



The Young Lives Foundation

KENT ADVOCACY REPORT

2021-2022



#makingadifference

268

**children and young people
in Kent
were supported by our
Advocacy Service this past
year.**

"Thank you. I really needed an Advocate a lot when I was made to move from my foster home. I don't really need an Advocate now but I may need to text you! I rate the service a 10, being excellent. I felt listened to and it was easy to contact you".



Children and Young People 0-15yrs

THEMES AND TRENDS



PLACEMENT

29 children between the ages of 0 – 15 were referred to the advocacy service for support regarding their placement. (Placement move wanted, placement move not wanted, 'other'). - "Foster carers provide children and young people with stability, security, attachment and often their first positive experience of family life." - "Stability means ensuring that every child in care is found the right placement as soon as possible. Careful matching is the first step in achieving stability"- "Although some placement moves may be in the best interests of a child, too many Looked After Children are experiencing multiple moves and placement instability" (The Fostering Network).

An Advocate can offer support to a child/young person. The purpose of the Advocate is to enable the child/young person to express their wishes and feelings. The aim of the Advocate is to encourage empowerment of children/young people and uphold their Human Rights. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that "Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously"

CONTACT

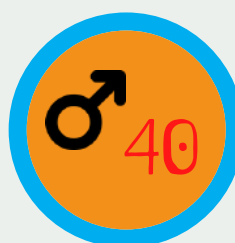
13 Children and Young people asked for support around family contact, some wanted more, some wanted less....

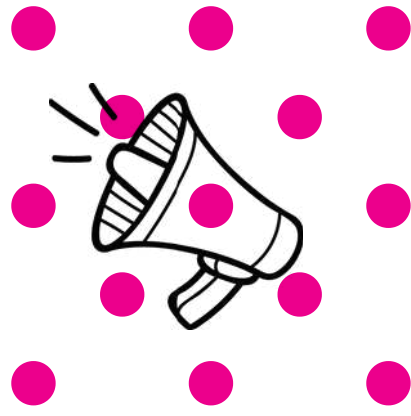
Children and Young people are often torn between what their parents want in terms of contact and what they, themselves, feel able to manage. An Advocate can allow the child/young person to express themselves in a safe, non-confrontational environment without the fear of causing upset to their family.



TOP 10 ISSUES

- PLACEMENT/HOUSING = 29**
- SUPPORT WITH MEETINGS = 18**
- DISABILITY = 16**
- CONTACT = 13**
- EDUCATION = 9**
- COURT PROCEEDINGS = 7**
- CHILD PROTECTION = 6**
- SOCIAL WORKER = 6**
- HOUSING = 1**
- ASYLUM = 1**





SUPPORT AT MEETINGS

18 children aged between 0 – 15 years asked for ongoing support at meetings:

Children in Care have regular meetings to bring together those people who are closely concerned with the care of the child. Many children and young people feel overwhelmed by these meetings and feel unable to voice their true wishes and feelings. An Advocate can offer vital support to a child in this situation.

During these meetings an Advocate can:

- Make sure a child's wishes and feelings are known,
- Attend decision making meetings with the LA or school on behalf of the child,
- Uphold a child's legal rights and ensure they are treated fairly, Provide impartial information to the child,
- Assist the child in making a complaint,
- Negotiate with Social Workers or other important people in the child's life,
- Ask questions to relevant people and speak on the child's behalf

0-15yrs

THEMES AND TRENDS CONTINUED

DISABILITY

16 Children with disabilities were referred for advocacy:

Some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Kent are those who have complex communication and often multiple disabilities. These children and young people need an Advocate who is able to build a relationship over time and who is consistent in their approach.

They need an Advocate who can not only listen to their words, but who can communicate using alternative methods and observe non-verbal communication and patterns of behaviour.

These Advocates are skilled in liaising with others in the network of support around the child/young person, whilst remaining objective and focused, keeping the voice of the child/young person at the centre of any decisions made about them.





