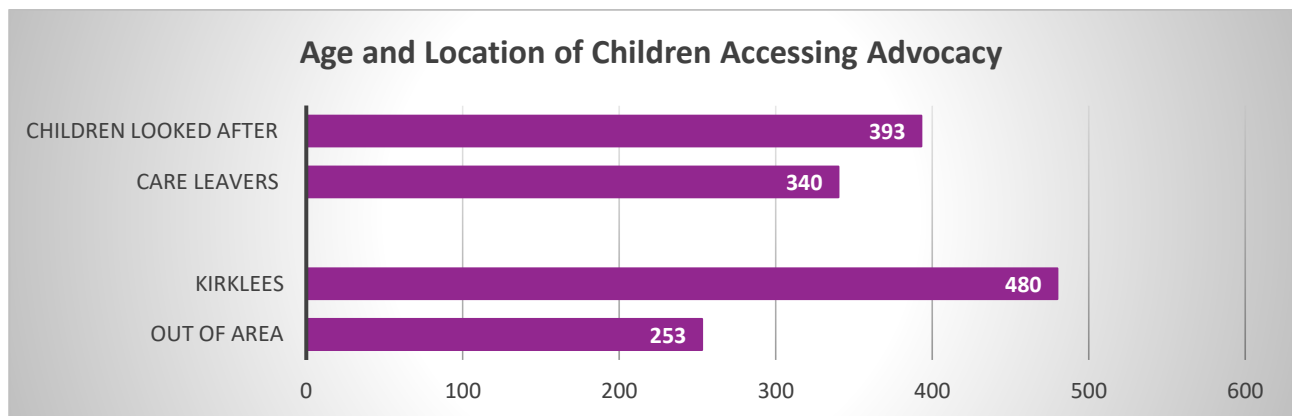
7.4 The chart below illustrates the types of advocacy issues that the Children's Rights Team support children and young people with, the most common being support for Children Looked After (CLA) Reviews and other meetings, such as supporting care leavers with children going through Care Proceedings, support at Pre-Birth Assessments or supporting children /young people at their Personal Education Plan Meetings.



7.5 As illustrated in the chart above, there were **22** pieces of advocacy undertaken in relation to issues with Social Workers or Personal Advisors, **52** in relation to placements, and **86** regarding issues relating to finance; themes and patterns relating advocacy issues are further explored in **section 8**.

7.6 Non-Instructed Advocacy - in this reporting period for 2 children /young people non-instructed advocacy was provided. This is provided when a child or young person does not have the capacity to clearly communicate their wishes or feelings or have an appropriate level of understanding. For these children and young people their Advocate gathers information from a range of sources such as parents, carers, and 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.

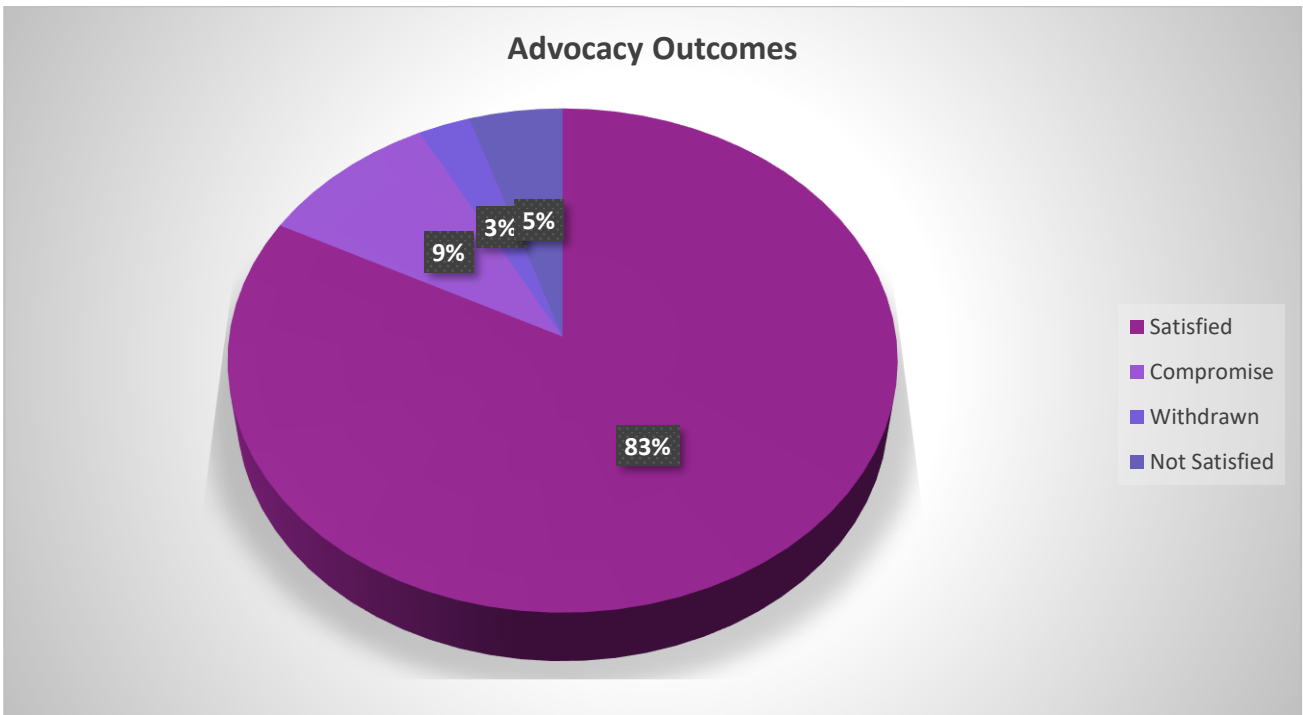
7.7 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children – During this reporting period there has been an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children accessing support from the Children’s Rights team, together with the service receiving requests for Advocates to attend Age Assessments.



