

Notice of a public meeting of Corporate Parenting Board

To: Councillors Fitzpatrick, Cuthbertson, Heaton, Hunter, Musson, Rowley, Runciman and D Taylor

Date: Tuesday, 3 September 2019

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: The Thornton Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G039)

A G E N D A

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests,
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2019.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Board's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is 5pm the working day before the meeting, in this case **5pm on Monday 2 September 2019.**

Filming or Recording Meetings

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officer (whose contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at http://www.york.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11406/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_of_council_meetings_20160809.pdf

4. Annual Advocacy Report 2018-19 (Pages 5 - 30)

The aim of this report is to share with the Corporate Parenting Board the 2018-19 Annual Advocacy Report, which provides a review of the statistics on the demographic of young people who have requested advocacy, details advocacy requests / common themes and reviews the outcomes of the service.

5. U Matter Survey 2019 (Pages 31 - 54)

The aim of this report is to share with the Corporate Parenting Board the U Matter Survey 2019, which details the consultation findings from children and young people looked after by the City of York Council.

6. Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum Annual Report (Pages 55 - 68)

The aim of this report is to detail the issues identified by the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, how these issues are being addressed and what issues are still to be taken forward. The report also details professionals and partner agencies that met with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, the outcomes of these discussions and different projects that the groups are involved in.

7. Summary of the Key issues identified in 2018-19 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report (Pages 69 - 92)

IROs have a statutory responsibility to report to senior managers and the corporate parenting board regarding the performance of the local authority with regards their statutory requirements as corporate parent to the Children and Young People in the Care (CYPIC) of the local authority. This report covers the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019.

8. Work Plan (Pages 93 - 94)

To consider the Board's work plan for the 2019-20 municipal year and to receive any updates Members may wish to give on their agreed areas of interest relating to the work of the Board.

9. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officer:

Name: Louise Cook

Contact Details:

- Telephone – (01904) 551031
- E-mail - louise.cook@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officers responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

**Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim (Polish)
własnym języku.**

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی میا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

☎ (01904) 551550

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

Meeting	Corporate Parenting Board
Date	4 June 2019
Present	Councillors Cuthbertson (Chair), Fitzpatrick (Vice-Chair), Heaton, Hunter, Musson, Rowley, Runciman and D Taylor
In Attendance	Representatives from Show Me That I Matter

1. Election of Chair

Members were invited to nominate a Chair for the Board.

Resolved: That Councillor Cuthbertson be appointed as the Chair of the Board.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

Members were invited to nominate a Vice-Chair for the Board.

Resolved: That Councillor Fitzpatrick be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Board.

3. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting Members were invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in relation to the business on the agenda or any other general interests they might have within the remit of the Board. None were declared.

4. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 20 March 2019 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

6. Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter and the Pledge

Members received an overview of the functions of the Children and Care Council (Show Me That I Matter) and Care Leavers Forum (I Still Matter) from the Corporate Director of Children, Education & Communities and they noted that:

- Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) held a monthly forum for young people in care (aged 14 – 19) to discuss important issues, sometimes with elected Members or senior managers from the council, with the aim of helping to shape and improve services.
- I Still Matter held monthly meetings for care experienced young people (aged 17 – 25) to discuss and improve the services care leavers received from City of York Council, and to help make the difficult transition from care to independence a better experience for all young people.
- Speak Up Youth had a less formal approach and was open to children in care aged 10-16 (and above for those with additional needs).

The Children's Rights Manager, the Advocacy and Participation Worker and two representatives from Show Me That I Matter were in attendance to inform Members of the work they had carried out to create the new Guarantee (York's Pledge for Children and Young People in Care).

Officers confirmed that in consultation with SMTIM and I Still Matter the experience of looked after children and young people in York had been reviewed and a new Guarantee had been produced. Members received a copy of the draft document and noted that the Guarantee represented the two group's views, design and wording and that an alternative version of the Guarantee would be produced for younger children, following further consultation with Speak Up Youth.

In answer to Members questions it was confirmed that:

- The Guarantee would become an agreement between York's Children in Care and their social worker and would include a section on the reverse for them to sign.
- A glossary of regularly used acronyms and a copy of the Local Government Guide on Corporate Parenting could be issued to all Board Members.

- A variety of professionals would be made aware of the new Guarantee including, Independent Reviewing Officers and Designated Teachers.

Following discussions around fostering and the training sessions members of SMTIM and Speak Up had delivered to Foster Carers; the Board were very impressed with the new Guarantee and congratulated all involved for producing an exceptional document. They agreed that the document needed to be well publicised and they welcomed an update at a future meeting to measure the impact of the new Guarantee.

Resolved:

- (i) That the functions of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum be noted.
- (ii) That a glossary of regularly used acronyms and a copy of the Local Government guide on corporate parenting be issued to all Board Members.
- (iii) That Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter consider how they would like the Guarantee to be signed off and how it should be promoted.
- (iv) That an update be provided at a future Corporate Parenting Board.

Reason: To keep the Corporate Parenting Board updated.

7. Member Induction, Role and Function of Corporate Parenting Board

Members considered the current terms of reference for the Board.

The Corporate Director of Children, Education & Communities gave an update and Members noted that to secure the direct involvement of young people in care, the membership could be configured to include representatives from Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter and that similarly appropriate officers, individuals or partners could be invited to attend specific meetings where themes were relevant to them.

Members discussed and commented upon the terms of reference and themed work areas and were keen to adopt practices which would help their work in supporting young peoples' priorities.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board consult with the Corporate Director of Children, Education & Communities to provide a draft terms of reference for consideration at the next Corporate Parenting Board on 3 September 2019.
- (ii) That a joint day out be arranged between the Corporate Parenting Board, Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter.

Reason: To develop a detailed suitable terms of reference for the Board.

8. Work Plan

Members considered the Boards work plan for the 2019-20 municipal year and the continuation of strategic themes.

Members agreed that foster care recruitment and retention should be included on the work plan and that the Chair and Vice-Chair could meet to consider additional items for business.

Resolved: That the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board consult with the Corporate Director of Children, Education & Communities to provide a draft work plan for consideration at the next Corporate Parenting Board on 3 September 2019.

Reason: In order to set a work programme for 2019/20.

Cllr Cuthbertson, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.35 pm].



Corporate Parenting Board**3 September 2019****Report of the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities****Annual Advocacy Report 2018-19****Summary**

1. The aim of this report is to share with the Corporate Parenting Board the 2018-19 Annual Advocacy Report, which provides a review of the statistics on the demographic of young people who have requested advocacy, details advocacy requests / common themes and reviews the outcomes of the service.

Background

2. The Children's Rights and Advocacy Services (known as Speak Up) provides advocacy for children and young people who are in or leaving care, on a child protection plan or wanting to make a complaint against the council, in line with the Local Authority's statutory duty.

Consultation

3. See Annex A.

Options

4. See Annex A.

Analysis

5. See Annex A.

Council Plan

6. See Annex A.

Implications

7. Financial

There are no financial implications to consider.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no HR implications to consider.

- **Equalities**

There are no issues relating to equalities to consider.

- **Legal**

There are no legal implications to consider.

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no issues relating to crime and disorder.

- **Information Technology (IT)**

There are no IT implications.

- **Property**

There are no issues relating to property.

- **Other**

No other known implications.

Risk Management

8. There are no risks to consider.

Recommendations

9. Members are not being asked to endorse any recommendations but to be briefed on the advocacy casework that is carried out with children and young people.

Reason: To keep the Board updated.

Contact Details

Author:

Nikki Wilson

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**Chief Officer Responsible for the
report:**

Sophie Wales

Title: Assistant Director of Children's
Services

**Report
Approved**



Date 15.08.19

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes

Annex A – 2018-19 Annual Advocacy Report

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SPEAK UP, YORK CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT AND REVIEW OF ADVOCACY

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019

SOPHIE BARNES, ADVOCACY AND PARTICIPATION WORKER
NIKKI WILSON, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS MANAGER



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speak Up, York Children's Rights and Advocacy Service promotes children's rights and entitlements and provides advocacy for children and young people who are in care, children going through the child protection process or wanting to make a complaint against the council, and care leavers, in line with the Local Authority's statutory duty. Speak Up has a Service Statement outlining details regarding service provision, independence governance, performance and monitoring, and practice in relation to resolution and escalation.

Between April 2018 and March 2019, Speak Up received 55 referrals in total from children and young people; 65% of which were in relation to children and young people in care. Referrals received were from children and young people ranging from 5-19 years, however three quarters of these were young people aged 13+. There were 10 referrals in relation to young people going through the Child Protection Process. Of the 55 referrals, 27 young people (49%) were receiving SEN support and 7 young people (13%) have an EHCP.

Referral reasons vary with the most common theme being placement issues (32%). This theme has been viewed in conjunction with 14 referrals from young people living out of area, and it has been found that all of these young people raised placement as an issue. The second most comment theme is 'support to have voice heard in decision making process' (23%); this has consistently been a common theme within previous annual reports.

Qualitative feedback has been received from young people and professionals who have completed evaluation forms. The feedback is generally very positive, with most young people feeling that advocacy helped them feel listened to and more able to express their views.

During the course of completing this report, the Office of the Children's Commissioner published the report 'Advocacy for Children'. As well as making a number of recommendations, this report highlights where there is a statutory requirement to provide advocacy to children and young people. Speak Up has been able to use the findings of this national report to make comparisons with its own service delivery, which has helped to inform some of the recommendations within this report.

Speak Up has identified a number of areas for development and some key recommendations. These include:

- Reviewing the reporting process in order to accurately capture the advocacy provided by the service and to enable reporting on outcomes.
- Continuing to raise awareness of advocacy with a variety of professionals, including social workers (in particular, Safeguarding and Intervention Teams), educational settings and foster carers.

- Undertaking a scoping exercise to gain further insight into whether the Local Authority is meeting the statutory requirement of the provision of advocacy for children and young people.

AIM OF THE REPORT

The aim of this report is to explore and review the advocacy provided by Speak Up, York Children's Rights and Advocacy Service, to explore if it functions effectively and to outline any areas of the service in need of further development.

This will be done by:

- Analysing advocacy requests and outlining any common themes;
- Reviewing and analysing statistics on the demographic of children and young people who have requested advocacy;
- Evaluating the service's effectiveness and identifying areas for development.

All advocacy requests from the financial year 2018/19 will be explored in the analysis of the service.

Advocacy evaluations received in the year 2018/19 will be explored to aid in evaluating the effectiveness of the service and identifying areas of development. Evaluations are sought from both young people and professionals.

INTRODUCTION TO ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Statutory advocacy is about listening to children and young people and helping them express their own views, have their voice heard, access information and services, and understand their rights and entitlements. Advocacy is based on the principle that all individuals are equal with the same rights and responsibilities.

It is a statutory duty for Local Authorities to provide advocacy for children and young people who are in care (Children Act 1989), leaving care (Children and Social Work Act 2017) or wanting to make a complaint (Adoption and Children Act 2002). The Children and Young People's Act (2008) places additional duties on local authorities to ensure that the views of children and young people in care are represented throughout the care planning and review process. This act requires local authorities to provide advocacy support to any child or young person in care that may require it. Whilst it is not a statutory requirement to provide advocacy for children and young people going through the Child Protection Process, it is identified as good practice.

The National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services state that:

- ✓ Advocates should work for children and young people and no one else.
- ✓ Advocates should value and respect children and young people as individuals and challenge all types of unlawful discrimination.

- ✓ Advocates should work to make sure children and young people in care can understand what is happening to them, can make their views known and, where possible, exercise their choice when decisions about them are being made.
- ✓ Advocates should help children and young people to raise issues and concerns about things they are unhappy about, including making informal and formal complaints.

SPEAK UP, YORK CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service (known as Speak Up) promotes children's rights and entitlements and provides advocacy for the following children and young people:

- Children and young people in care aged 5-18
- Care leavers up to the age of 21
- Children on a child protection plan
- Young parents (aged 18 and under) who have a child who is on a Child Protection Plan
- Any child or young person wanting to make a complaint about a City of York Council service.

The service provides specialist issue-based advocacy; this kind of advocacy aims to address a specific issue and only exists for the time it takes to resolve that issue. It should be noted however that children and young people often raise numerous issues, sometimes requiring advocacy for a significant length of time. Speak Up also seeks to provide advocacy that is appropriate for the needs of the child or young people.

Speak Up is a confidential service and is independent from Children's Social Care. The service sits within the Early Help and Local Area Teams structure to ensure that it can function independently from Children's Social Care, in line with good practice guidance.

Speak Up consists of a Children's Rights Manager (0.7PTE), Project Officer Apprentice (1 FTE) and three part-time Advocacy and Participation Workers (totalling 1.7 FTE). Speak Up also has a small number of trained volunteer advocates who undertake advocacy with children and young people. The service is recognising advocacy as a specialist skill and supporting staff to achieve the accredited 'Introduction to advocating on behalf of children and young people' award delivered by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). This training is building the knowledge and skill within the service.

There is a service statement (Appendix B) in place outlining details regarding service provision, independent governance, performance and monitoring, and practice in relation to resolution and escalation. Within the team, each Advocacy and Participation Worker carries out both advocacy support and facilitates participation opportunities. When allocating advocacy casework, wherever possible, the service seeks to appoint a worker that is not delivering participation activities with the child or young person, to avoid the potential for any conflict of interest or confusion for young people about the two functions of the service.

Advocacy referrals can be made directly by children and young people or professionals on their behalf, via telephone, email, Facebook or through the website <http://www.showmethatimatter.com>.

AWARENESS OF THE CHILDRENS RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

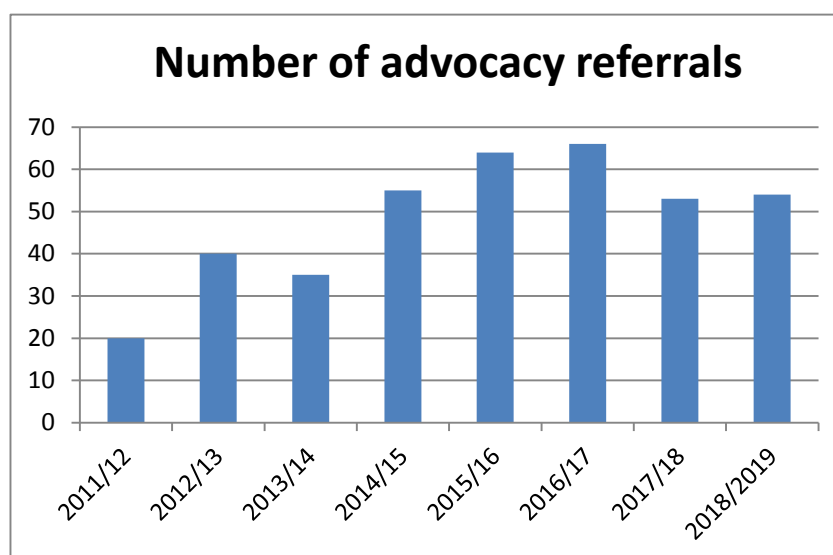
For Speak Up to function effectively, children, young people and professionals need to be aware of, and have an understanding of, the service. When a child or young person first comes into care, they are issued with an information pack which includes information about their rights and entitlements and Speak Up. Speak Up also send quarterly newsletters to all children and young people in care aged 5+ and care leavers aged 18-21 which include details of the service, with specific reference to advocacy and how to access this.

Children and young people are also made aware of the service through professionals. It is important that all professionals working with children and young people are aware of the service so they can signpost and refer young people who may benefit from the support of an advocate. The Children's Rights Manager regularly liaises with social work teams, the Virtual School and teaching staff to promote the service to professionals. During the year 2018/19, Speak Up has sought to increase the awareness of advocacy among education provision. Advocates from Speak Up have visited each secondary school in the city to provide information about Speak Up, including both advocacy provision and participation opportunities.

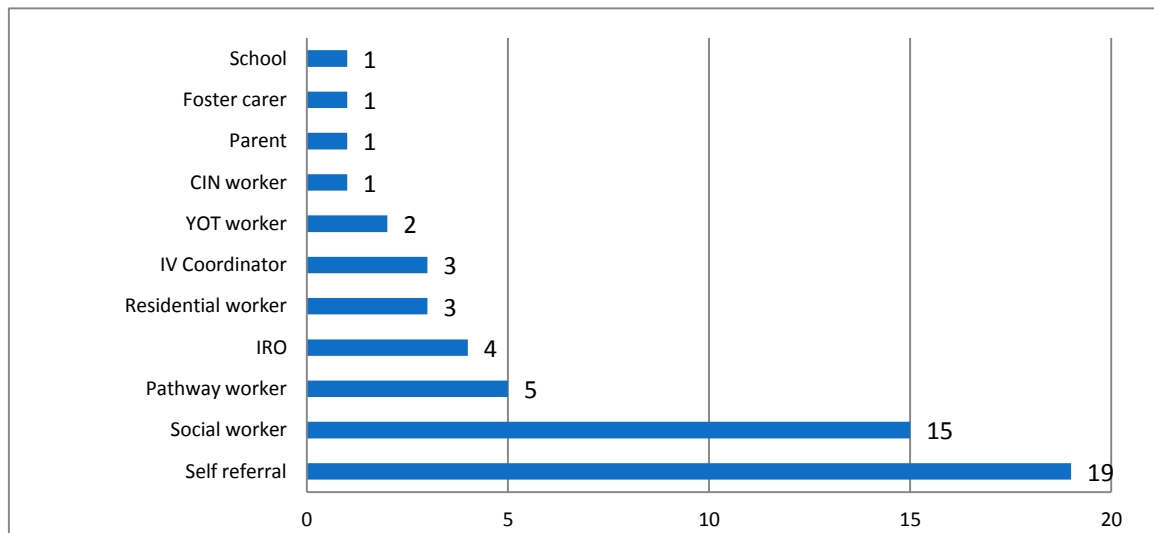
ADVOCACY REFERRALS - STATISTICS

In the year 2018/19, there have been 55 advocacy referrals. This is similar to the previous year, in which there were 53 referrals.