Children and Young People 0-15yrs

CASE STUDIES

Case Study Jodie: ‘Jodie was placed into care following concerns regarding her birth parents’ substance misuse and neglect. Jodie had been in three foster placements since being placed in care. Jodie’s younger siblings were adopted and she had no further contact with them. Jodie had wanted to be placed alongside her siblings and she struggled with the decision regarding lack of contact. Jodie settled well within her foster placement, but felt let down in the past by professionals. Jodie wanted someone who could advocate in her best interests. Jodie struggled at school, particularly around her peers.’

Jodie initially needed help in accessing additional pastoral and educational support in school. She also asked for support in expressing her voice in her meetings. However, during this period of advocacy support, Jodie’s foster carer died suddenly. An emergency move across the County was made. The Advocate continued to support Jodie in order to ensure that the placement match was assessed and appropriate, and approved in line with Jodie’s wishes and feelings.

Alongside the placement move, a new school place was required that needed to match Jodie’s educational needs. Advocacy support was undertaken by direct visits to Jodie, telephone calls and representation of Jodie’s wishes and feelings in meetings. The sudden change in circumstances for Jodie led to a significant need for intensive support from the Advocate, whilst new plans were set and decisions made. There was initial reluctance to agree the emergency placement as permanent, despite Jodie and her foster carers requesting this. This led to a period of uncertainty and instability for Jodie. It took about 3 months for the LA to agree that the foster placement met Jodie’s needs and she was without a school place for some time. During this time of high instability, loss and change, Jodie said she was glad to have someone independent to support her whilst professionals were assessing, planning and making decisions. She felt she had ‘someone consistent ‘and whom she trusted to speak for her, and promote her wishes and feelings as well as voicing her Rights and Entitlements.

Jodie was moved to the emergency foster placement in June 2021. After much consideration, and with advocacy intervention, this was assessed as a positive and well-matched placement. However, an education place was not offered until September 2021. There were differing professional views, with SEN wanting the closest school, and Jodie and the foster carers feeling this would be too intellectually intensive and lacked good pastoral support. The Advocate promoted Jodie’s Right to an education that could meet her individual needs. She voiced that Jodie’s preferred school option should be considered, and she should have the opportunity for this to be put forward for inclusion by SEN. This led directly to the offer of an interview and a place at the school of preferred choice. This has been very effective in its pastoral support of Jodie and her educational performance to date. The impact of advocacy for Jodie was a much higher inclusion in all the planning and processes for her.

‘Jodie thanked her Advocate for all the support she had given over a considerable period of time.’



Children and Young People 0-15yrs

CASE STUDIES



Case Study Harry: ‘Harry had had to be moved from his long term foster carers due to allegations made against them, by his sister, who lived in the same placement. The foster carers initially referred Harry to YLF as they were concerned about his emotional well – being, particularly as he viewed the carers as ‘Mum and Dad.’ On following up the referral with social services, the IRO asked for wishes and feelings regarding Harry’s feelings towards his sister’.

Harry, aged 9yrs, was moved from his long- term foster carers due to allegations made against them by his sister. Harry was distraught at the time and blamed his sister for this. The Advocate met with Harry, in school, and encouraged him, using conversation, drawing and play, to explore and express his wishes and feelings about his sister, family and ex foster carers. Harry’s wishes and feelings were presented to his CIC reviews and were subsequently given due consideration in plans that were made about his future. Harry’s Mother was already undergoing an assessment for Harry to return home, alongside his sister. The Advocate ensured that Harry was included in the plan by submitting his drawings that expressed his feelings about his family. The Advocate also supported Harry to have his voice heard regarding his feelings about his ex- foster carers, and a last ‘Goodbye Visit’ occurred. Harry accepted that he will be returning home to his family and is looking forward to this. - ‘Harry said he no longer needed an Advocate but was glad that he had someone to listen to him during a very difficult time.’



Case Study SAIID: ‘Saiid , 15yrs, had been in the UK for several months but still had no school place. There were concerns that neither the Social Worker nor VSK had made referrals to mainstream schools in the local area. Saiid was studying at KRAN but this was only for 2 hours a day, four times per week.’