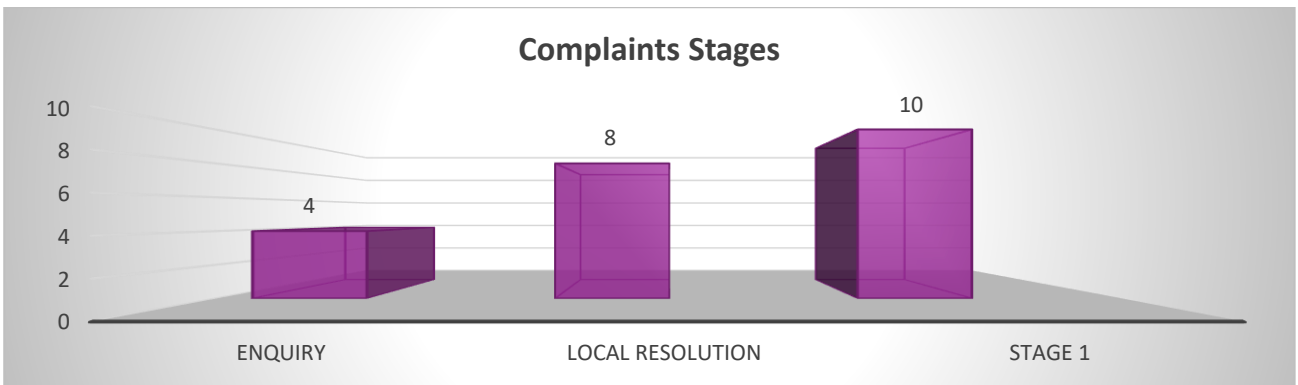
7.8 The above graph shows that a slightly higher volume of advocacy was provided to Children Looked After (**393**) as opposed to Care Leavers (**340**). The graph also illustrates that whilst the service supports children and young people living within the local authority area, those who live outside of the area do access the service, with 253/733 pieces of support provided to children / young people Looked After who did not live in Kirklees.

7.9 In the reporting period, in **56** instances, issues were raised by children and young people living in a residential setting, whilst **143** were raised by children and young people from a Black and Minority Ethnic Group and in **62** instances advocacy was provided to children with a disability.

7.10 The pie chart below shows that, (not including Child Looked After Review or support at other meetings,) **301** young people were satisfied with the outcome achieved in relation to the issue they raised and were supported with, **35** felt they reached a compromise, **10** issues were withdrawn, whilst **18** children /young people were not satisfied.



7.11 There were **22** formal Complaints raised by the Children’s Rights service on behalf of children and young people in this reporting period. The chart below details at what stage of the Complaints process the complaint was satisfied. It is positive that most complaints were able to be resolved informally. However, further work will be undertaken to better understand the reasons why in almost half of the complaints, young people felt the need to initiate the formal Complaints process.



8. Themes and Patterns

8.1 The majority of requests for advocacy work are received through young people self-referring to the service, with the second highest referral source was from Independent Reviewing Officers Social Workers or Personal Advisors, followed by referrals made by Foster Carer’s.

