



The Young Lives Foundation

# KENT ADVOCACY REPORT

October - December 2023



#makingadifference



# 80

**New children and young people  
in Kent were supported by our  
Advocacy Service this past  
quarter. 33 were JA's and 47 were  
general referrals.**



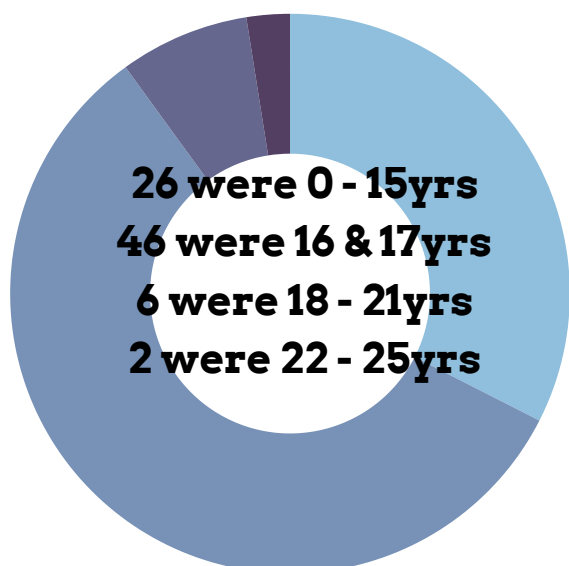
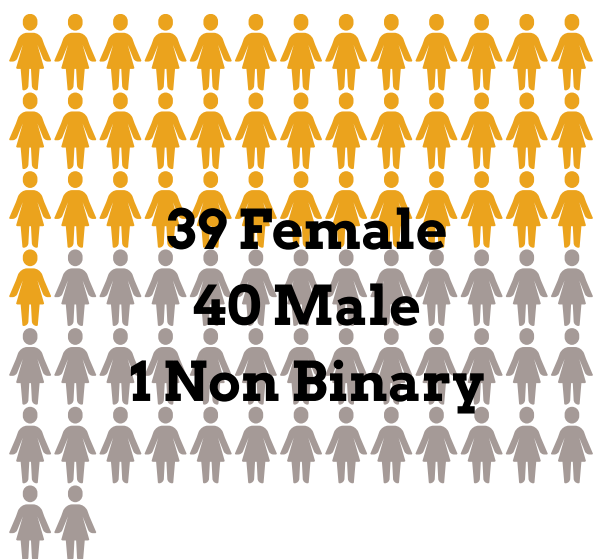
# Quarterly Data

## Demographics, Themes & Trends

### Referrals

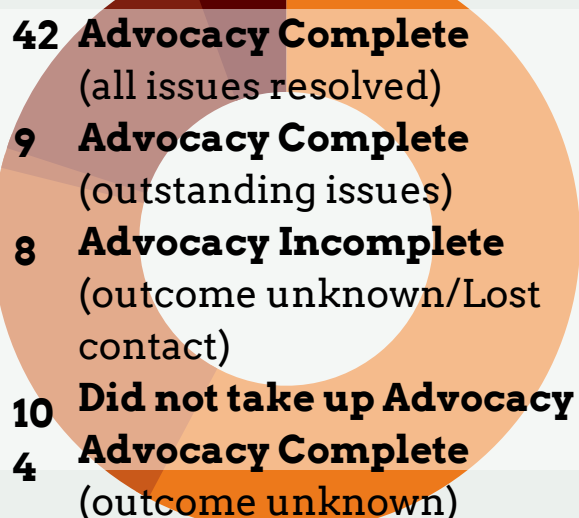
A total of **80** referrals were received this quarter.

JHA	33
CIC	31
C L	6
CIN	5
CP	5



### Closed Cases

A total of **73** cases were closed this quarter. 55 were fully resolved.



"The advocacy service requires all referrers to gain agreement from the young person prior to the referral being made. We find that the majority of young people are aware the referral has been made but they do not always understand the role of the advocate. Once this has been explained, in more detail, by the advocate, some may decline support (10 YP did not take up advocacy this Quarter). All these young people are given information about the service and know how to refer themselves back at a later date if needed."