“Every Child has a right to be in school. Immigration status does not affect this”

The Advocate met with Saiid. Saiid said that he wanted to be in school with other young people of the same age. He wanted to learn English and go to college once he had finished school. On behalf of Saiid, the Advocate put in a request for a new social worker. The social work team manager recognised that the previous social worker had dragged his heels over the issue. A new social worker was allocated to Saiid, The Advocate arranged a meeting between himself, the team manager and the new social worker. The new social worker made urgent referrals to two local schools and managed to get an interview for Saiid at one of the schools that was close to his foster placement. Saiid was accepted into the school and was very happy with his start date. - Saiid said “It’s like half of my dreams have come true, Thank you so much”

Children and Young People 16-17yrs

THEMES AND TRENDS



JOINT ASSESSMENT

139 young people referred to the Advocacy Service between April 2021 and March 2022 were 16 & 17 years. This group of young people made up 52% of all referrals for the year!

Joint Assessments = 63

63 of these young people found themselves homeless this year.

Joint Assessment:

“without adequate support homelessness can significantly affect young people’s lives. Young people who are homeless are more likely to become homeless again when they are older and also face greater difficulties finding work. Preventing homelessness is key and there is increasing recognition that young people who are supported to remain with their immediate family or friends have better outcomes than young people who are homeless. For many young people, the response they need is some time and space away from immediate family pressures followed by advice and mediation to support a return home” (The Young people and Homeless Report 2014).

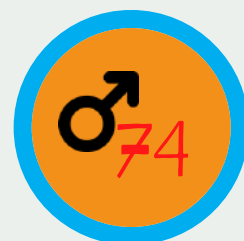
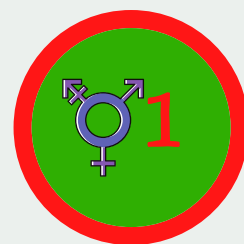
The Joint Assessment aims to bring Housing and Children’s Services together to work in a collaborative way to ensure that the holistic needs of the child are met.

Kent County Council have a Joint Protocol to prevent homelessness for 16 & 17 year old young people who present as homeless. The Kent Protocol recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount and ALL parties will work together to ensure young people are safe and their needs are met (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015)

The Protocol acknowledges the statutory duties of the Local Authority under the Children Act 1989 to assess Children in Need (s.17) and, where necessary, provide accommodation, under it’s duties outlined in s.20 of the Children Act 1989.

The Joint Protocol additionally acknowledges the statutory duties of the Housing Authorities under the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. Under the Housing Act 1996, 16 & 17 year old’s will be defined as ‘priority need’.

HOMELESSNESS = 69
PLACEMENT = 40
SUPPORT AT MEETINGS = 18
DISABILITY = 12
HOUSING = 8
SOCIAL WORKER = 7
IMMIGRATION = 6
EDUCATION = 6
COURT PROCEEDINGS = 2
FINANCE = 2
CP = 1
CONTACT = 1





16-17yrs

THEMES AND TRENDS CONTINUED

JOINT ASSESSMENT (CONTINUED)

Southwark Judgement dictates that:

“The powers of local authorities to provide accommodation under s.17 cannot be used as a substitute for their duty to provide accommodation under s.20 of the Children Act 1989 to homeless 16 & 17year olds. Children’s Services do not have the option of choosing under which provision they should provide accommodation for homeless 16 & 17 year olds. Section 20 involves an evaluative judgement on some matters but not discretion.”

“The welfare of the child is paramount and a 16 & 17 year old must not be placed at risk whilst waiting for a full assessment of their needs. A child in need of emergency accommodation should be accommodated under s.20 whilst their needs are further assessed”

All homeless 16 & 17 year old Young People should have access to independent advocacy and support to assist them in weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of coming into Care. This will help the young person to come to a balanced decision and increase their understanding of how to navigate the housing system. Independent advocacy plays a key role in supporting 16 & 17 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The wishes and feelings of a Young person are paramount in decision making about their lives. Advocacy is a crucial source of support for the young person within the Joint Assessments and has become a statutory role.

Joint Assessments have increased the pressure on the Advocacy Service to facilitate attendance at these meetings. Staff have received extra training in this area and positive outcomes have evidenced the difference advocacy can make to these young people’s lives!