8.2 As noted in the graph in section 7.4, many of the issues raised by children and young people related to Family Time, the majority of which related to requests for sibling and/or

parental contact. Other areas included contact with extended family and requests for overnight stays.

8.3 Of the **86** issues raised in relation to finance, common themes related to driving lesson requests, bus passes or train tickets, support with utilities, bank accounts, and clothing allowances.

8.4 There were **52** pieces of advocacy undertaken in relation to placements. Of these, **15** were in relation to children and young people living in foster care, **11** related to young people living in Children's homes. **6** young people were living in semi-independent, **8** were classed as residing in 'other' placement and **5** children /young people were living with a parent or family member. Whilst **7** issues were raised by young people recorded as either living independently, living in temporary housing, living in supported lodgings, an unregulated placement, or in a Young Offenders Institute. Issues raised included post 18 planning, placement moves and uncertainty in relation to this, and homelessness. One theme identified has been in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children moving homes when they reach the age of 18, when they have not received their 'leave to remain' and have no recourse to public funds.

8.5 Requests for advocacy to support young people and care leavers through Pre-Birth Assessments and Care Proceedings in relation to their own children has marginally increased in this reporting period. Further exploration as to why the take up of this advocacy offer is not higher, will help ensure that this group of young people receive appropriate support to understand and navigate the processes and access impartial advice.

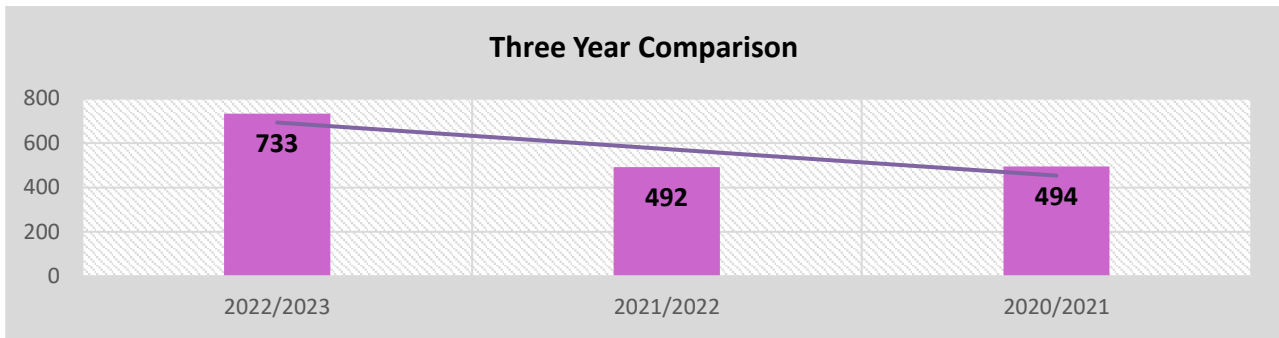
9. Child Protection Advocacy

9.1 The Children's Rights service works closely with the Child Protection and Review Unit, with the aim to continuously improve the offer and expand choice, for how children and young people are able to access and participate in their Looked After Review meetings and in Children Protection Conference meetings.

9.2 In the reporting period the Children's Rights Team have continued to be notified of all Child Protection conference meetings, and where advocacy may be appropriate and a child over the age of 10 is referred by the social worker to the team, each request is discussed and considered according to the individual child's needs and wishes.

10. Three-year Comparison

10.1 The chart below shows the level of advocacy support provided over a 3-year period. Of note, due to service improvements made in the last reporting period how the recording of advocacy is undertaken and captured has improved. This requires consideration when comparing the year-on-year data, and the perceived increase in advocacy support requested and provided. However, year on year data does indicate that advocacy support provided to children Looked After in relation to their Looked After Review meetings, and other meetings, remains consistently high, with support requested relating to placements, contact, and finance issues, accounting for other significant areas of service provision.



11. Participation Opportunities

11.1 The Children’s Rights service works with children and young people to support participation opportunities, this includes:

- **Children in Care Council (CiCC):**

11.2 The council is for children and young people Looked After aged between 12 and 16. It meets 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):**

11.3 CLF is for young people aged 16 and over to support young people to work with professionals, to help ensure that their views are heard regarding Care Leaver service delivery and provision. (See appendix 1 for more details.)