During 2018/19, 38 of the 55 new advocacy cases were closed, 5 resulted in 'no further action' and 17 remain open as of 30/03/2019 with ongoing advocacy still being provided. The service also continued to work with an additional 21 cases that carried over from the year 2017/18, all of which have now been closed.



REFERRER



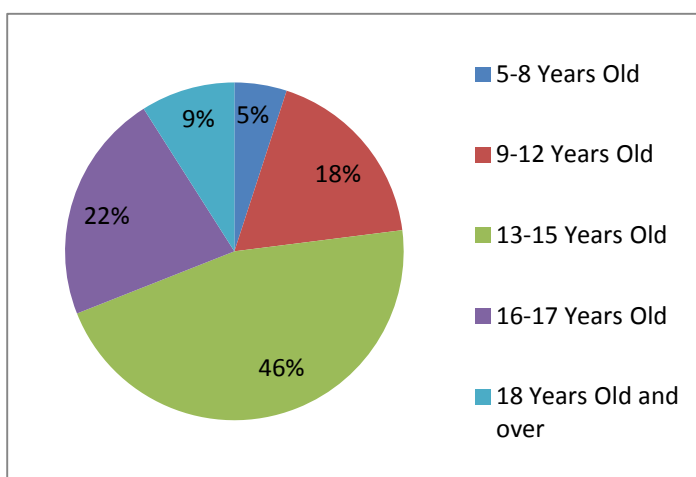
The majority of referrals this year came from young people directly (35%) and social workers (27%) which is similar to findings from previous years. The range of referrers suggests that awareness of the service is increasing, which is a real positive.

Last year, no referrals were received from educational settings and this was identified as an area for improvement. In response to this, Speak Up now has link workers for each secondary school. The link workers have visited the secondary schools to raise awareness of the service and ensure they have information to share with young people about advocacy. The referral received from one secondary school was following a visit from a link worker. Although this is just one referral, it is a step in the right direction and ongoing work with educational settings will still be required to keep advocacy on their radar.

Over the years, referrals from foster carers have always been low; there was one referral this year, and no referrals in the previous year (2017/18). It is unknown why this is the case, and it may be that foster carers encourage young people to self refer. It would be worth exploring this further and considering how to raise awareness of the service with foster carers.

PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ACCESS ADVOCACY

The following information is in relation to 55 referrals that were received by Speak Up from April 2018 – March 2019.



AGE

In relation to the age demographic of young people accessing advocacy support this has remained fairly constant over the last couple of years.

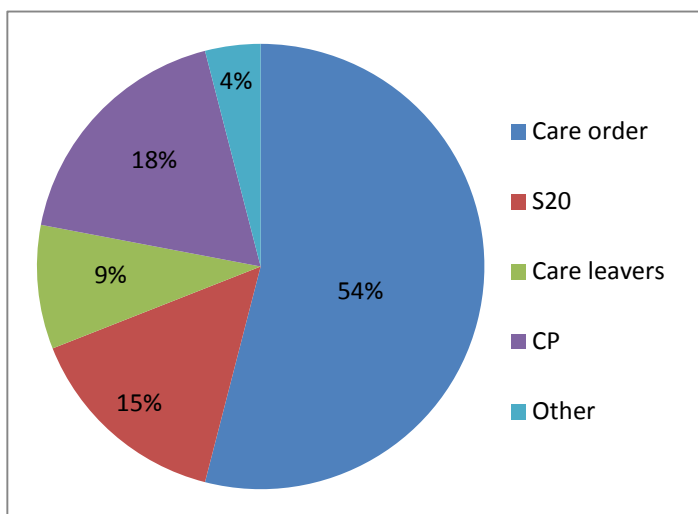
Last year, advocacy became available to care leavers up to the age of 21. Last year, 8% of the referrals were for care leavers and this year that increased slightly to 9%, which was expected.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Data has been gathered on the number of young people accessing advocacy that have any known SEN support. Of the 55 children and young people referred for advocacy, 49% have SEN support which equates to 27 children and young people. Of these 27, 7 children and young people (13%) have an EHCP.

The majority of advocacy provided by Speak Up is issue-based, however, Speak Up has provided non-instructed advocacy to two children. During this financial year, Speak Up has recruited a specialist advocate under temporary arrangements in order to provide non-instructed advocacy; this type of advocacy should only be undertaken when the child has no recognized communication system and should be a last resort when all other communication techniques have been explored. Non-instructed advocacy is rights-based, child-centred and usually involves observations of the child in multiple environments.

LEGAL STATUS



The majority of young people accessing advocacy were children and young people in care (69%) which includes both young people on a care order and accommodated under Section 20. 9% of referrals were for care leavers and 18% for those going through the child protection process.

The 'other' option refers to children and young people who only meet the remit of advocacy due to making a complaint. This applies to 2 referrals (4%) and both of these young people were supported by the

Child in Need Service at the time of referral. Please note, this does not reflect the total number of complaints within the year 2018/19, which will be explored further into the report.

This data regarding legal status is very similar to last year, with no significant difference highlighted.

To provide additional meaning to this data, a comparison will be made to 'population' data. This will include the population of children and young people in care aged 5+, the population of care leavers and the population of children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan aged 5+. This may help Speak Up to understand where further awareness raising may be needed. The population data will be taken from a snapshot taken on 31/03/2019. For children and young people in care and children subject to a Child Protection Plan, the population data will only include those aged 5+, as it is these children and young people that would be eligible for advocacy support from Speak Up.

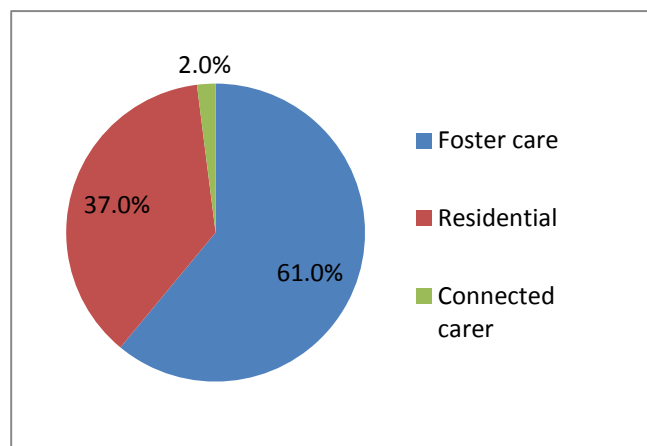
	No. of advocacy referrals 2018/19	Population snapshots on 31/03/2019	Advocacy referral as % of total population
CYPIC	38	162	23%
Care Leavers	5	107	5%
Child Protection	10	109	9%

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The living arrangements of all young people accessing advocacy support is very varied.

The information within the chart displays the living arrangements for the 38 children and young people in care who accessed advocacy support. 61% of young people in care accessing advocacy were living in foster care. This is a decrease from the previous year in which 69% of advocacy referrals were for young people living in foster care. There was a significant increase in the number of referrals from young people living in a residential setting; this was 15% last year and this year this has more than doubled to 37%. One young person was living with a connected carer, which is the 2%.

This year there was a greater range of living arrangements. Of the 5 referrals for care leavers, 2 young people were living independently, 1 young person was living in a hostel, 1 young person was staying put and 1 young person was living in a SASH placement. All 10 children and young people subject to Child Protection Plans were living with family. Of the 2 referrals from young people only meeting the remit of making a complaint, one was living independently and the other young person was homeless at the time.



This diversity suggests that a range of young people with different circumstances are able to access advocacy support.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The following information is in relation to the 38 referrals for children and young people in care.

The geographic location of young people in care is broken down into 3 areas: those living within the Local Authority, within 10 miles of the city boundary and residing out of this area. In order to add additional meaning to these statistics, they will be compared to the geographical location of the

overall population of young people in care. This has been done using a snapshot of young people in care on 31/03/2019.

	Total	In York	Within 10 miles of York	Further out of area
Children and young people in care aged 5+	162 (100%)	60%	15%	25%
Advocacy referrals for young people in care	38 (100%)	61%	2%	37%

Advocacy referrals for young people living in York is very similar to the overall population, showing no significant difference. The number of young people out of area requesting advocacy is greater than the overall population. Whilst this demonstrates that Speak Up is ensuring that those out of area have equal access to advocacy provision (some of whom being our most vulnerable and hard to reach young people), it should be noted that this brings with it operational pressures as a result of the amount of time needed to carry out this casework. For example, Speak Up has provided advocacy to young people living in Teesside, Scotland and Colchester within the year 2018/19.

Out of the 5 referrals received from care leavers, 1 of these was for a young person living out of area. All children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan or only falling under the remit of making a complaint were residing in York.

ADVOCACY ISSUED RAISED

For reporting purposes, advocacy requests are categorised into the following themes:

- Placement issues
- Unhappiness with social work service
- Unhappiness with contact arrangements
- Education
- Access to support services
- Support to have voice heard in decision making process
- Other (to reflect referral reasons that do not fall within these categories)

These themes have been used by Speak Up for the past 5 years which allows us to identify any trends in advocacy requests over the years. Reporting on advocacy requests is broken down into 2 key areas: *referral reason* and *additional issues raised*. The purpose behind this is that children and young people often raise subsequent issues during a piece of advocacy, which may be different to the original referral reason. Reporting on both of these areas ensures that the nature of advocacy requests is captured to provide an overview of emerging themes.

All the information described below relates to issues raised directly by children and young people. As outlined in our Service Statement, advocates must act exclusively on the behalf of children and young

Annex A

people and have no potential or apparent conflicting interests. On no occasion will the work be influenced by the views or opinions of the advocate but solely driven by the voice of the child, as one of the key, underlying principles of effective advocacy. The only exception is the provision of non-instructed advocacy; it has been appropriate to provide this type of advocacy to one young people within this year. There is also one young person who was referred for advocacy support in 2018/19 who may require a non-instructed approach but this has yet to be determined.

NATURE OF REQUESTS

The table below shows a breakdown of the initial referral reasons and additional issues raised, and these are then combined to show the total number of requests for each theme.

Theme	Initial referral reason	Raised as additional issue	Total
Placement issues	18	5	23 (32%)
Support to have voice heard in decision making	14	2	16 (23%)
Contact issues	8	3	11 (15%)
Other	7	2	9 (13%)
Unhappiness with social work service	4	3	7 (10%)
Education	2	1	3 (4%)
Access to support/services	2	0	2 (3%)
Total	55	16	71 (100%)

PLACEMENT

Requesting advocacy due to issues with placement is the most common theme this year, accounting for 32% which includes the initial referral reason and additional issues raised.

The nature of the advocacy within this theme includes the following issues raised by young people:

- Unhappiness with decision made by social care for the young person to move to a new placement, when they would like to stay at their current placement.
- Requesting a placement move.
- Sharing views about placement following a placement breakdown.
- Challenging relationships with carers and/or residential staff.
- Unhappiness with being placed out of area.

It is interesting to view this theme in conjunction with the referrals from young people residing out of area. There were 14 referrals from young people living out of area, and all of these referrals included placement issues as the referral reason or an additional issue.

SUPPORT TO HAVE VOICE HEARD IN DECISION MAKING

Annex A

This theme, which received the highest number of requests last year, is the second most common advocacy reason this year, accounting for 23% of requests. This is a reduction from 37% in 2017/18.

Support in decision making as a theme includes assisting children and young people to attend reviews or other decision making meetings, or attending on behalf of a child or young person and feeding in their views. It has also included helping young people have their voice heard during particular periods of transition or to help them ensure they have an understanding of current situations.

Of the 16 cases which included this theme, 10 were to support children and young people to prepare and contribute to their Child Protection Conference. There were no referrals this year in relation to supporting young parents whose children were going through the child protection process.

The majority of advocacy categorised under this theme involved advocacy in relation to supporting a child or young person to prepare and/or contribute to a decision making meeting. Speak Up would like to explore further defining this referral reason and this will be included within the areas for development towards the end of this report.

CONTACT

The number of contact issues has remained the same as last year, accounting for 15% of the advocacy issues raised. Contact issues refer to any issues that a young person raises relating to their contact arrangements with either relatives or friends.

The nature of the advocacy within this theme include the following issues raised by young people:

- Requesting an increase in frequency of existing contact arrangements with family members.
- Requesting contact with family members where this currently isn't in place.
- Expressing unhappiness in relation to contact with family members following an out of area placement move.

The majority of advocacy requests within this theme have been in relation to contact with siblings.

OTHER

Requests falling under the category of 'other' account for 13% of advocacy reasons, which is similar to the 12% from last year. There were 9 requests overall that didn't fit any of the common themes.

Due to confidentiality, it is not appropriate to detail the reasons for all of the cases categorized as 'other', but some examples are provided:

- Supporting a young person to request access to their social care records.
- A complaint in relation to unhappiness around funding. At the time of producing this report, this is still being investigated.
- One young person was supported to access information about how they could obtain British citizenship.

UNHAPPINESS WITH SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

There has been a slight decrease in the number of cases relating to unhappiness with social work service going from 15% last year to 10% this year.

The nature of the referrals within this theme is quite varied and include the following issues raised by young people:

- Unhappiness with multiple changes in social worker
- Disagreement with Care Plan and/or decisions made by their social worker
- Unhappiness with communication from their social worker
- Request for a change of worker
- Unhappiness with the length of time taken to produce a Care Plan

EDUCATION

Over 2018/19, there were three young people who raised education as an issue; for 2 of these, education was the initial referral reason and for 1, education was raised as a secondary issue. The advocacy support under this theme includes supporting one young person to express their views that they did not wish to move school following a placement move and one young person was supported to express their views about how they would like their pupil premium to be spent. The young person who raised this as an additional issue raised multiple concerns in relation to education including that their journey to school was too long, they wished to move back to their old school and they would like more support in specific lessons. These views were all fed into the young person's review meeting.

ACCESS TO SUPPORT/SERVICES

This year there have been 2 referrals for young people who came to the advocacy service in relation to accessing support and services. 1 young person wanted the help of an advocate to access mental health services and the other wanted the help to explore their options accessing support after frequent episodes of going missing. This still remains to be the theme that is least referred as for the previous 2 year no referrals were received. This theme was not raised as an additional issue by any young people this year.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints from children and young people appear to come to the attention of Speak Up in 2 ways. Sometimes it is apparent within the original referral that a child or young person would like to make a complaint, and sometimes a complaint is an output of existing advocacy support.

In the year 2018/19, Speak Up supported 5 complaints. Of these, 3 were accepted as formal complaints by the CYC Complaints Team. The further 2 complaints were accepted as formal comments.

To further explore one of those submitted as a formal comment, the young person initially requested the support of an advocate to help them make a complaint that they had 13 different allocated social workers within a 12 month period. Although this was not accepted as a complaint, it was recorded as a

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formal comment and a Service Manager was asked to provide a response to the young person as a representation/comment which is part of the complaints legislation. The young person received a written response from the Service Manager, which they were satisfied with, and they have since had a consistent social worker which they are also pleased with.

Of the 3 complaints accepted by the Complaints Team, further information is provided below:

- Siblings have made a complaint to challenge a decision made in regards to funding; this was accepted as a Stage 2 complaint and is still being investigated by an external investigator.
- A complaint was made by a young person in relation to contact. This was accepted as a Stage 2 complaint and was investigated by an external investigator. All of the points within this complaint were upheld or partially upheld, and the young person was happy with the outcome of their complaint.
- A complaint was made by a young person about their placement. It was agreed that the best approach for resolution was mediation, undertaken by an external mediator. The mediation came to an end due to an immediate placement move. The young person was happy with the outcome of their complaint.

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE

Direct feedback is sought from children and young people who have accessed advocacy in order to evaluate and improve the service. This is done on the closure of advocacy support. In addition to this, feedback from professionals is also sought, as well as feedback from advocates. This helps to gain varying viewpoints about the service provided.

Exploring outcomes for children and young people is a key area for understanding the effectiveness of advocacy. It has been a challenge to analysis this information. This is because Speak Up is reporting upon cases opened within the financial year 2018/19, and many of these advocacy cases have not concluded. This means there are inconsistencies in the outcome data that can be gathered. In order to address this and improve reporting in the future, Speak Up will consider changing the way in which reporting is done, so considering reporting upon cases closed within a financial year, as well as those referred within the same time period. This will be explored further in the 'areas of development' within this report.

The evaluations included within this report are those that have been received between April 2018 and March 2019. This means that some evaluations will likely be from advocacy cases opened in the year 2017/18 and closed in the year 2018/19.

This year, Speak Up has received 13 evaluations from young people and 14 from professionals. Overall, feedback has been very positive, both in terms of quality of service provision and outcomes for children and young people.

FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

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This year there were 13 evaluation forms completed by children and young people. On the evaluation form, young people are asked to score out of 10 whether they would recommend Speak Up to other young people: 1 being not likely and 10 being very likely. On average, young people scored 9/10. This is very positive feedback about the service. A further breakdown below shows that 9 young people scored a 10, indicating they would be very likely to recommend the service to another young person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	9

The evaluation form then provides statements asking for children and young people's views on whether they agree, disagree or are unsure. The views of young people are displayed in the tables below.

Because I had an advocate:	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
I feel more listened to by professionals (not my advocate)	2	3	8
I felt involved in decisions	1	4	8
I feel more confident in raising concerns I might have	0	1	12

About the advocacy service:	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
My advocate listened to me	0	0	13
My advocate helped me understand my rights	0	0	13

Feedback from young people is overall very positive. All 13 young people who completed the evaluation forms reported that their advocate listened to them and their advocate helped them understand their rights. This is great feedback for the service and suggests that Speak Up can be confident in the view that the service is following some National Advocacy Standards, including ensuring that advocacy is led by the wishes of children and young people, championing the rights and needs of children and young people, and listening to the views and ideas of children and young people.

There were 8 young people who reported feeling more listened to by professionals (not including their advocate) and feeling more involved in decisions. On the contrary, 2 young people did not feel more listened to by professionals, and 1 young person didn't feel involved in decisions.

All young people reported that they were happy with the support they had received and all who were asked indicated that they would use the service again or would recommend the service to another young person.

The evaluation form includes 2 free text questions which enable Speak Up to capture qualitative feedback from young people.

What changed as a result of using the advocacy service?

Could your advocate have done anything different?

The full responses to these questions have been included within Appendix A and include some of the following themes:

- Young people feeling more listened to and more confident to express their views;
- Young people feeling that their views have been taken seriously by professionals;
- Young people acknowledging that advocacy helped them find out more about their rights and entitlements;
- Young people acknowledging that, even where decisions haven't changed, that they valued the support of an advocate;
- All young people who completed evaluations did not feel there was anything their advocate could have done differently, which is a real positive.

It is very encouraging to hear directly from young people about the positive impact the service has had for many of them. There were just 4 young people who chose not to provide feedback on whether their advocate could have done anything differently.

FEEDBACK FROM PROFESSIONALS

There were 14 evaluations completed by professionals. Professionals are asked to state their level of agreement with 2 statements; the results below are their collated views.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the young person was more involved in the decision making process	2	1	5	6
I believe the person is more confident to express their views in the future	0	2	5	7

Professionals also have the option of sharing qualitative feedback by responding to 2 open questions.

Did you feel advocacy made any difference to the young person?

Is there any other feedback you would like to provide on the service?

The full responses to these questions have been included within Appendix A and include some of the following themes:

- the benefit to young people of the independence of the advocacy role; t
- advocacy support has helped in resolving issues a young person raises; a
- professionals feel it has increased the confidence of some young people; p

- he young person's voice and involvement is more present within decision making.

ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN – OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

In June 2019, a report 'Advocacy for Children' was published by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, which explores the provision of independent and professional advocacy to which children and young people are entitled to by law and statutory guidance. Through exploring a sample of advocacy services provided by the local authorities in England, the report includes some key findings which Speak Up can use almost as a point of comparison to see how the service measures against these findings.

The report highlights concerns about staff having the appropriate skills and training required for the advocacy role. This includes being able to meet the needs of children with additional needs and disabilities who may benefit from non-instructed advocacy. CYC management have committed to supporting the current advocates within the Speak Up team to undertake the accredited National Youth Advocacy Service qualification in providing specialist advocacy to children and young people. This shows that CYC and Speak Up are valuing that advocacy is a specialist role. Speak Up has also recently recruited an advocate on a temporary basis, who has the skills and experience to provide non-instructed advocacy to children and young people. This was in response to 2 referrals requiring this type of advocacy and it's positive that Speak Up has sought a skilled worker in order to offer these children a service.

The report highlights concerns around advocacy services not being able to meet demand. This includes not providing a service to children and young people out of area, having long waiting lists and not having enough staff. Although Speak Up has felt operational pressures over the course of the last year, there has never been a failure to meet demand. All young people out of area who have requested an advocate have been provided a service by Speak Up, and the service has not operated a waiting list.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

AWARENESS OF THE SERVICE

This continues to be an area that needs to be developed as there are very few referrals being received from those in the education sector or fostering community, despite these two groups spending the most amount of time with children and young people. Speak Up has continues to receive a high number of referrals directly from young people so it may be that foster carers and/or education providers are contributing by ensuring that young people have the information to self refer. Nevertheless, further attempts should be made to engage foster carers by forging further links with the Commissioning and Supporting Placement Team and York Area Foster Cares Association. Speak Up has recently engaged with secondary schools within the city; this has been done by a 'link visit' to all secondary schools to provide information about advocacy and participation opportunities. The three Advocacy and Participation Workers have been linked to secondary schools within the city with the idea of building relationships with schools. One referral from this year was made following a link visit,

but as direct engagement with schools is fairly recent, the service has yet to see if this has an impact on referrals moving forward.

The number of advocacy referrals for children subject to a Child Protection Plan is low, and this is an area to also focus on developing.

Speak Up has also worked together with young people and Children's Services to create review consultation documents for young people in care, as a tool that can be used to help them prepare and contribute to their review meetings. This has led to the creation of 'Children's Champions'; each team within Children's Social Care will nominate a worker to take on the role of Children's Champion. The Children's Champion will be responsible for sharing positive practice and resources across their teams, they will be the main point of contact within their team for developing and distributing voice material and will work with other Children's Champions to build on local resources to enhance the voice work across CSC.

The fourth national advocacy standard is "advocacy is well-publicised, accessible and easy to use". Speak Up is continually working in line with this standard, and awareness raising is naturally built in the role of the service. However, due to external factors such as changes in staffing in other teams, this will likely always be an area of improvement.

EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE

Number of evaluations

Although the number of evaluations compared to the number of referrals is better than last year, it is still relatively low. This makes it difficult to gain a true representation of the views of children and young people and the effectiveness of the service. Historically, it is known that gaining feedback from children and young people following advocacy is difficult, as they often don't return forms or attend final meetings where an evaluation could be completed. This may be a result of the child or young person having no interest in taking part in the evaluation or not wanting to complete the form knowing it would be returned to their advocate directly. It is also very difficult to seek evaluations from young people who have disengaged with advocacy support, and their viewpoint would be extremely valuable in understanding their experiences of advocacy and how this possibly could have been better.

Continuing to gather feedback from professionals will be a priority for the service going forward. Although only a small amount of feedback has been received from professionals to date, the messages from professionals working directly with children and young person regarding their views on how effective the advocacy has been has been invaluable.

Content of evaluation forms

It is recommended that Speak Up makes some amendments to the young people's evaluation form. This is to help make it easier for young people to complete, but also to capture more qualitative information from young people in relation to outcomes.

The first recommendation is a slight change to the first question. This question asks young people to rate from 1-10 about whether they would recommend the advocacy service to other young people. To

simplify the question, it is suggested that this question is ‘How would you rate the service you have received?’. This question is simpler and more meaningful.

The second recommendation is to add a question to gain further information about whether the young person was satisfied with the outcome of their advocacy support. This currently isn’t captured and is likely to be quite informative in understanding the impact of advocacy directly from those that access the service.

A third recommendation is to devise an evaluation process for non-instructed advocacy. This currently doesn’t exist and it’s important for the service to have a process of receiving feedback in relation to these cases in order to further develop this type of advocacy.

IMPROVING HOW WE REPORT ON ADVOCACY

Whilst completing this report, it has become apparent that there are improvements that can be made to the way in which Speak Up reports on advocacy referrals.

Currently, the main reporting explores data in relation to the referrals received within the last financial year. The data with regard to demographics and the nature of referrals is very helpful and informative for the service, and it is accurate. However, information such as the length of time a case has been open, additional advocacy reasons, and whether advocacy has resulted in a complaint is less accurate and does not reflect the advocacy support undertaken by the service. This is due to the report being solely based on incoming referrals within a time period, rather than also considering advocacy closed within the given time period, as this will provide qualitative and accurate information about the nature of the advocacy support.

A key example of this is to consider any cases that have been opened within one financial year and remain open into the next. Any further support provided is not reported upon and ‘lost’. There is an example of a case that was referred to Speak Up in March 2017. The young person was aged 14 at the time and in care. They originally requested the support of an advocate to help them contribute to their review meetings. This was the only information reported upon in the advocacy report of 2017/18. The young person went on to make a complaint with the support of their advocate. They expressed unhappiness with the social work service and requested a change of worker, and during the advocacy support they moved to an out of area placement which had an impact on their contact, so they also requested an advocate help them to share their views about contact. This is a significant piece of advocacy that is not captured by the reporting mechanism currently in place, due to it being solely based on incoming referrals.

A key recommendation is that any future advocacy reports contain 2 datasets: one for referrals received within the financial year, and one for referrals closed within the financial year. The first dataset can include exploration of demographic information and referral reason. The second dataset can include exploration of the length of time a case has been open, referral reason and additional advocacy issues combined and any advocacy that has resulted in a complaint being made. This will provide a much more accurate representation of the work of the service and the support provided to

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young people. This method also brings additional benefits, as the service will be able to accurately report upon outcomes for children and young people as a result of accessing advocacy support; this is currently not fully captured within the report due to the inconsistency of only being able to provide this information in relation to some cases. Another benefit of reporting on cases closed within a financial year is that the evaluation data included within the report will directly relate to the closed cases, allowing the service to link the nature of advocacy, the outcomes for young people and their evaluation feedback.

It has not been possible to implement this new method in time for this report, but it will be implemented within the quarterly advocacy reports for 2019/20 and the subsequent annual report.

DEFINING REFERRAL REASONS ACCURATELY

Speak Up categorises advocacy using a set of referral reasons, originally developed in 2014 by the service. These referral reasons are largely fit for purpose, but it has been identified that the reason 'support to have voice heard in decision making processes' would benefit from further exploration.

This referral reason is very general and can be used to describe almost any advocacy support provided by Speak Up. It has been noticed that a significant number of referrals with this referral reason involve an advocate supporting a young person to contribute to a decision making meeting, for example, Child Care Review Meeting, Child Protection Conference, Personal Education Plan etc. Therefore, in order to more accurately capture the nature of advocacy, it is recommended that this referral reason is changed to "Support to prepare and contribute to a decision making meeting". There is an additional benefit to this change, in that it may be clearer to professionals in the support that we can offer a child or young person.

CAPTURING ACTIVE CASELOAD INFORMATION

The data currently reported on is the number of referrals during a financial year. This is really helpful in gaining an overall understanding of the young people accessing advocacy, where referrals are coming from and the initial referral reasons. However, what this doesn't give us is any information about active advocacy at a given time.

It is recommended that Speak Up seeks to develop a reporting system whereby the number of cases opened and closed is reported upon. This will help to provide an 'active caseload' figure which will enable the service to report on capacity and identify any trends. In order to maintain the same methodology, it is recommended that the number of cases opened and closed is reported on as part of the quarterly advocacy snapshot reports. This will include cases opened and closed within the following time periods:

- 1st April – 30th June
- 1st July – 30th September
- 1st October – 31st December

➤ 1st January – 31st March

A 'caseload snapshot' should be included which looks at the number of advocacy cases open on a given day. To keep this a uniform process, it is recommended that the caseload snapshot should be taken on the last day of each quarter. This information could then be pulled together to include within future annual reports.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S STATUTORY ENTITLEMENT TO ADVOCACY

The recent Children's Commissioner report "Advocacy for Children" has highlighted the children and young people who have an entitlement to statutory advocacy. Speak Up provides advocacy to a number of these groups of children and young people.

The following young people have an entitlement to statutory advocacy:

- 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless
- 16 and 17 year olds who lack mental capacity
- Care leavers
- Children and young people in custody
- Children and young people in England who are detained under the Mental Health Act
- Children and young people in receipt of social care services (including child protection) who wish to make a representation (including a complaint, and those subject to child protection processes)
- Children and young people living in children's homes
- Children in receipt of health services who wish to make a complaint
- Children who may continue to need care and support in adulthood
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Looked after children and young people who go missing
- Looked after children whose care and progress are being reviewed
- Young carers

Speak Up is aware of the providers of statutory advocacy for some of these groups of children and young people, but for others it is not clear if the statutory requirement for provision of advocacy is met. Speak Up would like to propose that the service undertakes an exercise to scope out all of the advocacy provision available to children and young people in York. This may highlight unmet statutory requirements, which can be fed back to the Local Authority to consider how to meet this. This exercise will also provide Speak Up with a greater understanding of local advocacy services for children and young people, which will help with signposting and ensuring a young person is accessing the most relevant service for them. A consideration could be to create an 'advocacy' document highlighting which agencies provide advocacy to which children and young people.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has provided an overview of the advocacy service and the casework that has taken place during 2018/19. A number of recommendations have been made which can be taken forward by Speak

Up to further develop the service and reporting mechanisms. These have been fully detailed within the areas of development and summarised below:

1. Continue raising awareness of the service, with a focus on raising awareness with foster carers, schools and social work teams that support young people subject to Child Protection Plans.
2. Continue to seek evaluations from both young people and professionals, as this provides valuable feedback which can help further develop the service.
3. Add an additional question to the young person's evaluation form, asking if they were satisfied with the outcome of their advocacy support. This qualitative feedback in relation to outcomes isn't currently captured and will be extremely valuable.
4. Devise an evaluation process for non-instructed advocacy.
5. Further reports on advocacy to be amended so Speak Up reports upon closed cases within a time period, rather than opened cases. This will enable the service to more accurately capture the nature of advocacy undertaken by the service and also report upon outcomes and the impact of advocacy. This will allow Speak Up to capture information about the active caseload held by the team, which is not currently captured.
6. Consideration to be given to redefining the referral reason 'support to have voice heard in decision making process'. This could refer to all advocacy, so it would be worth Speak Up exploring cases categorized under this theme to understand if there is a more appropriate definition.
7. An advocacy scoping exercise to be undertaken by Speak Up to gain further insight into whether the Local Authority is meeting the statutory requirement of provision of advocacy to children and young people, either through direct service delivery or commissioning. This information is to be collated as it may also be helpful for Speak Up to use to signpost young people to the most appropriate advocacy service.

REFERENCES

Adoption and Children Act (2002)

Department of Health (2002) *National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services*. Department of Health Publications.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2019) *Advocacy for Children*



Corporate Parenting Board**3 September 2019**

Report of the Director of Children's Services

U Matter Survey 2019**Summary**

1. The aim of this report is to share with the Corporate Parenting Board the U Matter Survey 2019, which details the consultation findings from children and young people looked after by the City of York Council.

Background

2. The U Matter Survey is a chance for children and young people in care to feedback to the City of York Council about their experiences of being looked after. This survey helps to ensure that children and young people have an opportunity to highlight what the Local Authority should change and improve for children and young people in care, as well as highlighting areas of strength.

Consultation

3. See Annex A.

Options

4. See Annex A.

Analysis

5. See Annex A.

Council Plan

6. See Annex A.

Implications

7. Financial

There are no financial implications to consider.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no HR implications to consider.

- **Equalities**

There are no issues relating to equalities to consider.

- **Legal**

There are no legal implications to consider.

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no issues relating to crime and disorder.

- **Information Technology (IT)**

There are no IT implications.

- **Property**

There are no issues relating to property.

- **Other**

No other known implications.

Risk Management

8. There are no risks to consider.

Recommendations

9. Members are not being asked to endorse any recommendations but to be briefed on the 2019 U Matter findings.

Reason: To keep the Board updated.

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**Report
Approved**



Date 15.08.19

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes

Annex A – U Matter Survey 2019

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York's Children's Rights and Advocacy Service

U MATTER SURVEY 2019

Executive Summary

Georgette Pooley and Nikki Wilson



Background

The consultation was carried out with young people between November 2018 and January 2019. The U Matter Survey was made available to young people both online and as a paper copy. The online version could be accessed via Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com) and this was promoted to young people via Facebook and the quarterly Children in Care Council Newsletter.

Participants

A total of 83 children and young people aged 11-21 took part in the consultation. Unlike previous years, the 2019 consultation was separated into a survey for children and young people in care (age 11-17) and a survey for care leavers (age 18-21). A total of 60 young people aged 11-17 took part in the survey, equating to approximately 55% of all children and young people in care within this age bracket. In regards to the Care Leaver Survey, a total of 23 care leavers aged 18-21 took part, which equates to approximately 28% of those eligible in this age bracket.

Summary of Findings

To summarise, findings are that the young people who took part in this survey report to be feeling happy and safe in their placements and are able to identify an adult in their life that they can trust. Improvements have been seen in young people's experience of having a social worker, with most knowing how to contact their social worker and describing them as being reliable. Pathway support is viewed by young people as very positive, with care leavers reporting that they are happy with the support they receive, including support with their education, training and employment. The majority of young people report that they have access to the health information they need and know who to talk to if they need support with their emotional wellbeing or access to support in school. On the whole, young people in care and care leavers have a good awareness of their rights and entitlements. However, improvements could be made in ensuring that young people have access to the New to Care Packs when they first come into care and also written information about placement prior to a move. Consideration should also be given to involving young people more in their reviews and PEP meetings, with more of an emphasis on young people having an opportunity to meet their IRO before the meeting and be involved in the planning of reviews and PEP meetings.