Children and Young People 16-17yrs

CASE STUDIES

Case Study Dylan: Dylan required a Joint Assessment after the breakdown of his relationship with his mother when he began sofa surfing. The Advocate spoke to Dylan prior to the Joint Assessment and explained all his potential options under Southwark Judgement 2009.

During the Joint Assessment, Dylan decided that he wanted a higher level of support, as well as full Leaving Care benefits at 18yrs. He signed a s20 and became voluntarily accommodated. Dylan had an initial looked-after child review, but later he decided that he was going to live with his Maternal Aunt. Children's Services did a full assessment to ensure that this was going to work and was in Dylan's best interests. The s20 ended when he left his supported lodgings to live with his Aunt



Case Study Phoebe: Phoebe's Mother had kicked her out of the family home and she was sofa surfing. Phoebe was in her final year of school and needed to be housed within reach of the school. The Joint Assessment became a little fractious, as both Housing and Children's Services went back and forth apportioning blame. Phoebe was 18yrs within 13 weeks so did not meet criteria for leaving care rights. The Advocate had to intervene and asked for the meeting to be adjourned, whilst decisions were made that were in the best interests of Phoebe. Housing eventually found temporary accommodation in the preferred area and the social worker agreed to support Phoebe with her application for Universal Credit.

Phoebe thanked the Advocate for his help.



Children and Young People 16-17yrs

CASE STUDIES

Case Study Jake: The police referred Jake to Social Services He was a passenger in a car that was stopped for excessive speeding. Four young people were arrested for possession with intent to supply class A drugs. Drugs and money were found in the car. Following an altercation at home, Jake's parents had thrown him out and were refusing to have him back. There was a long history of anti-social behavior.

Jake was 13 weeks away from his 18th Birthday on the day of the Joint Assessment. The Advocate spoke to Jake about his Rights and Entitlements. Jake considered his options and decided he wanted the longer-term support that s.20 could offer, particularly as he was estranged from his parents and YOS was heavily involved. However, although Jake was offered an emergency bed that night, the social worker told Jake that this would not count towards the 13- week period he would need to be Looked After to qualify for full Care Leaver's entitlements. Jake did not take the offer of the emergency bed on the night of the JA. However, after speaking to his Advocate the following day (Jake had had his phone confiscated by the police so had to do this via his YOS worker), he realised that he should have taken the accommodation offered to qualify for LAC status. The social worker argued against this. She maintained that emergency accommodation following a JA does not allow the young person to become Looked After. The Advocate approached the Children Commissioner, who confirmed that, once a young person is placed in accommodation (of whatever means) by social services, they become a Looked After Child. The Advocate supported Jake through the process of becoming a Child in Care. He appealed to the Service Manager of 18plus, as well as to the manager of the Adolescent Team. As a result of this intervention, Jake was accepted, by 18 Plus, as a Qualifying Young Person. He was given 6 months in supported accommodation, with a review after the 6 months to discuss his progress.

Jake thanked his Advocate for his support.





Children and Young People 16-17yrs

DISABILITY & TRANSITION

Bradley Case Study:

Bradley was a vulnerable young person with complex needs. Advocacy provided Bradley with a consistent, known person who he had confidence would help to resolve issues, promote services and support him when he needed it. Bradley looked forward to hearing from his Advocate and felt a good relationship and understanding of him was in place. He liked having a person for himself to say what he wished for and to express his feelings about his situation and support. He felt heard.

Bradley has enduring and complex needs. He has professional and legal support through a good bespoke individual care provision, based out of county. Multi-agency networks have needed to work in partnership to put this in place. There has been a need for Independent Advocacy to ascertain and promote Bradley's wishes and feelings to the professional network as part of CIC reviews and PEP meetings. These procedures have been more complex due to the involvement of two local authority areas. Arrangements for an individually tailored teaching programme were particularly complex to resolve. There have also been legal matters of transition of care into adulthood. Both Bradley and the SW team found it very helpful to have an independent way of including his views and wishes around Mental Capacity assessments, Best Interest decisions and court application for a Deprivation of Liberty order. The outcome of this was a settled and secure plan, and day to day life that Bradley needed and wanted to have. Bradley consistently said, "I just want things to be like they are. I would be worried if anything changed or I didn't have adults around me to support me. "The Advocacy support was a part of achieving this and ensured his inclusion in the assessments, plans and decisions that were made for him.