- **Professional Recruitment Panels:**

11.4 The Children’s Rights team supports service areas to meaningfully involve children and young people in the recruitment of professionals, i.e., Social Workers, team, Service or Senior managers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

- **Total Respect training:**

11.5 The Children’s Rights Team facilitated Total Respect Training in June 2022 and October 2022 with 26 attendees in total. From June 2023, this training will revert to being delivered in person.

- **Skills to Foster training:**

11.6 In person delivery input by young people did not occur during this reporting period. However, children and young people made a video to share their experiences of being in care, which was utilised by a commissioned company who delivered the training package virtually, due to the Covid -19 Pandemic. The training returned to being delivered in person and in-house with our young people participating in the delivery from May 2023.

11.7 Delivering training to final year Social Work Students takes place when requested and during the reporting period this has taken place at Leeds and Huddersfield Universities; feedback from students was positive and evidenced that this training can be very impactful.

12. Quality Assurance

12.1 The Children's Right Service works closely with the Child Protection and Review Unit to share information, including themes from advocacy, to support positive outcomes and service delivery improvement. The Team Manager also works closely with the Children's Complaints team to discuss ongoing complaints and cater for joint working to resolve these at the earliest opportunity.

12.2 A quarterly Children's Rights report is completed to capture and report on data, themes and patterns relating to advocacy issues. Also, on a quarterly basis the Children's Rights Team seeks feedback from children and young people who have received advocacy, both support continuous service improvement and delivery.

12.3 Practice learning days (PLD's) have been implemented and are seen as an important tool in working collaboratively with practitioners to identify what is going well and where improvements can be made. PLDs will help support continuous dynamic learning.

13. Young people's voice



Direct quotes from children and young people gathered from feedback forms in relation to service provision.

13.1 When a matter is resolved and/or advocacy support ends, 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 can be improved. Young people have shared that they do not want to receive lots of paper forms or information, so in response to this an electronic feedback form is sent directly to their phone or e-mail address. This has been extended to the children and young people's participation groups, with feedback forms being sent after each group session. Feedback is gathered and analysed on a quarterly basis, to support service development.

14. Conclusion

14.1 Overall the figures suggests that the take up of advocacy has significantly increased within this reporting period from **492** to **733**, however this is partially attributed to improvements made in service delivery and the recording of advocacy. The extent that this is attributed to the recording improvements made will be better understood going forward, as year on year data will be more comparable.

14.2 Members of the CiCC and CLF have continued to be consulted on a variety of projects and have shared their experiences and thoughts regarding service delivery, including with managers and senior managers with the aim of improving outcomes for children Looked After and Care Leavers.

14.3 Total Respect Training has returned to being held in person; positive feedback has been received in relation to this. There are plans to make this training 'mandatory' for all managers and to offer the training to Elected Members.

14.5 The demand for Young Person's Interview Panels has continued in this reporting period with the team endeavouring to facilitate the majority of requests received.

14.6 It was envisaged that the service would be able to provide a more consistent offer for Child Protection Advocacy. With recent staffing changes, this continues to be under review.

14.7 The recommendations in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (2022) final report regarding advocacy is not yet published. We await the recommendations of this report and will seek to review the service when published.

15.Key Areas of Development from Previous Year 2021-2022

- **Introduction of improved quality assurance mechanisms, to support further development of the service and provide assurance that a consistent and high-quality service is provided.**

A new Service Manager for the team implemented the introduction of regular Practice Learning Days to be held throughout the year to support practice and service development. An improvement in how advocacy support is recorded has helped to ensure a more accurate understanding of the issues and concerns raised and the support provided.

- **To review and develop advocacy support to Care Leavers and Children Looked After who are going through Care Proceedings in relation to their own children.**

This offer has now been written into the Pre-birth policy and an Advocate attended Social Work Cluster meetings to promote this. Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that consistency of the offer is achieved for every young person going through Care Proceedings in relation to their own child/children.

- **Further develop the Child Protection advocacy offer, to provide a more consistent offer to children and young people.**

Although this is not a statutory requirement, this is an area of service development that remains a high priority to ensure a consistent offer for all children and young people. Development work continues to ensure that all children who request Child Protection advocacy are able to access support.

- **To create stronger links with strategic groups and Boards.**

The Service Manager of the Children's Rights team attends the Corporate Parenting Board to report on current advocacy issues. A plan has been devised to ensure that the topics, themes, and projects the Children in Care and Care Leaver Forum groups are involved in are communicated to board members.

- **To continue to work with others across Children's Services to capture children's voices, experiences, and help support participation and inform service development.**

The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum have been involved in a number of projects including consultation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the team is also involved in other service area's Practice Learning Days which provide valuable feedback from children and young people to support improvements in service delivery and working practices.