Placements – views of young people in care

The majority of young people in care reported that they felt happy and safe in their placement and were included in activities by their carers. There was a slight decline in young people who felt able to talk to their carers or social workers if they were feeling unhappy in their placement, however the number still remains high with just over three-

quarters reporting that they could. The provision of written information for young people, both when they first come into care in the form of the New to Care Packs and regarding a new placement for young people who are experiencing a placement move, have been identified as areas requiring improvement with relatively low numbers being able to recollect receiving such written information.

Experience of Social Workers – views of young people in care

The majority of children and young people knew how to contact their Social Worker, in line with previous years, and there has been a steady increase in those who know who to contact if their Social Worker wasn't available, with current figures demonstrating that just over three quarters of young people are aware of this. Three quarters of young people said that they thought their Social Worker was reliable (a significant improvement from previous years) and were happy with how often they saw them. Improvements have also been made in relation to young people's experience of how a change of Social Worker was done, with a decrease in young people stating that they had been unhappy with this.

Experience of Pathway – views of care leavers

In terms of care leavers experience of their Pathway Workers and their Pathway Plans, the majority of care leavers were extremely happy with the service provided. The majority of young people knew how to contact their Pathway Worker when needed and all young people stated they were happy with how often they saw their Pathway Worker and found that they took an interest in their views and opinions. All care leavers reported that they had contributed towards their Pathway Plan and had been able to discuss their future goals, however not all saw the value in these plans with only 64% stating they were important.

Reviews – views of young people in care

Improvements can be seen in the number of young people who know who their Independent Reviewing Officer is, which currently stands at 68%. However we have seen a decrease in those who report that they regularly attend their reviews as well as those who have an opportunity to speak to their IRO before review meetings. Improvements could also be made in involving young people in the planning of their reviews, as less than half stated that they had been involved in this.

Health & Well-being – views of young people in care and care leavers

Whilst a significant proportion of young people were aware of the purpose of Health Assessments, only half saw the value in having them. That said, the majority of young people in care felt that they had all of the health information that they needed. All the care leavers that took part reported that they were registered with a GP and the majority were registered with a dentist. Young people's feedback on support with emotional wellbeing remains positive with the majority of young people in care and care leavers stating that they knew who they could talk to if they needed help with their emotional wellbeing.

Education – views of young people in care and care leavers

The support that young people receive with their education from schools and colleges is reported as being high from the majority of young people and most young people were able to identify an adult in school that they could talk to, with young people naming various professionals including class teachers, designated teachers, pastoral workers and teaching assistants. Almost all young people felt that their carers took an active interest in their education however a significant proportion reported that they either didn't attend their PEP meetings or didn't find them at all useful. Encouragingly feedback from all care leavers about support with their education, training and employment was particularly positive, with all care leavers reporting that they knew how to access this support and the majority feeling that they had the right amount of support with this.

Family & Friends – views of young people in care and care leavers

In terms of seeing their family and friends, most young people in care and care leavers felt that had received a sufficient amount of support in this area and knew who to contact if they were unhappy.

Rights & Entitlements – views of young people in care and care leavers

Feedback from young people in care and care leavers showed that most had a good awareness of their rights and entitlements, with most young people reporting that they were aware of their right to make a complaint, the support available from the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service and from the Pathway Team. If improvements were to be made, it would be for more young people to be aware of the Violet Chambers Fund and the free Gym and Swim Pass, as around a quarter of young people reported being unaware.

Overall Experience – views of young people in care and care leavers

Finally, when children and young people were asked about their overall care experiences, feedback has been mixed but similar to previous years, with the majority of young people rating it somewhere between a 3/5 and 5/5, with 16% rating it as a 1/5 or 2/5. Importantly, almost all young people stated that they had an adult in their life that they could trust. When care leavers were asked the same question regarding their overall experience of their leaving care support all rated this somewhere between 3/5 and 5/5.

Recommendations

1. Review how the New to Care Packs are distributed to children and young people to ensure that they have access to information when they first come into care.
2. Work to be considered around introducing a children's agreement that Social Worker's could use with children and young people to outline frequency of contact between the Social Worker and the child, a clear message that children can talk to their Social Worker if they are unhappy and how any future changes of workers

would be managed. Consideration could be given to this being linked to the new Guarantee for Children and Young People in Care.

3. Re-launch of the Social Work Contact Cards to ensure that all children and young people in care know how to contact their Social Worker and who to contact in their absence. Despite high numbers of young people reporting that they do know this, the City of York Council would further demonstrate its ambition by ensuring that every child or young person has this basic information.
4. Work to be undertaken to ensure that children and young people have better access to written information about their placements prior to a placement move.
5. An increased emphasis on IROs meeting with children and young people before their reviews and work to be undertaken to further promote children and young people's involvement in their reviews.
6. Work to be undertaken by the Virtual School to promote more engagement of children and young people in their Personal Education Plans.
7. Consideration to be given as to whether there is anything further that can be done to improve children and young people's experience of having a Health Assessment.

Nikki Wilson

Children's Rights Manager

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York's Children's Rights and Advocacy Service

U MATTER SURVEY 2019

CONSULTATION FINDINGS FROM CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

Georgette Pooley and Nikki Wilson



Introduction

The U Matter Survey is a chance for children and young people in care to feedback to the City of York Council about their experiences of being in care. The importance of understanding the views of children and young people in care is addressed in Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. This states that “*when adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.*” This survey helps to ensure this is the case as it gives children and young people an opportunity to voice their opinion on what the local authority should improve for children and young people in care, as well as highlighting areas of strength.

This report will outline the findings from the 2019 U Matter Survey and, where possible, discuss them in relation to the findings from the previous 2015 and 2017 reports. While the 2015 and 2017 survey included questions targeted at care leavers, there was no separate survey for children in care and care leavers. In 2019 this was changed, when Speak Up carried out two separate surveys, one for children in care aged 11-17 and one for Care Leavers aged 18-21. This enabled questions to be more specific to the young person’s age and will help ascertain the effectiveness of the different types of provisions that are specific to their age group.

Method

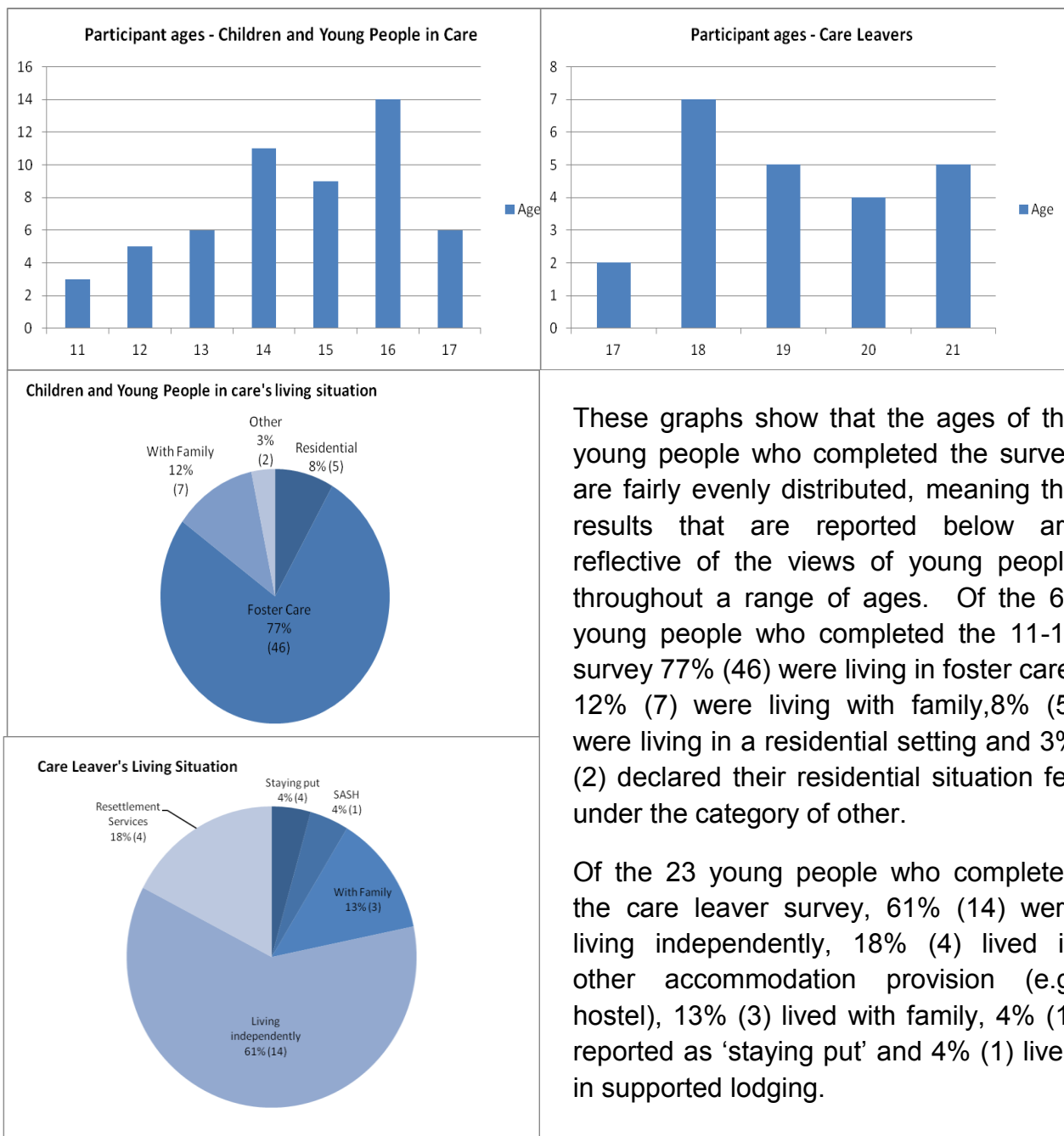
The consultation was carried out with young people between November 2018 and January 2019. The U Matter Survey was made available to young people both online and as a paper copy. The online version could be accessed via Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com) and this was promoted to young people via Facebook and the quarterly Children in Care Council Newsletter.

When approaching children and young people about completing the survey, multiple strategies were adopted. A variety of professionals were asked to encourage young people they were working with to complete the survey (Social Workers, Pathway Workers, Youth Offending Team Workers, Independent Visitors and Advocacy and Participation Workers). All three strands of York’s Children in Care Council (Show Me That I Matter, I Still Matter, and Speak Up Youth) were supported to complete the survey. In addition to this, members of Speak Up also contacted foster carers and families to explain what the survey entailed and to gain advice on the best way to engage the young people in their care.

When completing the survey, young people participating were not required to include any personal information; however they were able to leave their name and contact details if they wanted further information about their rights and entitlements or to be entered into a prize draw with a chance to win £25 in vouchers.

Participants

A total of 83 children and young people aged 11-21 took part in the consultation. Unlike previous years, the 2019 consultation was separated into a survey for children and young people in care (age 11-17) and a survey for care leavers (age 18-21). A total of 60 young people aged 11-17 took part in the survey (approximately 55% of all children and young people in care within this age bracket). In regards to the Care Leaver Survey, a total of 23 care leavers aged 18-21 took part (approximately 28% of those eligible in this age bracket). While this is a substantial number and is an increase from previous U Matter Surveys, it should be noted that this isn't a full reflection of the opinions of all children and young people in care and care leavers and the opinions are specifically of those who were willing to engage.



These graphs show that the ages of the young people who completed the survey are fairly evenly distributed, meaning the results that are reported below are reflective of the views of young people throughout a range of ages. Of the 60 young people who completed the 11-17 survey 77% (46) were living in foster care, 12% (7) were living with family, 8% (5) were living in a residential setting and 3% (2) declared their residential situation fell under the category of other.

Of the 23 young people who completed the care leaver survey, 61% (14) were living independently, 18% (4) lived in other accommodation provision (e.g. hostel), 13% (3) lived with family, 4% (1) reported as 'staying put' and 4% (1) lived in supported lodging.

Results

As a result of having a separate 11-17 Survey and Care Leavers Survey, some of the sections below contain feedback from young people in care, other from care leavers and some section contain feedback from both groups. It is worth noting that not all of the questions were answered by all of the young people who took part in the survey and therefore there are varying levels of response rates to different questions.

Placements – views of young people in care

When asked whether young people feel safe and happy where they are living, 94% (49) of young people reported to feel safe and happy where they were living, 6% (3) stated that they did not. When young people were asked further how happy they were in their placement responses continue to be positive. In the 2019 survey, young people were asked to rate how happy they are in their current placement using a scale of 1-5 (1 being low and 5 being high). 77% (44) of young people rated their current placement a 4 or a 5, 21% (12) of young people rated their current placement a 2 or a 3, and only 2% (1) young person rated their current placement a 1. Although not directly comparable due to a different style of question, 2017's survey results also saw a positive result with 95% expressing they were happy at their current placement, with only 5% reporting that they were not.

76% (44) of young people said if they had ever been unhappy about a placement, they were able to talk to their social worker or carers about this. Despite this indicating that a relatively high proportion of young people are able to do this, it is a notable decrease from the previous consultation, when 92% of young people stated they could talk to their social worker or carer in 2017.

90% (50) of young people said that they felt included in activities where they live. This is a notable increase from previous years with 70% saying yes in 2017. However, it is worth noting that 2017 had a 'sometimes' option, and the most recent survey does not.

In relation to placement information provided to young people when they first coming into care, 40% (21) of young people not living with family reported being given written information or photos of their foster carers/residential setting before moving in. This is a decrease from 2017 (60%) and 2015 (71%). When questioning whether young people had received a New to Care Pack, 24% (14) stated that they had received one, 17 % (10) stated that they did not, and the largest proportion 59% (35) stated that they cannot remember. Although statistics gathered for those who said they had received a new to care pack appear to be low, it is important to bear in mind that the highest rated answer is 'can not remember', which may be a reflection on the young person's age when they first came into care. Some of those who selected 'can't remember' may have been in care for a significant period of time and so it could have been several years since they received the New to Care Packs. Nevertheless, information received by young people regarding this is clearly an area that could be improved.

Experience of Social Workers – views of young people in care

The 2019 survey results revealed that 85% (50) knew how to contact their Social Worker if needed, with 15% (9) reporting that they did not. This is a very similar statistic to both 2017 (84%) and 2015 (85%), highlighting that this continues to be a strength of the City of York Council, but suggests there is still scope to improve this further. When asking young people if they knew who to contact when their Social Worker was not available, 76% (44) answered yes. This shows a gradual increase over the years with 70% (39) reporting they knew who to contact in 2017 and just 45 % in 2015.

In terms of how often young people saw their Social Worker, 74% (42) of young people said they were happy with how often they saw their Social Worker, an almost identical statistic to the 2017 survey. Of the 26% that weren't happy with the frequency some stated that they would like to see their Social Worker more frequently and others indicated that they would like to see them less.

When discussing a change of Social Worker, 18% (10) stated that they were not happy with how this has been done. This is a significant improvement from 2017 results, whereby young people previously reported that 42% were unhappy with how this was done. Despite this, when given the opportunity to provide any extra information, several young people (4 in total) reported that they had too many changes in Social Workers. One young person said, "I've had too many social workers, I had five in a year and four months and didn't get told appropriately when they changed over". Another young person indicated that she had had a more positive experience since being transferred to the Permanence Team, commenting, "We had a lot of social workers, when we got [name of social worker from the Permanence Team] I thought how long is she going to be here but she was with us for five years. It has been good since [name of the social worker from the Permanence Team]."

When asked their views on the reliability of their Social Worker, 75% (42) of young people expressed that they thought their Social Worker was reliable. This is an increase from both 2017 (54%) and 2015 (65%). This year's results also revealed that 77% (44) of young people felt that their Social Worker listened to them.

Finally, the survey asked young people to rate their current Social Worker using a scale of 1-5 (1 being low and 5 being high). This question saw a mixed response, with just over half (53%- 44) of young people rating their current Social Worker a 4 or a 5, 44% (19) of young people rated their current Social Worker a 2 or a 3, and 14% (8) of young person rated their current Social Worker a 1. Although a different question style, this is a decrease from 2015, whereby 77% stated that they were happy with their current Social Worker.

Experience of Pathway Workers – views of care leavers

95% (21) of care leavers knew how to contact their Pathway Worker when they needed to, with only 5 % (1) reporting that they did not. When asked if care leavers knew who to in contact the Pathway Team if their own Pathway worker was not available, a positive 91% (20) of care leavers knew who to contact. When asked if care leavers were happy with how often they saw their Pathway Worker, the 2019 survey revealed an extremely positive 100% of care leavers were happy with this. This is an increase from 2017, whereby 91% of care leavers reported they were happy with these arrangements. The 2019 survey also revealed that, 100% of care leavers found that their Pathway Worker took a genuine interest in their views and opinions.

Reviews – views of young people in care

This section of the results will focus on children and young people's experiences of their Independent Reviewing Officers and their Review. The survey revealed that 68% (40) of young people said they were aware of who their Independent Reviewing Officer is. This is an increase from 2017 (61%), however it is important to note that both 2017 and 2019 are a decrease from 2015 where 78% of young people were able to identify their IRO.

When asked if young people attend their review meetings, 76% (45) of young people reported that they did attend. This is a slight decrease from 2017, whereby it was previously reported that 84% (48) of young people regularly attended their reviews, however it is still an increase from 2015 where 65% of young people reported that this was the case. When discussing whether young people had the opportunity to speak to their IRO before review meetings, 63% (35) of young people reported that they did have the opportunity, again a notable decrease from 2017, where 85% of young people previously reported that they had the opportunity to meet their IRO before meetings.