Bradley was asked his thoughts of having had an Advocate to support him.

He said **"9/10 - Fantastic! You've helped me with so many different things."**



Care Leavers 18-25yrs



THEMES AND TRENDS

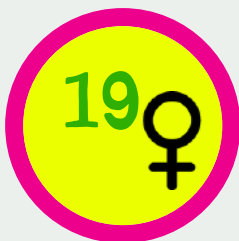
ISSUES
PLACEMENT - 21
HOUSING - 21
PA 19
DISABILITY - 7
FINANCE - 4
SUPPORT AT MEETINGS - 3
IMMIGRATION - 1
CONTACT - 1
EDUCATION - 1
YOUNG PARENT - 1

74% of all referrals to the Advocacy Service for young people aged 18- 25yrs are for young people who seek support with issues linked to their placement or confusion around their options regarding Housing. Many young people do not understand their choices as they reach 21years, they only know that they have to leave their 'protected environment' (Foster Care, KSH or Ready Homes) to live independently in the community.

Many Young people report that they 'don't know how to navigate complicated systems regarding Housing' and feel 'under - supported by their PA'.

A few young people have raised concerns regarding the condition of the Ready Homes properties they are living in. Movements have been difficult to plan, particularly if the PA has been difficult to get hold of. Advocacy support for these young people has led to some positive outcomes.

Many Young people leaving care have significant mental health issues, particularly those who have entered the UK as children seeking Asylum:



Care Leavers 18-25yrs

UASC YOUNG PEOPLE FIND UK POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND. THEY RELY ON THE SUPPORT FROM THEIR PA AND ARE ALWAYS EXTREMELY APPRECIATIVE OF THE SUPPORT THAT AN ADVOCATE CAN GIVE WHEN HELPING THEM TO LIAISE WITH THE 18PLUS LEAVING CARE TEAM.

"My Brain is an Immigrant by Senait Hagose

'My mind can travel anywhere
Across the ocean, across dry land
Past, present and future,
No traffic lights or mind the gap
No one can stop me moving.

My eyes can see the un-seeable
My ears can hear the un-hearable
My hands can touch the invisible.

I think non stop.

More bad, less good,
Fear, flashback, scared and hopeless,
Stressful,
Sometimes I see no future.
More sadness
Loneliness,
Insecurity.

This is my immigrant mind"





Care Leavers 18-25yrs

CASE STUDIES

Issues with Mental Health can create immense barriers for young people, who are often crying out for help:

Case Study: Sofia (23yrs) was a vulnerable Care Leaver with significant mental health issues. She referred herself to the Advocacy Service. Initial support for Sofia involved meeting her face to face to establish a rapport. Sofia said that she felt that she had not been included in decisions that were in the process of being made regarding her daughter, who was subject to Care Proceedings. The Advocate liaised with the PA and the SW for the child in order to establish, via a meeting, a good level of communication all round. During the meeting, Sofia received an update regarding her daughter. She was also, with support from her Advocate, able to raise her own concerns about the care of her daughter. Sofia was able to say that the foster carer caring for her daughter did not always keep the child clean and her bottles were often dirty (This had been validated by the person who supervised contact between Sofia and her child). Sofia would not have been able to voice her concerns without support from her Advocate.

The Advocate also supported Sofia to complete a self-referral to the Care Leaver Mentoring Service at YLF. In addition, the Advocate supported Sofia to chase legal documents regarding her child. Sofia should have had copies of all the Court documents. Sofia is still waiting for some of the foster carer's notes regarding her daughter.