- **To review the service against the new Advocacy Standards which are due to be published.**

The new Advocacy Standards have not been published.

- **To ensure key links and relationships are developed and maintained with Magdale House, the new Kirklees Children's home.**

The service has identified a named Advocate for the Children's home, ahead of the planned opening.

16.Key Areas of Development for the Next 12 Months

- To develop further the recording of advocacy work by exploring electronic recording of work with Liquid Logic Developers, with the view of establishing Tableau dashboards.
- Continue to develop and enhance involvement in Practice Learning Days across Children's Services, to further capture children's voices, experiences, and help support participation to inform service developments and practice improvements.
- Review the Service against revised Advocacy Standards when published.
- To complete a review of the current service capacity and offer, with a view to exploring:
 - Developing a consistent and achievable Child Protection Advocacy offer.
 - Expanding the current Advocacy offer to include an offer to children subject to Child in Need Planning and Children with a Disability.
- In collaboration with the Looked After Children's service, develop a children's consultation forum to ascertain the view of children and young people Looked After in respect of how they wish to celebrate their achievements.



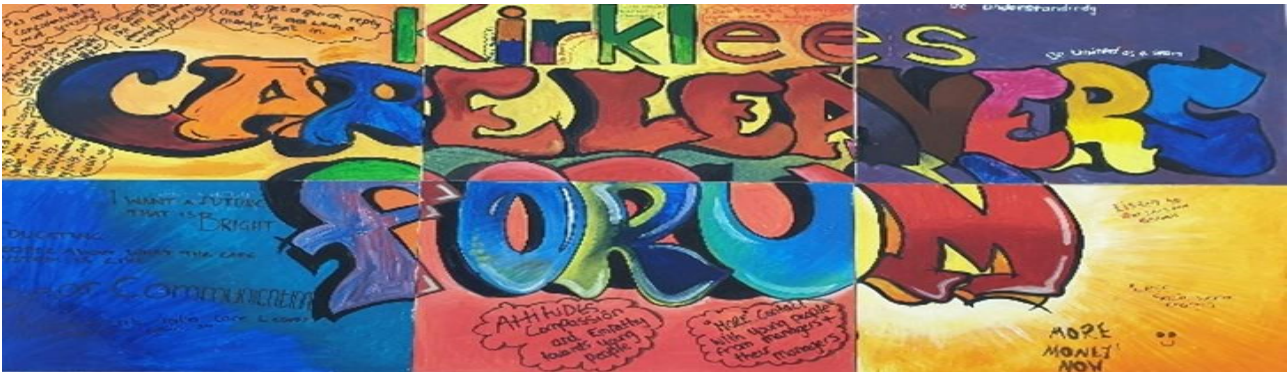
Appendix 1- Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF)

1. The Children in Care Council meets bi-weekly. 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 improve services to best meet the needs of children and young people.
2. 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. Young people work with professionals with the aim to improve services and ensure that these meet their needs. The group also meets bi-weekly.
3. Membership continues to be stable and due to the differing issues that children in care and care leavers experience, the groups were reformed as separate groups in September 2022. This enables better focus on the issues for each of the groups.
4. During this reporting period the groups have been involved in the following:
 - Creating a new logo for the CLF and CiCC
 - A member of the Leaving Care Team to discuss their role & the tenancy related issues/independent living.
 - Guest consultation re the regeneration of the town centre & to gather the YP's views.
 - Artwork Project.
 - Visit from the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.
 - Consulting with the Service Managers for Looked After Children and the Leaving Care Team Service regarding the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Logo.
 - Terms of reference for the respective groups.
 - Consultation on new Financial Policies and the Staying Put Policy.
 - National Care Day Celebration.

5. 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.
- Further 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.

- To identify alternative ways to facilitate sharing the wider views of children and young people who are Looked After and those leaving Care to the Corporate Parenting Board; suggestions include.
 - A video or PowerPoint created by the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum being shared with the Corporate Parenting Board perhaps two or three times a year which outlines the work they have been doing.
 - The Corporate Parenting Board members attending an activity with the groups.
 - Individual members of the Corporate Parenting Board attending the groups periodically throughout the year.



Appendix 2 - Independent Visitors Scheme Report

Kirklees Independent Visitors 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

Kirklees Independent Visitors Scheme is also known as Care2Listen. The scheme was established in its current format ten years ago; it is coordinated by an Independent Service Officer.