When young people were asked whether they were involved in planning their reviews, answers were relatively split with 47 % (28) stating that they were involved in planning, and 53% (31) stating that they are not. These results are similar to those seen in the 2017. The final question in this section revealed that 53% (30) of young people felt they were involved in decisions made about them, 16% (9) did not and 31% (18) did sometimes.

Pathway Plans – views of care leavers

This section of the results will focus on care leaver's experiences of their Pathway Plans. Results revealed that 100% of care leavers had contributed to their Pathway Plan and that 100% had been able to discuss their future goals and aspirations for life in their plan. Despite extremely positive results for young people's contributions to their Pathway Plans, 67% (14) reported that their Pathway Plan was important to them and just over half (55% -11) of care leavers said that they consult their Pathway Plan for important information or telephone contacts. However, it is important to consider that young people may have different methods for storing this information.

Health & Well-being – views of young people in care and care leavers

This section of the report will focus on young people's views about health and wellbeing and has responses from both young people in care and care leavers. In response to young people's awareness of Health Assessments 75% (44) of young people in care said they are aware of what a Health Assessment is. This is a slight decrease from 2017 where 83% reported yes. When asked if young people found Health Assessments helpful, 49 % (24) reported that they did, however when asked if they thought they got all of the health information they needed, 79% (44) answered yes.

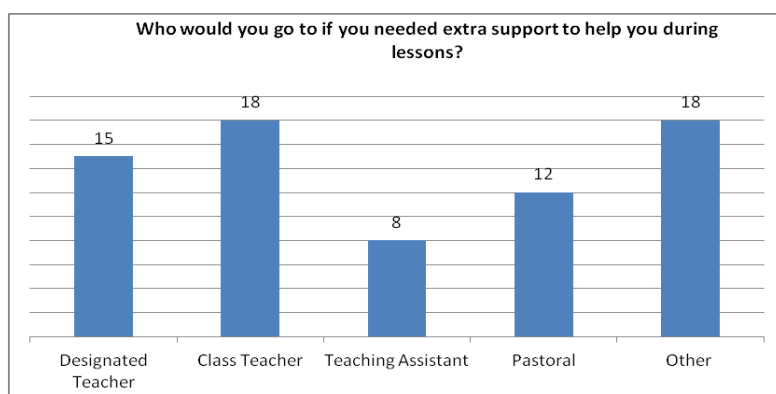
In terms of young people's emotional wellbeing, 83% (48) of young people in care said they know who they could talk to if they needed help with their emotional wellbeing. Whilst this is a high percentage, it should be noted that 17% (10) reported that they did not know who they could speak to. Although not directly comparable, a similar question in 2017 saw young people answer 100% in response to whether they had somebody to talk to if they were unhappy. One young person commented, "My carers help a lot, I speak to my foster carer if I am feeling low."

In relation to the views of care leavers, when asked if they know who they can talk to if they need help with their emotional health, 85% (17) of care leavers reported that they did and 15% (3) stated they did not. If young people were in need of information on how to access health services, 95% (19) of care leavers reported that they would ask their Pathway Worker for this information.

The 2019 survey also revealed that a positive 100% of care leavers who took part in the survey were registered with a GP and 85% (17) were registered with a dentist. When asked if care leavers preferred to use walk in services, 26% (5) reported that they did prefer this but the majority of young people (74% -14) expressed they did not have a preference for this.

Education – views of young people in care and care leavers

When young people in care were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 how well their school or college supported them to do their best educationally, the responses received were fairly positive. 69% (38) of young people rated their support as a 4 or a 5, 20% (11) of young people rated their support as 2 or a 3, and 11% (6) rated the support they receive as a 1.



When young people in care were asked if there was an adult in school they felt that they could talk to, 83% (43) answered yes. Young people in care were asked further who they would go to if they needed extra support to help them during lessons and young people identified a number of different adults including class teacher and form tutors,

designated teachers, pastoral staff and teaching assistants.

In terms of young people's Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting, 51% (27) stated they found it 'quite useful', 19% (10) answered that 'they did not attend', 19% (10) answered 'no use at all' and 11% (6) answered that they found it 'very useful'.

When young people in care were asked whether they felt their carers took an interest in their education results were extremely positive with 92% (48) of this who answered the question stating that they did. One young person expressed that "no additional pressure should be put on children by carers, as carers are sometimes unaware of how much pressure is received at school".

In relation to care leavers, an encouraging 100% of young people knew they can get support to apply for college, university and employment and 95% (19) of young people felt they had the opportunity to discuss their ETE options and interests. As well as this, 90% (18) of young people feel they had the right amount of support with their education, training and employment.

Family & Friends – views of young people in care and care leavers

Unlike previous years, young people were asked separately about the support they had received for seeing family and friends. This was proven to be useful as results in relation to friends and family were different, however both results show that young people in care feel relatively well supported, in line with findings from previous years. 93% (52) of the young people in care felt that they have received the help and support they need to keep in touch with their family and 87% (47) stated that they had the support that they needed to keep in touch with their friends.

When young people in care were asked if they were happy with the arrangements for seeing their family, 76% (42) stated that they were happy and 93% (54) said that if they were unhappy they knew who to speak to about their unhappiness with these arrangements. This is a very similar result to 2017, and shows a continuous positive response to this area. However, when given the opportunity to offer any additional information, several young people commented on the fact that they would like to see their family more (five in total). One young person went on to make the following statement regarding the importance of positive relationships between carers and birth families; "I feel like if a foster child is keeping in contact with their biological family then the carer should also have a good, stable relationship for the sake of the child."

In relation to care leaver's experiences of support available to them to keep in touch with family and friends upon leaving care, 86% (18) of young people feel they have had the support to keep in touch with family and friends and 90% (19) of young people knew they can have support to keep in contact with family and friends.

Rights & Entitlements – views of young people in care and care leavers

Responses showed that young people in care and care leavers have a good understanding of their rights and entitlements. Feedback from young people in care provided us with the following statistics:

- 90% (52) were aware of their right to make a complaint
- 93% (55) were aware of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service
- 83% (49) were aware of the Children in Care Council
- 76% (45) were aware of the Independent Visitor Service
- 68% (40) were aware of the Violet Chambers Fund

Improvements can be seen in young people's awareness of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service, known as Speak Up, and the Children in Care Council, Show Me That I Matter. In 2017 82% were aware of Speak Up (this is now increased to 93%) and 73% were aware of the Children in Care Council (this has now increased to 83%), showing a steady increase in young peoples awareness of the service.

Data shows that figures have fluctuated slightly over the recent years regarding young people's aware of their right to make a complaint, as in 2015 88% were aware of their right to complain, in 2017 this figure rose to 95% and in 2019 we have seen a slight drop to 90%. Nevertheless, we can see that these consistent high responses indicates that this a continued area of strength.

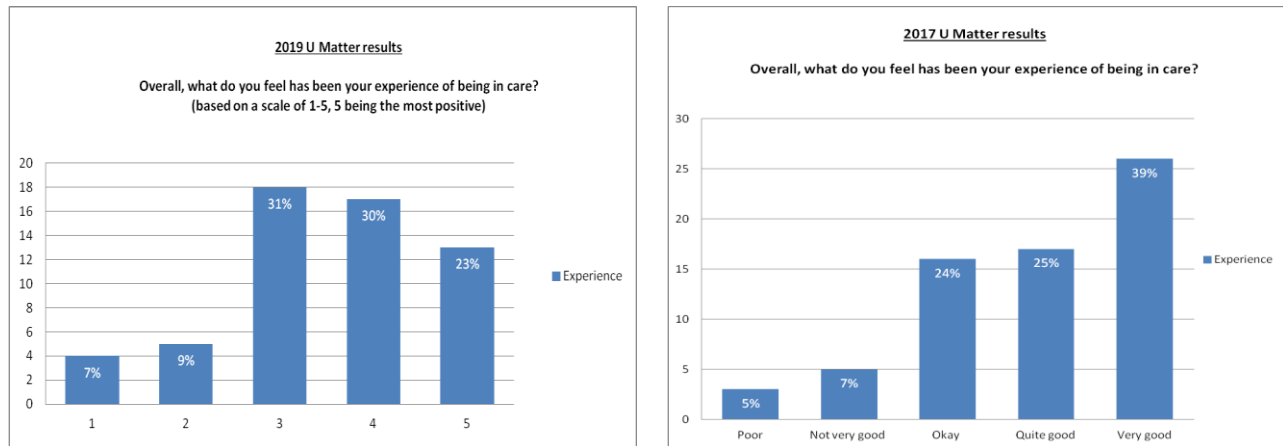
Feedback from care leavers regarding awareness of their rights and entitlements is positive with care leavers reporting the following:

- 100% (21) were aware of their right to make a complaint
- 90% (18) were aware that they can now ask for support from the Pathway Team up to the age of 25 years.
- 86% (18) were aware of Speak Up and their right to access advocacy
- 81% (17) were aware of the Care Leavers Forum
- 79% (15) reported that they regularly receive the I Still Matter Newsletter, which informs young people of work carried out by the Care Leavers Forum and opportunities available to care leavers.
- 70% (14) were aware of their right to access a free gym pass

Overall Experience – views of young people in care and care leavers

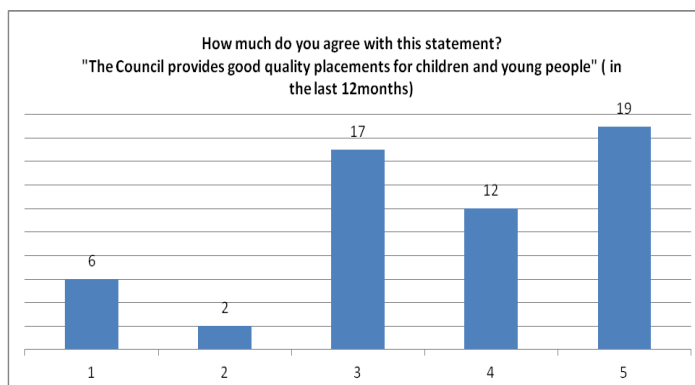
The final section will look at the overall experience that children and young people have had of being in care, as well as young people's experiences of leaving care. When young people in care were asked if they felt that they had an adult in their life that they can trust, a positive 91% (51) expressed that they did.

Children and young people in care were then invited to rate their overall experience of being in care on a scale of 1-5 (1 being negative, 5 being positive). 84% (51) of young people rated their overall experience of being in a care somewhere between 3/5 and 5/5 and 16% (9) rating it as a 2/5 or 1/5. In previous surveys, young people answered using phrases 'Very Good' to 'Poor', so although answers cannot be directly compared,



similar results can be seen from the 2017 survey, with 88% rating their experience as being, 'Okay', 'Quite Good' or 'Very Good'.

Children and young people were asked to rate how much they agree with the following statement: "The Council provides good quality placements for children and young people." 55% (31) of children and young people in care rated this statement a 4 or 5, 34% (19) rated this statement a 2 or a 3, and 11% (6) rated this statement as a 1. As with previous questions in this section, due to the different question styles used in previous reports, answers cannot be directly compared, however in 2017 80% of young people said they either 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with the given statement.



Care leavers were asked to score on a scale of 1 -5 their experience of leaving care services (1 being low and 5 being high). 81% (17) rated their experience of leaving care as a 4 or 5, and 19% (4) rated their experience as 3. In relation to whether care leaver's feel they have learnt adequate independence skills, 85% (17) of young people felt they learnt independence skills whilst in

care and 68% (13) of young people feel they had received enough advice about budgeting and money management. In regards to housing, 91% (19) of care leavers are aware of the support available and who to contact if they have problems with their housing and 86% (18) of young people are aware of their accommodation options going forward.

Summary of Findings

The majority of young people in care reported that they felt happy and safe in their placement and were included in activities by their carers. There was a slight decline in young people who felt able to talk to their carers or social workers if they were feeling unhappy in their placement, however the number still remains high with just over three-

quarters reporting that they could. The provision of written information for young people, both when they first come into care in the form of the New to Care Packs and regarding a new placement for young people who are experiencing a placement move, have been identified as areas requiring improvement with relatively low numbers being able to recollect receiving such written information.

The majority of children and young people knew how to contact their Social Worker, in line with previous years, and there has been a steady increase in those who know who to contact if their Social Worker wasn't available, with current figures demonstrating that just over three quarter of young people are aware of this. Three quarters of young people said that they thought their Social Worker was reliable (a significant improvement from previous years) and were happy with how often they saw them. Improvements have also been made in relation to young people's experience of how a change of Social Worker was done, with a decrease in young people stating that they had been unhappy with this.

In terms of care leavers experience of their Pathway Workers and their Pathway Plans, the majority of care leavers were extremely happy with the service provided. The majority of young people knew how to contact their Pathway Worker when needed and all young people stated they were happy with how often they saw their Pathway Worker and found that they took an interest in their views and opinions. All care leavers reported that they had contributed towards their Pathway Plan and had been able to discuss their future goals, however not all saw the value in these plans with only 64% stating they were important.

Improvements can be seen in the number of young people who know who their Independent Reviewing Officer is, which currently stands at 68%. However we have seen a decrease in those who report that they regularly attend their reviews as well as those who have an opportunity to speak to their IRO before review meetings. Improvements could also be made in involving young people in the planning of their reviews, as less than half stated that they had been involved in this.

Whilst a significant proportion of young people were aware of the purpose of Health Assessments, only half saw the value is having them. That said, the majority of young people in care felt that they had all of the health information that they needed. All the care leavers that took part reported that they were registered with a GP and the majority were registered with a dentist. Young people's feedback on support with emotional wellbeing remains positive with the majority of young people in care and care leavers stating that they knew who they could talk to if they needed help with their emotional wellbeing.

The support that young people receive with their education from schools and colleges is reported as being high from the majority of young people and most young people were able to identify an adult in school that they could talk to, with young people naming various professionals including class teachers, designated teachers, pastoral workers

and teaching assistants. Almost all young people felt that their carers took an active interest in their education however a significant proportion reported that they either didn't attend their PEP meetings or didn't find them at all useful. Encouragingly feedback from all care leavers about support with their education, training and employment was particularly positive, with all care leavers reporting that they knew how to access this support and the majority feeling that they had the right amount of support with this.

In terms of seeing their family and friends, most young people in care and care leavers felt that had received a sufficient amount of support in this area and knew who to contact if they were unhappy.

Feedback from young people in care and care leavers showed that most had a good awareness of their rights and entitlements, with most young people reporting that they were aware of their right to make a complaint, the support available from the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service and from the Pathway Team. If improvements were to be made, it would be for more young people to be aware of the Violet Chambers Fund and the free Gym and Swim Pass, as around a quarter of young people reported being unaware.

Finally, when children and young people were asked about their overall care experiences, feedback has been mixed but similar to previous years, with the majority of young people rating it somewhere between a 3/5 and 5/5, with 16% rating it as a 1/5 or 2/5. Importantly, almost all young people stated that they had an adult in their life that they could trust. When care leavers were asked the same question regarding their overall experience of their leaving care support all rated this somewhere between 3/5 and 5/5.

To summarise, findings are that the young people who took part in this survey report to be feeling happy and safe in their placements and are able to identify an adult in their life that they can trust. Improvements have been seen in young people's experience of having a social worker, with most knowing how to contact their social worker and describing them as being reliable. Pathway support is viewed by young people as very positive, with care leavers reporting that they are happy with the support they receive, including support with their education, training and employment. The majority of young people report that they have access to the health information they need and know who to talk to if they need support with their emotional wellbeing or access to support in school. On the whole, young people in care and care leavers have a good awareness of their rights and entitlements. However, improvements could be made in ensuring that young people have access to the New to Care Packs when they first come into care and also written information about placement prior to a move. Consideration should also be given to involving young people more in their reviews and PEP meetings, with more of an emphasis on young people having an opportunity to meet their IRO before the meeting and be involved in the planning of reviews and PEP meetings.

Recommendations

1. Review how the New to Care Packs are distributed to children and young people to ensure that they have access to information when they first come into care.
2. Work to be considered around introducing a children's agreement that Social Worker's could use with children and young people to outline frequency of contact between the Social Worker and the child, a clear message that children can talk to their Social Worker if they are unhappy and how any future changes of workers would be managed. Consideration could be given to this being linked to the new Guarantee for Children and Young People in Care.
3. Re-launch of the Social Work Contact Cards to ensure that all children and young people in care know how to contact their Social Worker and who to contact in their absence. Despite high numbers of young people reporting that they do know this, the City of York Council would further demonstrate it is ambition by ensuring that every child or young person has this basic information.
4. Work to be undertaken to ensure that children and young people have better access to written information about their placements prior to a placement move.
5. An increased emphasis on IROs meeting with children and young people before their reviews and work to be undertaken to further promote children and young people's involvement in their reviews.
6. Work to be undertaken by the Virtual School to promote more engagement of children and young people in their Personal Education Plans.
7. Consideration to be given as to whether there is anything further that can be done to improve children and young people's experience of having a Health Assessment.

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Corporate Parenting Board**3 September 2019****Report of the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities****Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum Annual Report – 2018-19****Summary**

1. The aim of this report is to detail the issues identified by the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, how these issues are being addressed and what issues are still to be taken forward. The report also details professionals and partner agencies that met with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, the outcomes of these discussions and different projects that the groups are involved in.