Sofia allowed the Advocate to voice her wishes and feelings in her absence regarding the Care Plan for her daughter. The Advocate offered Sofia a high level of support around the Court Proceedings, explaining the processes and putting things in 'layman's terms' so that Sofia had a greater understanding of procedures and how long processes take. The Advocate supported Sofia in her understanding of Mother and Baby resources. Sofia was able to make informed decisions about future care of her daughter. The Advocate supported Sofia throughout the court hearing and facilitated understanding of decisions made. The Advocate enabled Sofia to talk to her solicitor and gain an understanding of legal language. Sofia said that she would like her parents, in Sri Lanka, to care for her daughter if she could not do so, despite difficulties in her own childhood. The Advocate helped Sofia to voice her wishes.

With trust in her Advocate, Sofia was able to talk about her time in Care and reported how she went off to university with her stuff in a black bag and not a spoon to her name. Sofia said she wishes to make a complaint about her time in care and her negative experiences but was not able to give the Advocate the necessary information to draft a complaint on her behalf. This is still outstanding but Sofia is aware that she can contact the Advocacy Service when she feels ready to do this.

Sofia fed the following back to her Leaving Care Mentor: **“When S started working with me, I felt for the first time I had someone who was on my side. She is amazing, I can't fault her, she has listened to me and she has given me this kind of power inside to have a voice and fight for my rights”**

Care Leavers 18-25yrs

CASE STUDIES



Case Study: Mamoud's Mentor at KRAN referred him to the Advocacy Service. Mamoud was unhappy at the lack of support and communication from his PA. He wanted to live in North Kent or London to be closer to his friends and his cultural community. He said he felt abandoned and just wanted support to know what his options were. The Advocate met with Mamoud to gain his wishes and feelings and advised Mamoud that she could write a letter to 18 Plus on his behalf. Mamoud said that he wanted a change of PA as he had lost trust in his current PA. He also said that he would like support from the new PA to explore his options regarding housing. The Advocate wrote a letter on Mamoud's behalf and received a positive response. The Team Manager acknowledged that the match of PA had not been productive and said that she would arrange a change of PA as a matter of urgency. She also arranged for a Housing Planning meeting to be set up for Mamaoud.



Mamoud was happy with the outcome and thanked the Advocate for her support.
"Thank you for everything you have done for me"



FEEDBACK FROM CARE LEAVERS 18-25YRS

When we end our work with young people we always ask them to reflect on their experience and give us feedback about the advocacy service and any suggestions as to how we could improve the service. Young people are always given information about how to access our service again if they need our support. and our freephone number

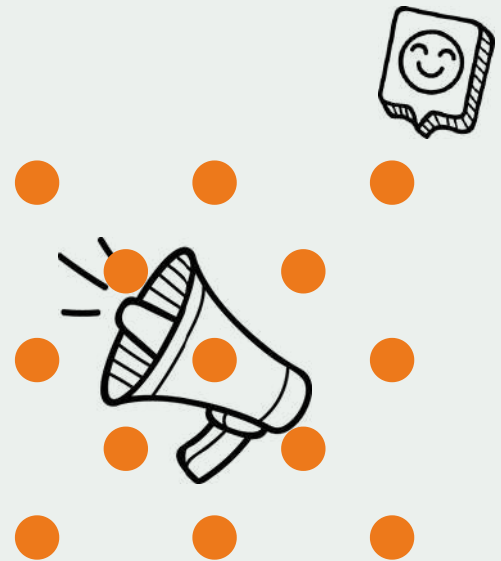


0808 164 0096

Most young people send their Advocates text messages to give their feedback and say "Thank you"



"**THANK YOU MISS ADVOCATE , YOU ALWAYS CALL ME AND ASK HOW THINGS ARE GOING, YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CARES ABOUT ME. THANK YOU"**



"**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR HELPING ME, YOU REALLY ARE A GOOD PERSON, YOU HELP ME A LOT"**

"**THANK YOU, I HAVE RESPECT AND APPRECIATION FOR YOU"**

"**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR EVERYTHING YOU STAND FOR ME"**

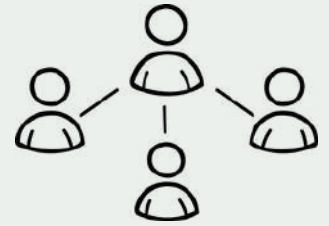
"**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP, I AM VERY HAPPY , THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND AGAIN THANK YOU SO MUCH"**

IMPACT OF ADVOCACY



302 CASES CLOSED

- Advocacy Complete - All Issues Resolved = 165
- Advocacy Complete - Issues Outstanding = 39
- Advocacy Complete - Outcome Unknown = 7
- Outcome not Known = 4
- Lost Contact = 16
- Did not take up Advocacy = 71



OVERCOMING TECHNICAL ISSUES



A 6 -week data outage in the summer may account for the slightly raised number of young people who did not take up advocacy. The issue was beyond the control of the advocacy service and all young people referred during this 'lost' period were subsequently contacted and offered advocacy.