The scheme provides independent adult volunteers who befriend children / young people in the care of the local authority; to spend time with them on a one-to-one basis, undertake activities and develop a positive relationship with a trusted, responsible adult. Volunteers provide children / young people with the opportunity to talk to someone independent, seek advice, guidance, and support from and have fun with, in an informal setting.

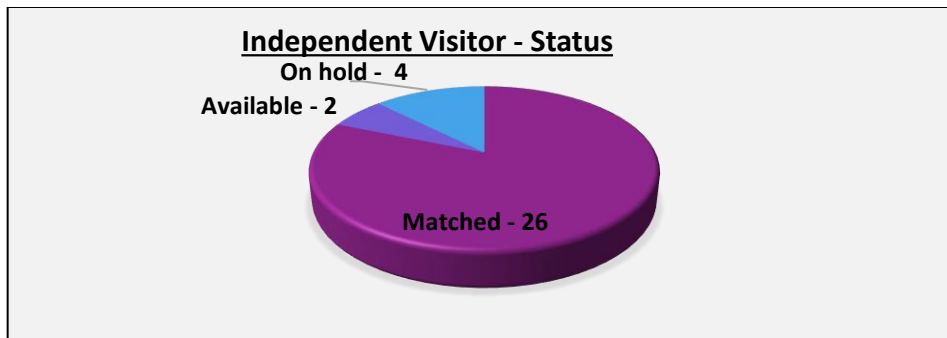
Volunteers undergo a recruitment and selection programme which includes, submitting a formal volunteer's application, an adult and young person interview panel, and a bespoke training package; tailored to equip and inform volunteers for the role of an Independent Visitor. Enhanced DBS checks are undertaken,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

Children and 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 child's / young person's 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 it directly with the Scheme Coordinator, their Social Worker, key worker, or carer. However, a formal referral document needs to be completed and submitted by the child's Social Worker.

In 2022/23 4 new volunteers were recruited and trained and matched with children or young people.

2. Current position

Ideally the scheme seeks to match a volunteer with a child/young person who meets their preference in terms of placement, location, age, and gender within 8 weeks of being classed as available. It can take longer to ensure that the match is appropriate and likely to be successful.

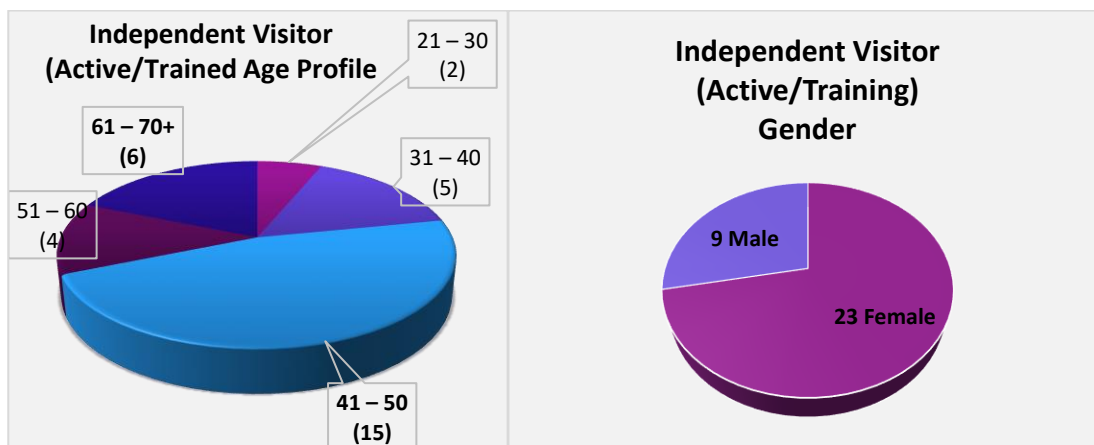


There are currently 32 trained volunteers. 26 Independent Visitors are matched with a child/young person on a one-to-one basis, 2 are available and are due to be matched and 4 volunteers are not matched at their request, and 1 person is currently undergoing training. Due to personal circumstances 2 Independent Visitors have left the scheme in the reporting period.

There continues to be interest from people about volunteering with the scheme although not all enquiries result in an application being received. The scheme coordinator endeavours to contact non respondents to gain an understanding of why they have decided not to pursue volunteering with the Scheme; this suggests that there is no overarching reason and includes a change of circumstances or people looking into multiple opportunities to decide which is right for them.