Background

2. Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) is the name of York's Children in Care Council and I Still Matter is the name of York's Care Leavers Forum. Monthly panel meetings are held for young people to raise and discuss issues that are important to them, with the aim of shaping and improving services for children and young people in care in York. Quarterly panel meetings are attended by Elected Members and Council Officers to listen to the views of young people and respond to issues raised.

Consultation

3. See Annex A.

Options

4. See Annex A.

Analysis

5. See Annex A.

Council Plan

6. See Annex A.

Implications

7. Financial

There are no financial implications to consider.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no HR implications to consider.

- **Equalities**

There are no issues relating to equalities to consider.

- **Legal**

There are no legal implications to consider.

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no issues relating to crime and disorder.

- **Information Technology (IT)**

There are no IT implications.

- **Property**

There are no issues relating to property.

- **Other**

No other known implications.

Risk Management

8. There are no risks to consider.

Recommendations

9. Members are not being asked to endorse any recommendations but to be briefed on the work of the Children in Care Council.

Reason: To keep the Board updated.

Contact Details

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Sophie Wales

Title: Assistant Director of Children's
Services

**Report
Approved**



Date 15.08.19

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

No back ground papers submitted.

Annexes

Annex A – Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum Annual Report, 2018-19.

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YORK'S CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL AND CARE LEAVERS FORUM

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019

GEORGETTE POOLEY, PROJECT OFFICER APPRENTICE

NIKKI WILSON, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS MANAGER



INTRODUCTION

Participation arrangements for children and young people in care in York are organized under the Children in Care Council (Show Me That I Matter panel and Speak Up Youth group) and our Care leavers Forum (I Still Matter). This includes monthly Show Me That I Matter panel meetings (13-17 yrs), monthly meetings of the Care leavers Forum, I Still Matter, (17-24 yrs) and fortnightly Speak Up youth club sessions (10-16yrs). The purpose of these groups is to enable care experienced young people the opportunity to raise and discuss issues that are important to them, whilst helping to shape and improve services in York. SMTIM and ISM members are financially rewarded for their contribution and this is operated using a stamp system in which young people receive a £20 cash reward for attending 3 sessions.

The aim of this report is to detail the activity of the CiCC and highlight the issues identified by young people between April 2018 and March 2019. The report will look in depth at all three strands of York's Children in Care Council; providing information on the range of different projects each group has been involved with during this period and detailing how particular issues have been addressed.

STRUCTURE

SHOW ME THAT I MATTER

SMTIM currently consists of 9 young people in care aged 13-16 years. SMTIM meetings are held monthly and key decision makers (elected members and senior council officers) are invited to attend every third meeting to enable young people to feedback on the work they have been doing and help to change and shape services in York. In between professional meetings, SMTIM are able to explore and discuss issues in depth and take part in more focused work before feeding back their thoughts to decision makers. In addition to this, young people regularly invite and are consulted by professionals and other agencies to discuss a range of issues and to provide insight on service provisions for children and young people in care.

SPEAK UP YOUTH

Speak Up Youth was formed in September 2017 after All Together Active (ATA) and I Matter 2 merged together. Speak Up Youth meets fortnightly at Moor Lane Youth Centre and is aimed at children and young people aged 10-16 years and up to 19 years for those with additional needs. The group is currently made up of 11 young people aged 10-19 and has a more informal, activity based approach to participation. This allows children and young people to share their views and raise any issues in a relaxed, sociable environment with other care experienced young people. Issues raised by Speak Up Youth are shared with the SMTIM panel to take forward to senior

managers and elected members during their quarterly meetings. It should be noted that the participation carried out by this group is less frequent due to the informal nature of the group. Young people are encouraged to take part in consultations alongside accessing the group for recreational purposes.

I STILL MATTER

I Still Matter is York's Care Leavers Forum and is aimed at care leavers and young people aged 17- 24 years, as well as young people who are approaching the transition to leaving care. ISM currently consists of 8 members aged 18-22 years, and is delivered by staff from the Speak Up Service and members of the Pathway Team. The panel meets on a monthly basis at West Offices and enables young people to identify and discuss any key issues significant to Care Leaver's in York. In line with the SMTIM's meeting structure, meetings with Elected Members and Senior Council Officers are held on a quarterly basis. During these meetings, ISM is able to feedback any issues with the aim of helping to change and shape services for care leavers in York.

OVERVIEW

Between April 2018 and March 2019, a total of 28 children and young people, aged between 10-21 years, have been involved in the Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum. Out of these 28 young people, 14 were male and 14 were female, 3 had an Educational Health Care Plan and a further 6 were in receipt of other SEN services.

In the twelve month period, the 3 groups together have conducted 11 panel meetings, 4 of which were formal panel meetings, 14 youth group sessions, and 1 social event. In addition to this, CiCC members have taken part in interview panels, attended an awards ceremony, attended a regional residential and have presented at conferences and training sessions. There have been a total of 10 key issues raised between the groups, including education and employment, financial support, placement issues, care leavers as parents, improving mental health support and respecting cultural and religious views.

CONTACT WITH PROFESSIONALS

The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum have worked with a number of different professionals over the last twelve months. Three identified elected members and senior managers attend SMTIM and ISM every quarter, to ensure that decision makers can regularly hear directly from young people. In addition to this, various professional are invited by young people to attend and respond to any issues raised. Professionals also regularly approach the group to ask if they would like to be involved in various pieces of consultation.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROFESSIONALS THAT HAVE ATTENDED

Professionals	When	Which group
Claire Mo, Cath Short and Emily Wood – Permanence Team	March 2018	SMTIM
Jon Stonehouse - DCS	April 2018	SMTIM
Cllr Runciman and Michelle Porter -	May 2018	SMTIM
David Purcell – Pathway , Cllr Crawshaw, Cllr Rawlings.	May 2018	ISM
Cath Murray and Jenny Pavis – Complaints Team	June 2018	SMTIM
Cllr Rawlings, Cllr Crawshaw and Jon Stonehouse - DCS	July 2018	SMTIM
Jill Langdale and Helen McGahan - ETE, Pathway	Sept 2018	ISM
James Lee - Assessing Permanent Carers Team	Nov 2018	SMTIM
Karron Young, Gill Clapham, Phil Taylor – Virtual School, Julia Massey and Melody Hardcastle.	Dec 2018	SMTIM
Sophie Wales - AD, Sophie Keeble - Group Manager, Cllr Runciman and Cllr Crawshaw	Jan 2019	SMTIM/ISM
Rachel Duffield – Virtual School and Anna Fitzgerald – Health	Feb 2019	SMTIM
Jill Langdale -ETE Pathway	March 2019	SMTIM
Alison Cammiss and Sara Sherwood – CSE and Missing	March 2019	SUY

ISSUES RAISED AND WORK CARRIED OUT

KEY ISSUES RAISED - ISM

Perception of care leavers who are parents – Members of ISM raised some of the issues care leavers can experience as parents. Some members felt that there can be a negative perception of care leavers who are parents, and shared their negative experiences of being ‘judged’ or feelings of being “singled out’ by professionals. As a result of these discussions, professionals from the Healthy Child Service and the Midwifery Service were invited to attend ISM to listen to the views of the group, and to consider if there is anything their services can do to address these issues.

Difficulties in understanding letters sent by housing and council tax - Members of ISM raised the issue that they often find it difficult to understand information sent in the post by housing. As a result of this, ISM have been working together with Pathways to create a document, based on an example letter which will help explain elements of a typical letter and breakdown the common terms used. Once

completed, ISM and Pathways have agreed this will be added to the accommodation section on the SMTIM/ISM website for other young people to access.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing – Young people highlighted the need for opportunities to be made available to both professionals (including foster carers) and young people to develop their knowledge of mental health and emotional wellbeing. Young people also stated that information about counselling should more readily available and expressed an interest in carrying out a project to promote 30 Clarence Street, a service for young people in York.

Understanding cultural needs – Young people discussed the importance of professionals having a good understanding of a young person's cultural needs when placement planning and the importance of avoiding assumptions. As a result of raising these concerns, ISM would like to develop a resource which can be shared with foster carers around understanding and respecting cultural and religious views. One member of ISM is also working on developing a leaflet for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children outlining young people's rights and helping to define common terms used in social care.

Breakfast for care leavers – Following the success of York's Civic Breakfast, young people discussed the idea of a similar breakfast for care leavers hosted at the Mansion House. The focus of this breakfast would be on how businesses and organizations in York can support care leavers. This would include having the opportunity to meet with organizations across the city with the aim of considering their education and employment options. Although no decisions have been confirmed, as a result of these discussions, conversations have taken place to discuss whether this could take place.

WORK CARRIED OUT ISM

Accommodation leaflet - After identifying the need for extra support for Care leavers who are moving into independence, ISM helped to write and design an accommodation leaflet for the Pathway Service. This leaflet provides Care leavers with useful information on living independently including; a moving in checklist, Care Leaver's entitlements, helpful tips, and a list of useful contact numbers. This leaflet will be shared by the Pathway team with any care leaver moving into independent living.

Local Offer for care leavers - Members of ISM have also been involved in the launch of the City of York's Council's Local Offer for care leavers. The Local offer was written and designed together by I Still Matter and York's Pathway team and outlines the help and support available to care leavers in the City of York.

KEY ISSUES RAISED BY SMTIM

Mental health and emotional wellbeing – Young people raised the issue of mental health support in schools, with some noting a difference in the support available when placed out of area. Discussions also took place around the length of waiting lists for services such as CAMHS, and young people highlighted the need for further mental health and emotional wellbeing support in schools. Young people also expressed the need for better mental health training for foster carers to prevent the breakdown of placements.

Education – Young people raised the question of whether supply teachers are made aware when a student is in care. Some members explained that when supply teachers are not aware of this, it can result in the inability to fully support or recognise the difficulties faced by young people. As a result of raising these concerns, this was shared with Rachel Duffield (Virtual School Well-being Worker) who subsequently visited SMTIM to collect their views on how this could be improved.

Peer support – One member identified the need for a peer buddying system for children and young people in care, expressing that young people are not always able to open up to professionals and noted the difference this could make to young people first coming into care.

Foster Placements - Some members discussed experiences of foster placements and stressed the importance of privacy for young people. Some young people felt that their privacy isn't always respected during foster placements and accessing their bedrooms without permission can feel intrusive. This also led to the discussion of foster carers packing young people's belongings during a placement move, which young people felt was inappropriate. As a result of these concerns, this was followed up at a future meeting and the Assistant Director of Children Specialists Services was notified, as well as being taken forwards as a consideration when recruiting foster carers.

WORK CARRIED OUT SMTIM

You Are Not Alone Booklet - The You Are Not Alone Booklet was launched during 2018 and is a booklet put together by Show Me That I Matter for other young people in care. This booklet contains important messages that SMTIM wanted to share to remind young people that 'they are not alone' as well as suggesting who you might talk to if you were experiencing some difficult feelings. This year, The You Are Not Alone Booklet has been shared with the Corporate Parenting Board, Strategic Partners, been included in the new to care packs for young people, been promoted in the SMTIM newsletter and been circulated as part of training events.

Social Worker's profile - Members of SMTIM have been working to create team profiles for Social Workers in the Permanence Team. This was in response to young

people saying that they would like to like improve their relationships with their workers and encourage better communication .This is an ongoing piece of work and will shortly be available for use in the permanence team.

Foster Carer recruitment - SMTIM met with members of the fostering team to look at how to better involve young people in the recruitment and training of foster carers. SMTIM also met with the Assessing Permanence Team to discuss how young people can inform the assessment process when recruiting foster carers.

Virtual School - SMTIM met with members of the Virtual School to talk about how schools can better support children and young people in care. In addition to this, a member of SMTIM has been named the lead person to take forward any issues in relation to education and will work with the Virtual School to create resources and attend future Designated Teacher Network meetings in order to feed in young people's views.

IV leaflet - Members of SMTIM were consulted in the creation of the Independent Visitor Scheme leaflet for children and young people in care.

COLLABORATIVE WORK – SMTIM/ISM

York Human Rights City - Members from SMTIM and I Still Matter have worked together with York's Human Rights City and York Youth Council to create a Young Person's Indicator Report, which will outline and provide research on the top priorities for young people in York helping to promote awareness. This piece of work is ongoing.

The TACT project - Show Me That I Matter, I Still Matter and Speak Up Youth were consulted by TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) in order to devise a new universal dictionary of care. Members of Show Me That I Matter and Speak Up Youth gave their thoughts on the language frequently used by professionals when talking about being in care. This information was combined with feedback received from other children in care councils across a variety of other local authorities and used to create a new dictionary of care which will be shared with professionals across the country.

Fostering home assessment toolkit - As a result of young people wanting to more involvement in fostering recruitment, members of SMTIM and ISM have been working together with the Fostering team to create a Foster Home Assessment toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit is to ensure that the voices of care experienced young people are heard through the fostering assessment process. During the process the young panel member along with the Assessing Fostering worker will identify up to 12 questions to discuss as part of the home visit. The feedback

provided by young people will help the Fostering team to identify any areas where potential foster carers may need extra support, information or training. This project is still in its pilot stage and will be launched shortly.

Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign - I Still Matter and Speak Up Youth took part in City of York Councils Foster Carer recruitment campaign. Speak Up youth provided quotes to explain how their foster carers had made a difference to them and I Still Matter contributed to the interviews and provided sound bytes for the social media release.

Review toolkit – SMTIM and ISM were able to input their views on the Review Toolkit which will aid young people's participation within their reviews.

Complaints Leaflet – SMTIM and ISM were consulted on the new design of the complaints leaflet for young people.

CONSULTATION WITH SPEAK UP YOUTH

Missing Consultation - Speak Up Youth took part in a consultation surrounding the missing process for children and young people in care and were able to share how they think return interviews could be improved.

ADDITIONAL CICC ACTIVITY 2018-19

CICC REGIONAL EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

Yorkshire and Humber Regional Children in Care Council - Show Me That I Matter has continued to be proactive in representing York at regional events at Wakefield, Sheffield and Leeds.

ADCS Conference 2018 - Two members of ISM were invited to present at the Association of Directors of Children's Services Conference in Manchester in July 2018, during which decision makers from across the country came together to discuss the improvements that could be made to the services for young people. I Still Matter members were able to successfully deliver some important messages regarding young people in care to around 250 people, including Ofsted member's, Government Officials and Directors.

Virtual School Next Steps Summer Programme - In August 2018 members of SMTIM attended the Next Steps summer programme. This programme was an opportunity for young people to learn more about their career options and receive additional information and advice. Young people had the opportunity to visit Askham Bryan College, John Lewis, and attend a session at Moor Lane Youth Centre which included CV writing and the opportunity to talk to Learning and Work Advisor about their future prospects.

WHITEHALL TAKEOVER 2018

This year three members of Show Me That I Matter took part in the Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge and had the opportunity to visit Whitehall. The Takeover Challenge puts young people in decision-making positions and encourages organizations and businesses to hear their views. This year young people has the opportunity to shadow Jonathan Slater (Department of Education), Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Ministry of Housing) and Sir Simon McDonald (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

NORTH YORKSHIRE YOUNG MINDS COMBINED

Representatives from Show Me That I Matter have been a part of 'North Yorkshire Young Minds Combined' - a project group with representatives from various youth groups across York and North Yorkshire. The purpose of this project was for young people to come together to discuss how mental health services can be improved and as a result young people are planning an event to bring together various professionals and organizations from across York/North Yorkshire to discuss how mental health provisions for young people can be improved.

AWARDS CEREMONIES

Shine Awards - After identifying the need for a voice and participation award earlier this year, members of Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter were nominated and awarded for their contribution and involvement in Voice and Participation in the City of York.

INTERVIEW PANELS

The demand for young person's interviews has continued throughout 2018-2019, with young people sitting on 15 interview panels for various roles within Children's Services including the Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Director for Children's Services, the Virtual Head Teacher, Learning and Wellbeing Worker within the Virtual School, Senior Social Workers, Newly Qualified Social Workers,

Assessment and Contact Workers, Independent Visitors and an Advocacy and Participation Worker.

TRAINING

The Speak Up and Hear My Voice training was developed in 2015, as a direct response to SMTIM's views on the importance of reducing the stigma faced by children and young people in care. It was agreed that young people would co-design and deliver a training programme which would feature the Arts4Care film, "Listen to Me". The training, whilst providing professionals with the opportunity to hear directly from children and young people in care about their experiences, also offers practical tools and resources as to how practice and service development could be adapted to embed participation.

The success of this training has continued through 2018-19, with 3 training sessions being delivered. During these sessions, young people were supported to deliver training sessions to Social Worker Students at the University of York, Independent Visitors and Designated Teachers. In addition to this, young people have been supported to deliver training to aspiring foster carers, via the Skills to Foster training, during which representatives from SMTIM and ISM talk about experiences of care and the transition to leaving care.

SUMMARY

To conclude, York's Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum have achieved a huge amount within the last twelve months. This has been achieved with their continuous hard work and commitment to improving services for children and young people in care and care leavers in York. The effects of the projects young people have been involved in throughout 2018-19 demonstrate the value of the CiCC and the difference participation provisions can make to both young people and services. Their continued invites to attend events, conduct training and the awards and recognition received highlights how York's CiCC work is respected locally, regionally and nationally.