WITH SUPPORT FROM AN ADVOCATE, 70% OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAD POSITIVE OUTCOMES REGARDING THEIR ISSUES.



NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Who knew we would spend so much time this year in meetings on Zoom or Teams? Turns out some young people quite like speaking from the comfort of their own home without the pressure of being in an unfamiliar space and surrounded by people wearing lanyards. Some young people have reported that it is really helpful to be able to text their Advocate discretely during a meeting to raise issues and get help to share their views.

STAYING CONNECTED



As young people found themselves cut off from their normal networks of support, many told us they felt isolated. Without the normal access to free Wi-Fi out in the community they felt cut off. Young people tell us they would like all shared accommodation to come with free Wi-Fi as standard.



FEEDBACK FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

When we end our work with young people we always ask them to reflect on their experience and give us feedback about the advocacy service and any suggestions as to how we could improve the service. Young people are always given information about how to access our service again if they need our support.



YOUNG PERSON GAVE HIS THOUGHTS OF HAVING HAD AN ADVOCATE TO SUPPORT HIM. HE SAID “9/10 – FANTASTIC! YOU’VE HELPED ME WITH SO MANY DIFFERENT THINGS.”

“I’M GOING TO PLAN FOR MY FUTURE AND MAKE THE MOST OF MY LIFE. KIND REGARDS AND BEST WISHES. B “

“WHEN I SAY SOMETHING, YOU’VE MADE SURE YOU DO IT, AND ALWAYS FOLLOW UP WHAT I ASKED ABOUT. YOU’VE BEEN CONSIDERATE TOO, ASKING ME WHAT I WANT TO SHARE FIRST, CHECKING THAT’S WHAT I MEANT FOR OTHERS TO HEAR”

“THANK YOU. I REALLY NEEDED AN ADVOCATE A LOT WHEN I WAS MADE TO MOVE FROM MY FOSTER HOME.” “I DONT’ REALLY NEED AN ADVOCATE NOW BUT I MAY NEED TO TEXT YOU!” “I RATE THE SERVICE A 10 BEING EXCELLENT, I FELT LISTENED TO AND IT WAS EASY TO CONTACT YOU.”

YOUNG PERSON THANKED THE ADVOCATE FOR ALL THE SUPPORT AND COMMENTED THAT SHE HAD FELT WELL SUPPORTED AND HER VIEWS AND INFORMATION RESPECTED.

““I’M GOING TO PLAN FOR MY FUTURE AND MAKE THE MOST OF MY LIFE. KIND REGARDS AND BEST WISHES. B “

“YP THANKED ME FOR MY SUPPORT IN THE MEETING, HE SAID HE ‘LOVED IT’ AND ‘FELT LIKE HE HAD HIS OWN SOLICITOR’

“ “THANK YOU FOR THE HELP, IT WAS HELPFUL TO SPEAK TO MY SW AND I HAVE NOW BEEN PROMISED A FULL MOVE, FINALLY, AFTER MONTHS OF HASSLE. EVERYTHING THAT N HAS SAID HAS BEEN EXACT TO MY WISHES AND I AM HAPPY WITH THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN RECENT WEEKS. “

“ “THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING. THE SOLICITOR, HELPING WITH HOUSING, GETTING ME THE CHILD PROTECTION I WANTED AND GOING TO MEETINGS FOR ME. YOU WERE REALLY GOOD AND C IS REALLY GOOD NOW. 10/10”

THE CHILD SAID HE THOUGHT THE INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE HAD LISTENED TO HIM AND HEARD HIS VIEWS ABOUT HIS SITUATION AND SHARED THEM ACCURATELY AND AS HE HAD EXPRESSED THEM. “YOU TOLD THEM WHAT I SAID.”