16 children /young people are waiting for a match with an Independent Visitor, of these, 11 currently live in a host local authority and 5 in Kirklees. The waiting list is reviewed regularly to ensure the referrals remain appropriate and contact is made with Social Workers to check continued suitability.

3. Volunteers Profile

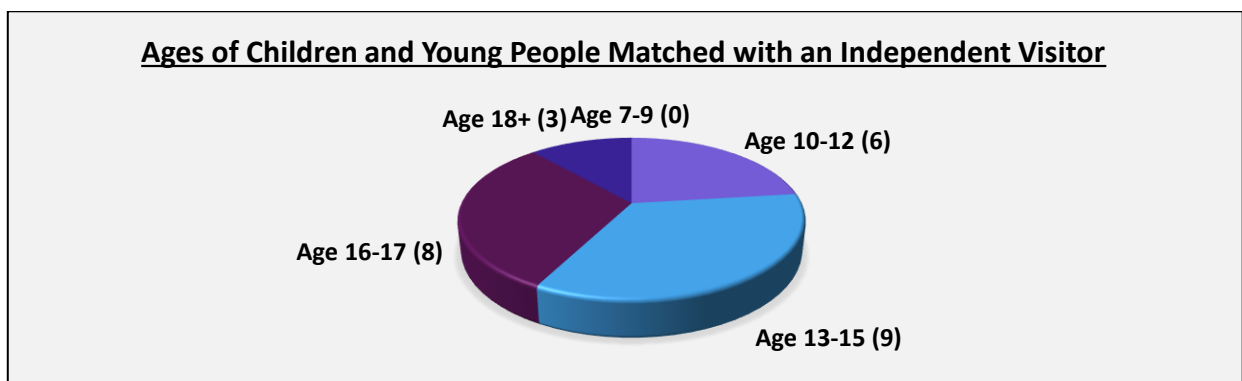


The Independent Visitors Scheme has a diverse range of volunteers. Volunteers must be aged 18 or over, with a minimum 5-year age gap between the adult volunteer and the young person they are matched to. Volunteers in the youngest age range are accepted only if they can demonstrate a degree of maturity appropriate to managing the challenges which young people may present. 26 volunteers are of white ethnicity and 6 identify as being an 'other' ethnicity.

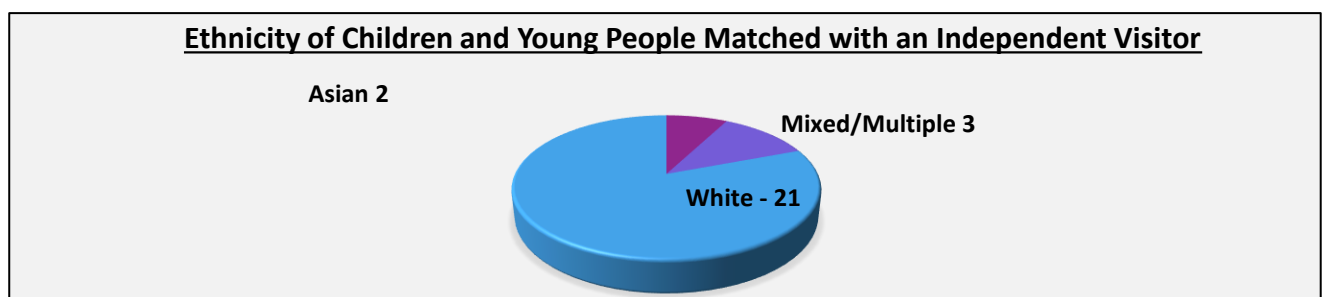
23 of the current volunteers are female and 9 are male. This is a similar cohort as seen in other regional schemes. Although some young people specify that they would like a male volunteer, many have been matched with a female volunteer and these relationships have been sustained.

4. Profile of children and young people

Of the 26 young people matched with an Independent Visitor, 16 are female and 10 are male. 3 young people are over the age of 18. Continuation over the age of 18 is in line with Government recommendations and is based on the needs of the young person, however the frequency tends to be less than monthly. All matches for young people over 18 are reviewed annually. 8 young people are aged 16 or 17, 9 are aged between 13 and 15 and 6 are aged between 10 and 12 years old.