# Issues

<b>Housing/Homelessness</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Support at meetings</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Disability/various issues</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Placement issues</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CP meeting</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Court proceedings</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Contact</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Social Worker</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Immigration</b>	<b>1</b>



**Every young person has  
a "Right to a Safe Home."**

## Joint Housing Assessments

Requests for support at joint housing assessments continue to dominate the advocacy service, with 41% of all referrals this quarter pertaining to homeless 16 & 17-year-olds. To date, 100% of these young people have received the support of an advocate at their assessment meetings.

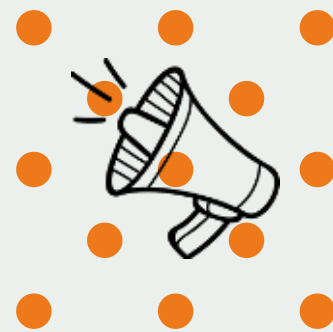
There are significant changes within KCC regarding their accommodation provision, with several well-established providers becoming decommissioned whilst new provision is being established within the County. Many young people have been caught in an interim period where there have been severe limitations to their options, thus leaving them with difficult choices to make. Many of these young people have relied on extended advocacy support (beyond the confines of the JHA) to ensure their voices continue to be heard. This has added extra pressure to the advocacy service, who believe the welfare of these young people is paramount at such a critical point in their lives.





## Case Study:

### Jade - 17 years old



Jade fled from her Dad's home as he was verbally and physically abusive towards her. Jade was 5 weeks away from her 18th Birthday. The advocate spoke to Jade prior to the JHA and advised her of her rights and entitlement as a homeless young person. The advocate explained about the 13- week rule to becoming a looked after child (under s.20) and explored the law regarding the Housing Act 1996. After a full assessment, the Housing Office managed to place Jade in temporary accommodation as part of a domestic violence protocol. Jade said she was happy with her accommodation and "felt safe for the first time in years!"

## Disability

Disabled children who are unable to live at home are high in need. In addition to their disability, they are often deprived of a normal family life. They have many professionals involved in their lives and may struggle to articulate their wishes and feelings to those around them.

There has been a significant increase this Quarter in referrals for children and young people with disabilities. Many of these children and young people live in residential accommodation, often out of county. It is important that these young people receive face to face contact and support from their advocate, so that the advocate can build a relationship with the young person and gain accurate information regarding their wishes and feelings within their care situation. Children and young people with disabilities take priority in the allocation of an advocate. However, careful matching needs to be considered, as these young people may need advocacy over a longer period than is typical for issue- based advocacy.

Advocacy resources are continually stretched by the high volume of referrals each month. Despite this, the waiting list for children with disabilities remains minimal.

## Case Study

### Michael - 16 years old



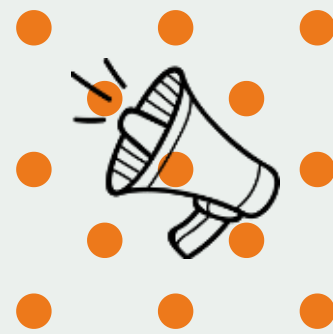
Michael is a young person with significant disabilities including OCD, Autism, SLD, Communication difficulties and hyper vigilance. At the time of his referral, he was attending a specialist residential school in Kent. KCC SEN had identified a college in Kent that they felt would meet Michael's educational needs, but his parents did not feel that the colleges in and around Kent would be able to meet Michael's needs, therefore an advocate was sought to support Michael's wishes and feelings regarding where he would like to go for his college placement.

The advocate met regularly with Michael over a period of two years and attended meetings in connection with Michael's transition to an adult placement. These meetings included Child in Care reviews, transition meetings and meetings with the parents. The advocate was able to present Michael's wishes and feelings to the meetings about where he felt safe and what he felt he would like regarding his next steps in life and education.

Although there were some difficulties in sourcing the most appropriate placement, Michael has now transitioned to his adult placement which is out of county but still in reasonable proximity to his parents.



## Support at meetings & Complaints



“An advocate is independent from any other professional. They are there to listen to you and to make sure you are involved in all decisions made about your life. An advocate can go to meetings with you, or on your behalf, and represent your wishes, feelings, and views to professionals around the table.”

“An advocate can support you if you are not happy about the care you are receiving and can help you to make a complaint if this is what you wish to do?”

13 children and young people (excluding those with disabilities) this quarter asked for support in meetings.

## Case Study

### Grayson 15 years old

Grayson has been a child in care since he was 10 years old and has always had regular contact with his mum and nan. At the age of 15 years, he expressed that he wanted to move back home, but Children’s Services felt that this needed to be safely planned. Grayson felt that his current social worker was not listening to him and was delaying any move forward.