Corporate Parenting Board**3 September 2019****Independent Reviewing Service****Summary of the Key issues identified in 2018-19 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report****Summary**

1. IROs have a statutory responsibility to report to senior managers and the corporate parenting board regarding the performance of the local authority with regards their statutory requirements as corporate parent to the Children and Young People in the Care (CYPIC) of the local authority. This report covers the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019.
2. Since 2016 IROs in York have uniquely overseen the planning and review for children subject to protection plans and child in need plans as well as children in care. Service wide review of these arrangements undertaken during Quarter 4 concluded that this all encompassing remit was not serving children well as IROs capacity to robustly achieve their full statutory responsibility to children in care was compromised by the competing demands of children subject to safeguarding concerns and family support interventions.
3. IROs were working hard to maintain the timeliness and effectiveness of meetings however their availability to undertake qualitative consultation with children, particularly very young, resistant or 'hard to reach' children and young people was compromised. During this period there were ongoing issues regarding staff retention across children's services which meant that some children were experiencing multiple changes of social worker and / or front line manager and a consequent loss of momentum in intervention. Whilst the IROs were undertaking a high volume of informal resolutions to address the impact of this the Independent Reviewing Service and Children's Services management group was not effective in escalating concerns about this amid a changing senior management team. A new senior management team is now in place that has immediately recognised the impact and scale of these difficulties and has effectively established a multi agency improvement board to oversee implementation of a robust multi agency and service wide improvement plan. As part of this, responsibility for oversight of children in need arrangements transferred on 1st June 2019 to newly configured social work teams to reduce IRO caseloads and enable IROs to better focus on children in care and subject to safeguarding arrangements

4. During the reporting period there has been a small rise in the number of children in care which is less than the national and the regional trend – ongoing robust service review and independent scrutiny and audit is being undertaken to better understand the extent to which this is a positive indicator of effective early intervention or adverse consequence of delayed care planning for some children. Of the children that are in care over half are living in stable placements that are consistent with their permanence plan. 94% of the children in care who participated in the 2019 Tell Us Survey reported that they felt safe and happy where they were living.
5. There has been no real change in the profile of children in care in York, other than a rise in the number of babies relinquished for adoption via the student population, it is yet to be seen whether this is just an anomalous blip or whether there are ongoing public health / preventative support services that need to be targeted.
6. Sufficiency of placements in York continues to be a significant issue resulting in some children needing to be placed away from York and / or in short term bridging placements, until the right permanence placement can be secured for them. (42% CYPIC are currently placed outside of the city boundary). Whilst some of these children require specialist placements to address their complex learning or behavioral issues most would benefit from a placement closer to their family and local community contacts if there were sufficient placements locally. The distance of some placements contributes to increased likelihood of breakdown and increased pressures on social work and IRO workloads. This has been identified as a contributory factor to current retention issues amongst the safeguarding social work teams. Plans have been confirmed to increase the recruitment of new foster carers and to commission additional regulated residential provision within York to help address this gap.
7. Despite the sufficiency issues IROs continue to report that children in care generally have the right plan, placement and legal status.
8. In 2018-19 IROs reported that in the IRO's opinion
 - 99 % CYPIC were subject to appropriate legal status
 - 98 % were in placements that met their assessed needs
 - 89 % had good quality care plans
9. Changes of care placements arise for a number of reasons, but generally need to be avoided as all children benefit from stability. In 2018-19 there was an increase in the number of placement disruptions, with 12% CYPIC experiencing 3 or more changes of placement, and a slight reduction to 57 % of the children who had been in care for over 2 ½ years being in the same placement for at least 2 years. The majority of these placement

changes were unplanned. Typically, the preceding placement was deemed to meet the child's needs, but either an unforeseen change of circumstances or escalation in behavior resulted in unanticipated need to seek alternative placement. On occasion this has been partly due to or exacerbated by the competing and / or incompatible needs of other children within the same placement and increased reliance on short term / emergency bridging placements – a consequence of current placement sufficiency issues). The need to reduce the number of short term placements and unplanned moves remains a key area for development that is being addressed by the Placement Service Review

10. Priorities for the coming year

1. Maintain manageable IRO caseloads to enable statutory compliance and expedient and robust service development.
2. Embed adherence to clear practice standards across children's services with an accountable quality assurance framework to quickly identify and address any potential drift in planning and achieve expedient and optimal outcomes for children.
3. Re-launch and embed the IRO resolution process and reporting arrangements to increase the impact of IRO intervention in quickly identifying, escalating and addressing any emergent issues of concern.
4. Raise placement stability by increasing sufficiency of local placement provision and reduce use of out of area and independent care provision.
5. Build in social work sufficiency to reduce reliance on agency workers.
6. Embed a proactive process of customer led feedback and evaluation of services.

Recommendations:

11. It is recommended that the City of York Council Corporate Parenting Panel consider the following:

- Note and support the Unit's commitment to better deliver its statutory responsibilities to children and young people in care and their parents or carers, in particular increased consultation, participation and challenge;
- Use the annual reporting requirement of the Unit to inform the ongoing work of the Corporate Parenting Board in raising outcomes for the children and young people in the care of the City of York Council.

Reason: To keep the Board updated on the IRO service.

Council Plan

12. The work of the IRO service is in line with the Council Plan as follows:

- a prosperous city for all – striving to ensure that children in care have the best opportunities for future prosperity as citizens
- a focus on frontline services – ensuring that children in care have access to good services, provision and support
- a council that listens to residents – engaging with the voice of children in care.

Implications

13. The implications are:

- **Financial** - none
- **Human Resources (HR)** - none
- **Equalities** - none
- **Legal** - none
- **Crime and Disorder** - none
- **Information Technology (IT)** - none
- **Property** - none
- **Risk Management** – none

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Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Amanda Hatton

Corporate Director of Children
Education and Communities

**Report
Approved**

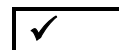


Date 19 August
2019

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex 1 – IRO Annual Report 2018-19

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Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2018 / 19

Executive Summary

This report is prepared in accordance with Statutory Requirements to inform the Corporate Parenting Board and Senior Leaders about the council's performance in respect of children in the care of the local authority.

Since 2016 IROs in York have uniquely overseen the planning and review for children subject to protection plans and child in need plans as well as children in care. Service wide review of these arrangements undertaken during Quarter 4 concluded that this extended remit was not serving children well as IROs capacity to robustly achieve their full statutory responsibility to children in care was compromised by the competing demands of children subject to safeguarding concerns. Whilst IROs were working hard to maintain the timeliness and effectiveness of meetings their availability to consult very young or resistant children and young people and to effectively oversee implementation of plans between review meetings was compromised. During this period there were ongoing issues regarding staff retention across children's services which meant that some children were experiencing multiple changes of social worker and / or front line manager and a consequent loss of momentum in intervention. IROs were undertaking a high volume of informal resolutions to address the impact of this, however the Independent Reviewing Service was not effective in escalating concerns about this amid a changing senior management team. A new senior management team is now in place and has effectively established a multi agency improvement board to oversee implementation of a robust service wide improvement plan. As part of this, responsibility for oversight of children in need arrangements transferred on 1st June 2019 to newly configured social work teams to reduce IRO caseloads and enable IROs to better focus on children in care and subject to safeguarding arrangements

During the reporting period there has been a small rise in the number of children in care in York, which is less than the national and the regional trend – ongoing robust service review and independent scrutiny and audit is being undertaken to better understand the extent to which this is a positive indicator of effective early intervention or consequence of drift in care planning for some children. Of the children that are in care over half are living in stable placements that are consistent with their permanence plan. 94% of the children in care who participated in the 2019 Tell Us Survey reported that they felt safe and happy where they were living.

Sufficiency of placements in York continues to be a significant issue resulting in some children needing to be placed away from York and / or in short term bridging

placements, until the right permanence placement can be secured for them. Plans have been confirmed to increase the recruitment of new foster carers and to commission additional regulated residential provision within York to help address this gap.

Priorities for the coming year

1. Reassign oversight of the children subject to Child in Need plans to enable IROs to focus on their statutory responsibilities to Children in Care and subject to protection plans.
2. Embed adherence to clear practice standards across children's services with an accountable quality assurance framework to quickly identify and address any potential drift in planning and achieve expedient and optimal outcomes for children
3. Re-launch and embed the IRO resolution process and reporting arrangements to increase the impact of IRO intervention in quickly identifying, escalating and addressing any emergent issues of concern.
4. Raise placement stability by increasing sufficiency of local placement provision and reduce use of out of area and independent care provision.
5. Build in social work sufficiency to reduce reliance on agency workers
6. Embed a proactive process of customer led feedback and evaluation of services

Introduction and Legal Context

1.1 The roles and responsibilities of the IRO are defined by:

- The Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (ref section 7)
- The Children Act 1989
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Young People's Act 2008
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- IRO Handbook 2010 (implemented 1 April 2011)

This includes legal requirement for the IRO Manager to produce an Annual Report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board to provide information about the structure and performance of the IRO Service, information about the delivery of services and outcomes achieved for children in care in York and recommendations regarding identified areas for development.

1.2 The IRO's statutory responsibilities are to;

- monitor the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent and alert senior manager's to any issues of concern / report on good practice
- ensure that children's care plans are based on a current and informed assessment, and provide an effective response to the child's individual needs and aspirations ;

- identify and address any gaps in the assessment process or provision of service;
- provide a safeguard to prevent 'drift' in care planning and the delivery of services;
- ensure that the child's voice, wishes and feelings are reflected in the plan and that the child fully understands the implications of any changes to their care plan
- ensure that the child understands how an advocate could assist them and their entitlement to one

1.3 To help achieve this

- All Looked after Children have a named IRO who, as far as possible, remains a consistent figure during the child's journey through care.
- The IRO chairs a meeting to review the child's care plan within 28 days, then within 3 months and then at least every 6 months
- As part of each review the IRO consults with the child, making sure that the child understands what is happening to them, can make a genuine contribution to plans, fully understands the implications of any changes and understands his / her legal entitlement to legal advice or independent advocate and how these could help them .
- The IRO provides challenge and support to social workers, their managers and partner agencies to ensure the best life chances for the child in care
- The IRO service oversees the formulation and implementation of care plans, tracking progress against desired outcomes, identifying any potential for drift and effective means for helping to challenge and address such issues, including, a Formal Resolution Process, the ability to convey concerns to CAFCASS and access to independent legal advice

2 Profile of the IRO Service

2.1 The Independent Reviewing Service is sited within the Quality Assurance Group in Children's Social Care, based at West Offices alongside the CSC management team, the social work teams and Children's Rights and Advocacy Service. This co location of services has significantly assisted with improved working together across the teams.

2.3 The IRO service consists of:

- 1 FTE Service Manager who reports to the Quality Assurance Group Manager – independent of CSC service delivery
- 6 FTE IROs undertaking the CYPIC, CIN and CP reviews, (made up of 5 full time workers and 2 part time workers)
- 1 FTE IRO (Placements) undertaking the foster carer's annual reviews, inspection of CYC's registered provision (The Glen) and quality assurance of externally commissioned residential care provision (two part time workers job share this post)

2.4 Within the Independent Reviewing Service there are 10 long serving and experienced workers covering the 8 FTE posts, all of whom are employed on permanent contracts. The longest serving member of the unit joined the council in 1992 and the most recent appointment was January 2018. Most children have had the same IRO for at least two years with a significant number retaining the same IRO for over 3 years. Maintaining this consistent relationship is recognised as very important by children, carers and IROs alike. 68% of the children and young people who participated in York's 2019 U Matter* survey of care experienced young people stated that they know who their IRO is – our aspiration is to increase this to 100%, and to this end the service has been working with the Speak Up Service to develop a review toolkit that includes a revised IRO profile, pledge and welcome pack.

2.5 Of the 10 workers within the IRO Service Unit 8 are female and two are males. 9 of the Service members are White British and one is White/ Swedish.

2.6 All IROs have at least 5 years post-qualifying experience as a social worker and are registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council. 5 members of the unit have previously held manager roles in social work services, including looked after children and leaving care services, safeguarding, quality assurance, fostering and residential services. The other IROs have extensive experience working in referral and assessment, adoption and fostering services.

2.7 IROs and their manager access a diverse range of training appropriate to their development needs and the specific areas of knowledge required by the needs of the young people on their caseloads and the IROs and their manager also participate in the regional IRO practitioner's group and the regional IRO manager's group. Additional focused training is being commissioned for the IROs as part of the service review and improvement plan.

2.8 All members of the team have monthly supervision and contribute to monthly team meeting and peer audits. IROs have also contributed to thematic service wide audits. Learning arising from these audits is reviewed in individual supervision and the collective data arising from the audits is shared and discussed with the team as part of team meetings.

2.9 The Independent Reviewing Service has contributed to practice improvement activity across children's services in a number of ways including delivery of multi agency child protection training delivered on behalf of CYSCB, induction sessions for students and newly appointed social workers, participation in the Speak Up task group, Fostering Gateway meeting and active promotion of Family Group Conference, Advocacy Service and use of graded care profile and practice educator role for a social work student.

2.10 The IRO perspective is represented by the manager in a number of forums including Legal Gateway and permanence tracking Meetings, Permanence Panel, Children in Care partnership meetings, and guest attendance at York Association of Foster Carer's support group. The IRO manager has also provided interim line

management cover for the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) dealing with allegations against professionals.

3. IRO Caseloads and outputs

3.1 During the reporting period work with Children and Young People in Care constituted a third of the overall work undertaken by York's Independent Reviewing Service, as uniquely since 2016 IROs in York have also overseen the planning and reviews for children subject to Child Protection Plans and Child in Need plans. IROs in York have thus been well placed to oversee implementation of early intervention support to help avoid the need for children to come into care, and to also oversee the implementation of support services to help support children when their care episode ends, however this broad remit has also meant that the IRO's capacity to deliver a high quality service to children in care has been compromised by rising caseload and competing workload demands .

Table 1 : IRO caseload

Snap shot at period end	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Children subject to CPP	171	167	161	179	182	193	161
Children and YP in Care	205	197	208	207	206	207	208
CIN allocated to IRO	220	199	211	190	186	195	211
Average caseload size	91*	94	97	96	96	99	97

*In Sept 2016 the number of IROs reduced from 7.5 to 6 FTE as part of the CSC restructure

3.2 The IRO Handbook 2010 (Statutory Guidance) states that in order to carry out the IRO responsibilities as laid out in the Care Planning Regulations 2010 a full time IRO should have a caseload of between 50 and 70 looked after children. In York IROs have an average of 30 Children in Care each with no single IRO overseeing more than 50 Children in Care, however the total number of allocated children has varied between 80 and 100 children (FTE) as IROs were also allocated children subject to Child Protection and Child in Need plans. The IRO task is less time intensive for children subject to child protection and child in need plans as review of these plans are usually undertaken as whole family meetings rather than the individualised format of most CYPIC reviews and IROs do not have statutory requirements to undertake the same level of pre-meeting consultation / and post review oversight, however the high caseloads and competing casework tasks have impacted on IROs' capacity to undertake their statutory functions for children in care, as there has been a real challenge between the need to prioritise scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements versus the requirement to further develop the level and effectiveness of IRO engagement with children and young people in care, with an inherent risk that neither are done as effectively as they need to be.

3.3 Concern about the potential impact of this on outcomes for all children was such that during Quarter 4 the new senior management team commissioned a whole

service review that specifically considered whether current IRO caseloads, remit and status were consistent with statutory requirements and best delivery of services for all children. This review concluded that IROs require equitable status with frontline managers to help exert appropriate gravitas and influence and that the broad remit was detracting from IRO's statutory duty to children in care, as there was insufficient opportunity for IRO's to undertake qualitative consultation with the very young or hard to reach children or availability to maintain effective oversight of care planning between reviews. The outcome of this review has been the decision that from May 2019 IROs in York will cease to oversee interventions for children subject to Child in Need Plans to focus attention on children in care and subject to safeguarding arrangements. This development is very welcomed by the unit.

4. CYPIC Profile and trends

4.1 The number of children in care in York has remained fairly static across the year, whilst the number of children subject to protection plans has been more variable, peaking in quarter 3 at a time when there was a high level of staff turnover in the social work teams and across all tiers of the CSC front line and senior management group.