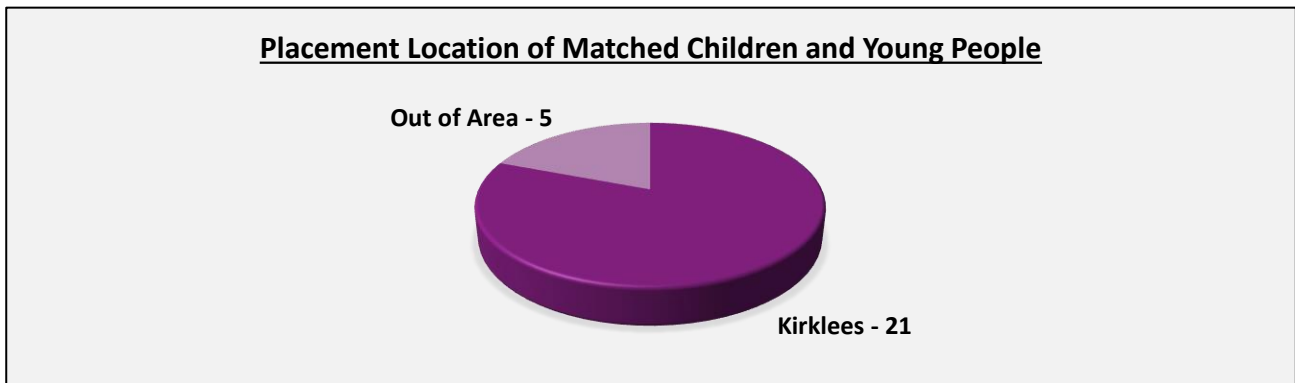


The ethnic background of children/young people who have an independent visitor is broadly representative of the wider Kirklees community. ¹



¹ [InstantAtlas Kirklees – JSA Home – People and Life Events – Vulnerable children](#)

81% of the matched children/young people live in Kirklees with 19% living in a host local authority area such as Bradford, Leeds, and Calderdale.



5. **Making a difference.**

Independent Visitors are required to submit a short feedback form following each visit or contact with the child / young person they are matched with. Volunteers should ideally have contact with their matched child/young person once a month although occasionally this may extend to a 6-weekly due to the availability of the child/young person and/or the volunteer.

Quality assurance monitoring ensures that the Scheme Co-ordinator has contact to evidence the involvement of each volunteer within a quarterly period, and if this is not the case, the Scheme Co-ordinator will contact the volunteer for an update. Independent Visitors also have an annual review which includes the Scheme Co-ordinator obtaining the views of the child/young person the Independent Visitor Volunteer is matched with.

Volunteers undertake a range of activities with children/young people including, eating out visits to the cinema, park walks, ten pin bowling and creative activities such as crafts/arts, baking and sewing.





17.6 Feedback from young people

The value and impact of the scheme and relationships built is evidenced within feedback received from children/young people.

Young people are spoken to at the time of an Annual Review for an Independent Visitor Volunteer. General feedback is they value a relationship which is 'just for them' and they do not have to share their time with other family members or with other children/young people with whom they live. The following are direct comments from young people:

"I like having J as my Independent Visitor and enjoy talking to her. We 'click' and I feel that I'm a mini 'her' – we like the same things such as Primark! I like the things that I do when I go out with her. We figure out together where we will go on the next visit. I would like to see her more if she could but I know that she's busy."

"I love seeing F and definitely want to continue. It's fantastic and the best thing is looking forward to doing something nice and having someone to talk to about the same interests. I get on really well with F, I can talk to him easily and I think having an Independent Visitor is great!"

"I like seeing my Independent Visitor. We do fun things and she makes me laugh."

"I really enjoy seeing my Independent Visitor. I like that I can talk to her, she takes me places, we do new things that I didn't think I would ever get to do. We have been to a vintage clothes shop, to the cinema, we go for meals and shopping. I like that I can get out of the house, meet new people, and it is something just for me and not with parents. It gives me freedom. I want to continue with my Independent Visitor. I love her, she's the best. We always have a laugh, it is just good to be with her."

Projected changes in the next 12 months

Due to changes in the management structure of the Children's Rights team, how the scheme is delivered is currently under review. As part of this, tasks pertaining to the marketing, recruitment, training, and checks associated with the Independent Visitors scheme were allocated to Fostering Recruitment Advisors, to enable more effective use of resources and support service wide developments.

Priorities for the scheme

- The two existing trained and available volunteers have now been matched with young people.
- Recruitment campaign to be aligned with Fostering recruitment campaigns and marketing.
- Introduction of enhanced quality assurance processes **and** further development of mechanisms to capture timely feedback from children and young people to support continuous practice and service delivery improvements.