ADVOCACY SERVICE Professional Feedback

We will use this feedback to develop the service in the coming year. This is some of what they told us...

100%

They would recommend the Advocacy Service to others

"C has been a consistent advocate for Nelly. C supported Nelly in expressing her views. Nelly has grown in confidence because of the work that C did with her, knowing that her views will be expressed and efficiently too. Nelly engaged well with C, and both were able to build a trusting relationship throughout the period that they worked together. C was professional throughout visiting Nelly, obtaining her wishes and feelings and relating this in meetings and to professionals. C has been a source of strength to many other young people as well." Social Worker

"Thank you very much, brilliant, I thought he'd have to wait ages for an advocate" Foster Carer"

100%

Of those who had made a referral said they found the process easy

"Thanks so much for all you are doing for ME, and for making the time to update me on Wednesday. Really thankful that you are able to continue supporting him through this move as I am sure it will be a challenging transition." Social Worker

"Really appreciate all the help you have given us all." Care Manager

"Thank you, C. I am sure that S has appreciated your long standing support. I wish you all the best for your future and hopefully our paths will cross again soon. Take care and best wishes," PA

Recommendations for the Advocacy Service.....

I am not sure how easy it is for teenagers to access the service in a way that they feel comfortable

More leaflets

Helping young people to have realistic expectations and working in partnership with their Social Worker.

Raise the profile of Advocacy



CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENT



During March 2021 - April 2022 the demand on the Advocacy Service grew considerably. An increasing number of referrals for advocacy support at joint assessments added to the overall numbers of referrals received. Because of the increased demand, positive changes were made to the re structure of the Advocacy Service. In July 2021 YLF recruited a full time Senior Advocacy Coordinator and in February 2022 a full time Advocate joined the Team.

The advocacy team welcomed four student social workers over the last year and gave them all live cases and ongoing mentoring and support throughout their placement. The skills and knowledge gained via Advocacy will undoubtedly inform their social work practice in the future. Two of the students were so impressed with the service that they stayed on as sessional advocates!

Although the Country eased out of lockdown over the last year, Covid 19 has continued to impact on the health and well-being for both staff and young people. Despite this, there are NO young people waiting for Advocacy. Advocates have been amazing over the last year, meeting the needs of children and young people via What's App, text, email, TEAMS & Zoom if not face to face.

Vital links have been forged with the Refugee Council and KRAN and relationships between the services continue to strengthen. Advocates have been present at Housing Protocol Forums and continue to have input into the development of new policies across the County.

Stronger links with Mental Health Advocacy would be good, as many young people have significant mental health issues and need specific and tailored support with their issues.

ADVOCACY TEAM NEWS



Our 'Advocacy YLF' page has been refreshed and updatedvisit Advocacy YLF on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for news and updates.



This year saw many changes to the Advocacy Team, with key staff leaving and new staff starting. The Advocacy Team now has a full time Senior Advocacy Coordinator Marcya Farmer photo 1 as well as a full time Advocate Shelly Allen 2.



Our student social worker, who is with us until the end of June, is Charlotte Dissanayake.



ADVOCACY TEAM NEWS



Our Sessional Advocates are;

**Neil Snee
Andrew Moon
Carole Whittake
Jo Vickery
Eleanor Hulme
David Thirlaway**

On 31st March we sadly said ‘goodbye’ to our wonderful Christine Liggins. Christine has been an advocate for a number of years, following her retirement from KCC. We are sad to see her go and know that she will be greatly missed by all the young people she supported over the years as well as the staff at YLF.

And on 31st April we will say ‘goodbye’ to Coral Ingleton, who has supported young people for many years and who will be greatly missed by staff and young people alike.



“

You made me increase my confidence. Telling me I can do this. You were helpful, because now I can finally use my own voice. I'm not in any need of someone who will speak for me, as I have learnt that if I don't use my voice goodness knows what my future would be like. I have loved having to work with you. Since I have had you, it gave such an impact on my life.

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