The advocate became involved and supported Grayson in presenting his wishes and feelings at meetings. There were some minor concerns around overnight stays as Grayson had younger siblings who could antagonise him at times. The advocate helped Grayson to express his concerns about his siblings and helped him to ask for support with this. With the advocate’s support, Grayson, his social worker, and his Mum were able to set out an overnight contact plan, that has since increased as a gentle way of re-introducing Grayson to the family home.

Grayson will be spending Christmas with his mum and siblings and a timetable for him to move home has been set. This will give Grayson and his mum the stability and time required to re-build their relationship and allow them to both understand each other.

Grayson said:

“Thank you. You helped me to get a time set for when I can go back home, and you helped me to get my words out.”

3 young people asked for support to make a complaint this quarter.

One young person had his complaint heard, in person, by a Service Manager. He was happy to have had his voice heard by a senior member of staff and felt empowered by this.

His comment was -

“Thank you for taking the time to come out and see me. I appreciate that you have listened to me, and I feel my voice has been heard”.







## Cases Closed

Cases Closed = 6

Advocacy complete, all issues resolved = 1

Advocacy complete, Outstanding issues = 2

Advocacy complete, Outcome unknown = 1

Advocacy Incomplete, YP lost contact = 2

## Kent Care Leavers

Number of referrals = 6

Source of referral:

Email = 5

Telephone call = 0

Website = 1

Referrer:

Social Worker = 3

Self = 1

Teacher/Tutor = 1

Issues:

CP = 1

Disability = 4

Placement = 2

Support at meetings = 1

**"It's very helpful to  
have an Advocate  
who explains things  
in a way I  
understand."**



# Case Study

## Care Leaver



### Hayleigh - Age 21

Hayleigh has a young baby. She had been in a PLO process for over a year whilst living in a mother and baby foster placement. The advocate was instrumental in helping Hayleigh to secure a solicitor in Kent who offer a specialist service to care leavers. Hayleigh was very impressed with her solicitor and felt well-supported. The advocate remained in the background, offering support at meetings when needed. Hayleigh engaged well with her support systems and eventually came out of the PLO process. She secured independent accommodation in the community and her advocate spoke to her about having a careleaver mentor to support her once she moved into independence. Hayleigh agreed that this was a good idea as she worried about feeling isolated and anxious about holding a tenancy in her own right. A referral was made to the YLF care leaver mentoring service and Hayleigh was matched with a mentor.

The advocacy service frequently supports young parents who are in PLO processes. Advocates help the young person to understand and navigate what are often quite stressful meetings. Young people often say that they feel that professionals are against them and having an advocate helps them to feel that 'somebody is on their side'.





# Feedback

## From Young People

"Thank you for everything that night. I was very upset and I can't thank you enough"

An 8 year old child said to her social worker:

"I want to speak to the lady who shares what I want to say with you"

"Feedback form all done and thank you. It went just as planned so I am glad I got to talk to you first." (YP following JHA)



"Thank you so much, i don't have the words again and thank you, thank you, thank you."  
(UASC young person)

"Thank you for all your help me and H are very grateful. We wish you all the best!"

"I'm glad I've found someone to help me communicate."

"when we applied for an advocate I really needed one and had issues speaking for myself. Now that you are here I feel I am fine speaking for myself so it's nice to have you there but I feel I can speak for myself now."



### Feedback from professionals and family:

"Great work there David. Thanks for the quick feedback too. She has been very consistent about her wishes and thoughts which is amazing. I am on board to ensure her transition is as smooth as possible. Thank you all for being an amazing team to work with and making sure T's voice is heard." **Social Worker** - "I understand the letter for D was sent to you last week, just want to check that you have it. I hope it helps D and that he feels he was heard. Thank you for being his advocate- it's such an important role." **Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Officer** - "Thank you for your advice, you have been incredible". **Pippa at Amber Project** - "Thank you for all the effort you have made to find the response, we are very grateful." Re KCC complaint **Parent**

# News and Service Updates

## Changes to the Advocacy Team

Kristy Tidey says “Goodbye” as she starts her new venture as Director Of Youth Programmes in YLF.



The Advocacy Service welcomes Carly Maskell, the new Director of Advocacy Programmes at YLF.