Table 2. Children in Care / subject to Protection Plans April 2017 to March 2019

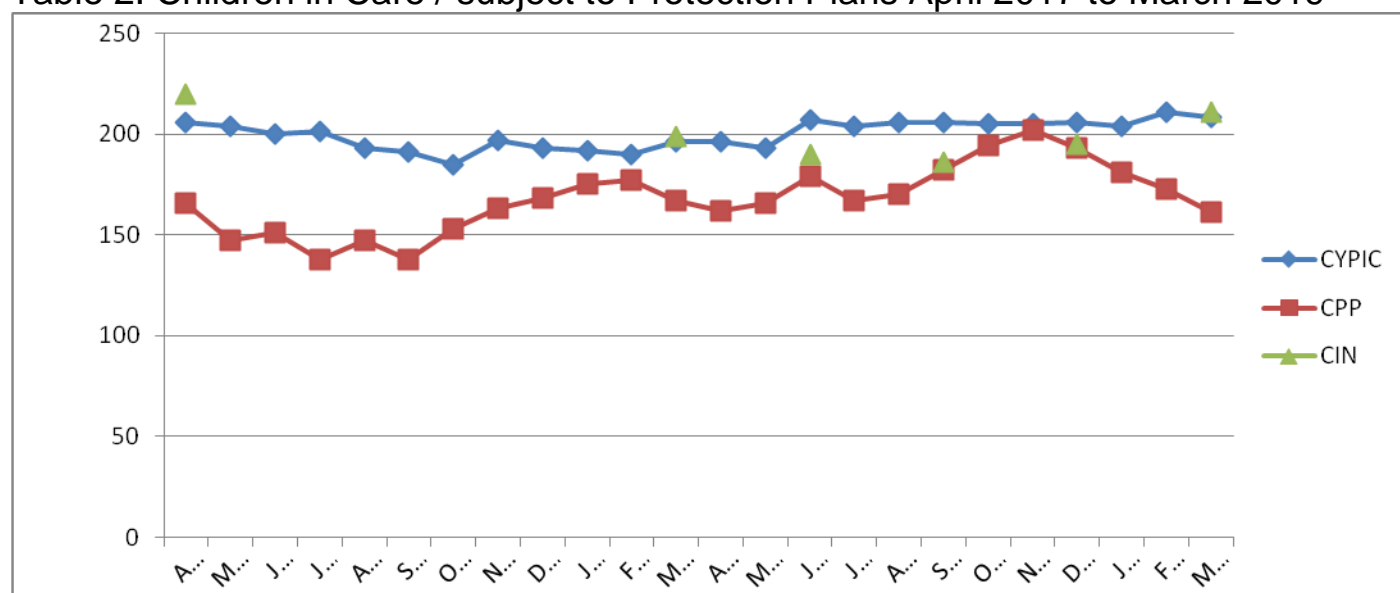


Table 3 CP and CYPIC numbers by month

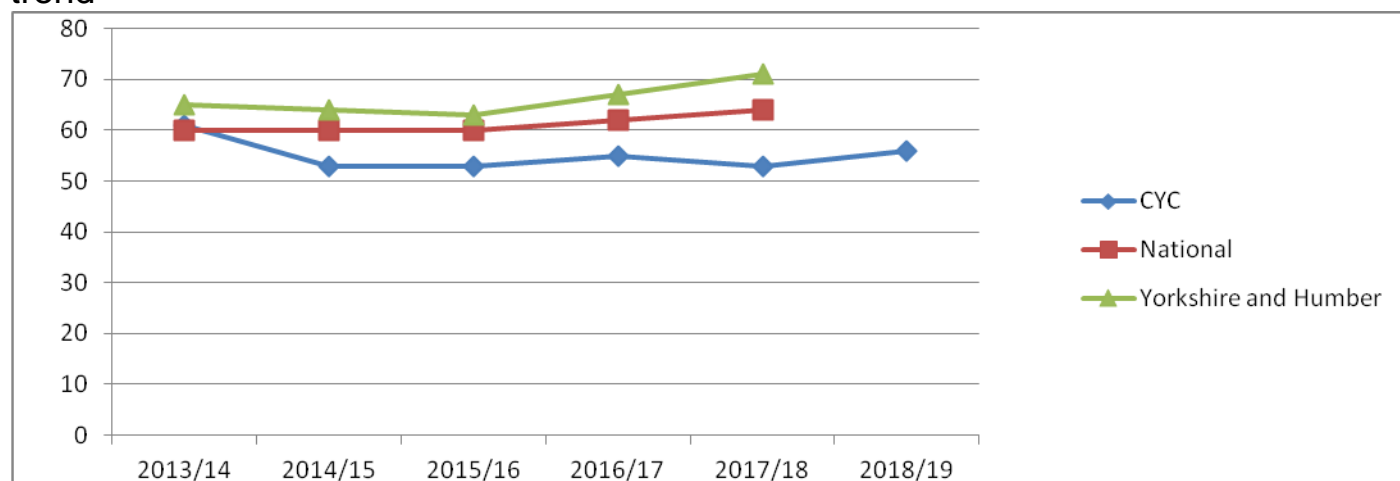
	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
LAC	206	204	200	201	193	191	185	197	193	192	190	196	196	194	207	204	206	206	205	205	206	204	211	208
CPP	166	147	151	138	147	138	153	163	168	175	177	167	162	166	179	167	170	182	194	202	193	181	173	161

4.2 Difficulty recruiting to staff vacancies during this period resulted in an unprecedented level of temporary agency cover in the social work teams (many of whom who left after short periods). This meant that some children experienced a

succession of different workers and consequent loss of momentum in their planning and intervention. The need to prioritise scrutiny of the safeguarding arrangements inevitably compromised IROs availability to maintain robust oversight of the implementation of care plans between reviews and their capacity to undertake qualitative consultation and planning, particularly with any younger, resistant or 'harder to reach' children and young people in care.

4.3 Throughout this period the static number of looked after children in York remained below Regional and National comparators – previously this had been regarded as an indicator of the positive impact of effective early intervention and support services achieved via the Immediate Response Team, Family Group Conferencing and Local Area Teams. Whilst this was still a positive factor for some children it is also recognised that there was some delay for some children in care planning decisions being robustly progressed. This has now been addressed by the introduction of very clear practice expectations, weekly scrutiny of alternate legal gateway and legal tracking meetings and much more robust permanency case tracking, escalation processes and external scrutiny of partner agencies and executive members.

Table 4: Number of CYPIC – 5 year trend



61	53	53	55	53	CYC Children Looked After per 10k – (end of year snapshot data)
60	60	60	62	-	Benchmark - National Data
65	64	63	67	-	Benchmark - Regional Data
221	193	191	204	197	Number of children looked after

4.4 The IRO service is working hard with Children's Services to help identify and expedite the planning for any children for whom there are concerns about potential drift, delay or poor planning and the IROs are contributing to the permanence, legal tracking and gateway meetings to help ensure that the right children are in care at the right time and that care plans for permanence are achieved without avoidable drift.

4.5 54 of the 70 children who came into care during the year (77%) did so as a consequence of concerns about them being at risk of abuse or neglect. The planned reconfiguration of the social work and children in need teams is set to further

improve the focus on quick step up and step down between support services and safeguarding interventions to ensure that early help and edge of care support services are targeted at the right children to help divert the need for children to come into care.

Table 5 Reason for care episode starting

Reason for care episode starting	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Total - (YTD)	64	73	84	64	70
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Abuse or neglect - (YTD)	42	51	42	28	54
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Child's disability - (YTD)	3	1	1	1	0
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Parents illness or disability - (YTD)	5	3	10	12	1
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Family in acute stress - (YTD)	8	8	13	3	4
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Family dysfunction - (YTD)	1	4	4	11	5
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Socially unacceptable behaviour - (YTD)	2	2	7	0	0
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Low income - (YTD)	0	0	0	0	0
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Absent parenting - (YTD)	3	0	6	6	5
CLA Starters, excluding Short Term Breaks - Cases other than CIN - (YTD)	0	4	1	1	0



Profile of all children in care (5 year trend)

4.6 The overall profile of children and young people in care in York has been broadly consistent across the last 5 years with little variation in the gender and just a small increase in those who are not White / British. This reflects the changing demographics in the wider population of York and a small number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (currently 4). This change is not matched by the ethnic profile of the substantive staff or foster carers within CYC, who currently continue to be almost exclusively White British, however increased use of agency social workers and managers has increased ethnic diversity amongst the work force.

Table 6: Number of CYPIC by Ethnicity

ETHNICITY	White British	Other white	Asian	Black African	Black and white	Other mixed	Other ethnic
snap shot on 31.3.19	90%	0.4%	2%	0.5%	0.5%	5%	1.4%

Table 7: Number of CYPIC by Gender

CYPIC by GENDER excluding Short Term Breaks	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
% of Children Looked After (CLA), - Male - (Snapshot)	52.30%	51.30%	52.90%	54.30%	54.33%
% of Children Looked After (CLA), - Female - (Snapshot)	47.70%	48.70%	47.10%	45.70%	45.67%

4.7 There has been a rise in the number of infants under the age of 1 coming into care, which has been in part caused by an unusually high number of babies being relinquished for adoption via York's student population. It is recommended that consideration is given to whether more preventative work needs to be undertaken with local universities and colleges to help increase the availability of free / emergency contraception to help reduce the incidence of unwanted pregnancies.

Table 8: Number of CYPIC by age

CYPIC by AGE , excluding Short Term Breaks	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Number of Children Looked After (CLA) - Under 1 - (Snapshot)	8	13	11	10	19
Number of Children Looked After (CLA), - 1-4 years - (Snapshot)	23	19	24	27	30
Number of Children Looked After (CLA), - 5-9 years - (Snapshot)	36	37	35	33	40
Number of Children Looked After (CLA), - 10-15 years - (Snapshot)	90	78	82	85	76
Number of Children Looked After (CLA), - 16+ years - (Snapshot)	36	44	52	42	43

4.7 The number of children in care subject to either full or interim care orders has marginally increased in the last year whilst the number of children in care due to S20 voluntary agreement has reduced, this reflects the national trend following judicial and national scrutiny about use of S20. The number of children subject to Placement Orders (Freed for Adoption) has risen fairly significantly this year partly as a result of an increase in relinquished babies, but also indicating effective early intervention by which permanence plans are secured for children at an earlier age.

CYPIC by LEGAL STATUS	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Children in care under legal code - Interim care order - (Snapshot)	22	30	20	30	28
Children in care under legal code - Full care order - (Snapshot)	105	106	126	132	144
Children in care under legal code - Freed for Adoption or Placement Order - (Snapshot)	11	9	5	5	13
Children in care under legal code - Accommodated under S20 - (Snapshot)	55	44	52	29	22
Children in care under legal code - Youth Justice legal statuses - (Snapshot)	0	0	1	1	0
Children in care under legal code - Detained on CP grounds in LA accommodation - (Snapshot)	2	2	0	0	0

4.8 The IROs work proactively with the social work teams to ensure the right permanence plan, and legal status is in place for every child and young person in

care. The Quality Assurance Monitor completed by IROs following every child care review confirms that IROs continue to be satisfied that almost all children have an appropriate legal status / placement. Where concerns have been identified they have generally reflected the increased focus on converting some voluntary S20 arrangements for children for whom a return to their family's care is not in the C/YP best interests.

Table 9: QAF Data: Is the current or proposed legal status / placement appropriate for the child ?

Appropriateness of legal status	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2017/18
In the IRO's view is the current / proposed legal status is NOT appropriate	1.04%	2.8%	2.24%	1.2%
In the IRO's view the current / proposed placement does NOT fully meet child's assessed needs	3.7%	2.3%	2.07%	2.2%

4.9 IROs confirm that in their view all but 2% of York's children in care are in placements that meet their needs, however there is a small cohort of young men who are placed in unsuitable semi supported accommodation outside of York. The lack of a sufficient range of available local placements is being addressed by the current residential service review and in the interim IROs are maintaining a high level of additional scrutiny regarding these arrangements and reporting weekly to the director on their wellbeing and progress.

4.10 Of the 210 children who were looked after on 31st March 117 (56%) were living in what is intended to be their long term placement consistent with their permanence plan - i.e. placed with parents, prospective adoptive parents, Kinship foster carers, confirmed long term foster carers or living semi independently. Of the 93 not yet living in a confirmed permanence placement (residential provision, secure, YOI, hospital and short term placement with kinship carers or foster carers) , 26 (28%) were subject to ongoing proceedings (interim care order or placement order) 16 (17%) were subject to s20 accommodation and 54 (59%) were subject to care orders, and so should ideally be placed in a confirmed long term placement - a significant number of these are placed with connected carers or other foster carers in placements that could potentially convert to permanent placements if return to parents is fully ruled out. (eg. Some parents are part way through substance rehabilitation and need to demonstrate sustained or unsuccessful abstinence before the child's final permanence plan can be confirmed). Work is required in respect of some children to better understand what the barriers are to these children and carers committing to a confirmed long term placement. A common theme is often carers' reluctance to surrender their status and recompense as foster carers to become special guardians. A more robust Special Guardianship support package would potentially help reduce some of this resistance.

4.11 Of the 20 children placed with parents 10 had been living back home for over 12 months – It is recognised that this ongoing care status is costly and potentially intrusive as it impacts on right to private family life and self determinance, and as

such IRO's drive ongoing and pro-active consideration about whether the time is yet right to seek revocation of the care order for these children.

Table 10. Placement type – snapshot of all placements on 31.3.19

Children in permanence placements			Children not yet in permanence placement		
Placed for adoption	5	2.3%	Secure unit	1	0.4%
Placed with parents	20	9.5%	YOI	1	0.4%
Kinship carers – long term	25	11.9%	NHS hospital trust	1	0.4%
Foster carers- long term	62	29.5%	Reg. children's home	11	5.2%
Living semi independently	7	3.3%	Unregulated residential	4	1.9%
			Short term kinship care	23	10.9%
			Short term foster care	50	25.8%

4.12 A significant number of children continue to experience multiple changes of placement. Some of these moves are very positive, either undertaken at the young person's request or because they are moving to a permanent home in accordance with their permanence plan, however a number of placements also arise because they have had to have a series of short term / emergency placements before a longer term or more suitable bridging placement can be secured. Current sufficiency issues are such that an increasing number of children have had to be placed a distance away from York. This separation from family, friends and local networks can sometimes be part of a positive protection plan, but where it isn't the distance from local connections and professional supports can increase the likelihood of further placement disruption. Senior Managers and the executive recognise the need for local placement sufficiency to be increased and have invested money in raising local provision, in accordance with the recommendations of a recent placement review.

Table 11 ; Placement stability

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018 -19
% of CYPIC having 3 or more moves of placement	11.9%	8.9%	7.4%	11.7%	12.2%
% of the CYPIC looked after for at least 2.5 years who've lived in the same placement at least 2 years, or whose adoptive and previous placement lasted at least 2 years	58.3 %	63.6%	66.83%	58.8%	56.5%

4.13 To help support these children the permanence team and fostering service have developed an effective RAG rating system to help identify and address any emergent placement difficulties, whereby there is a clear protocol and expectation about the Supervising Social Worker consulting the IRO at first sign of any emergent placement difficulties so that consideration can be given to convening an early review to consider additional support arrangements and / or need for a positively planned and supported move. As part of this development IROs are to take on the chairing of a more robust regime of placement disruption meetings to help identify and learn the lessons about how best to support these placements and avoid disruptions.

4.14 Feedback from children in care continues to confirm that the majority of children consider themselves to be in the right place for them. In the 2019 U Matter survey for York's children in care and care leavers 94% (49) of young people reported to feel safe and happy where they were living, 76% (44) of young people said if they had ever been unhappy about a placement, they were able to talk to their social worker or carers about this. 93% (52) of the young people in care felt that they have received the help and support they need to keep in touch with their family and 87% (47) stated that they had the support that they needed to keep in touch with their friends, however the IRO service and or children's advocacy service have also assisted some young people in raising complaint / issue regarding their experiences in some care homes – and their wish to be permitted to return to York (bail conditions prohibit this for some) .

Profile of children leaving care

4.15 The majority of care episodes in York continue to end positively as part of a successful permanence plan, with the biggest cohort being children and / young people being supported to return / move to the care of parents or relatives, (18), children being adopted (16) or being made subject to Special Guardianship Order (3). Sadly one child with severe disabilities died as a consequence of complex health issues.

Table 12 : Reason care episode ended

REASON CARE ENDED	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
CLA Ceased, - Total - (YTD)	89	65	74	73	57
CLA Ceased, - Adopted (All) - (YTD)	16	3	9	10	8
CLA Ceased - Adopted (Application unopposed) - (YTD)	9	3	7	7	6
CLA Ceased, s - Adopted (consent dispensed with by court) - (YTD)	7	0	2	3	2
CLA Ceased, - Left care to live with parents, relatives, or other person with no parental responsibility - (YTD)	5	9	3	4	3
CLA Ceased Accommodation on remand ended - (YTD)	1	0	4	1	0
CLA Ceased, s - Age assessment determined child is aged 18 or over and support not required - (YTD)	0	1	2	0	1
CLA Ceased, - Died - (YTD)	0	0	0	0	1
CLA Ceased, - Care taken over by another LA in the UK - (YTD)	0	0	2	0	0
CLA Ceased, - Returned home with parents/relatives etc - (YTD)	3	1	-	-	-
CLA Ceased, - Returned home with parents/relatives etc as part of their agreed care plan - (YTD)	9	16	15	8	11

CLA Ceased, - returned home with parents/relatives etc other than part of their agreed care plan (and not SGO, RO or CAO) - (YTD)	4	2	7	6	4
CLA Ceased, - Residence order or child arrangement order granted - (YTD)	6	1	0	3	3
CLA Ceased, - SGO made to former foster carers - (YTD)	9	1	6	7	-
CLA Ceased, - SGO made to former foster carer who was a relative or friend - (YTD) (New for 2018/19)	-	-	-	-	3
CLA Ceased, excluding Short Term Breaks - SGO made to other carers - (YTD)	3	5	1	5	-
CLA Ceased, excluding Short Term Breaks - Moved into independent living (supportive) - (YTD)	14	2	5	9	19
CLA Ceased, excluding Short Term Breaks - Moved into independent living (non supportive) - (YTD)	2	0	1	3	0
CLA Ceased, excluding Short Term Breaks - Sentenced to custody - (YTD)	1	0	3	1	0
CLA Ceased, excluding Short Term Breaks - Ceased for any other reason - (YTD)	13	20	13	12	4
CLA Ceased, excluding Short Term Breaks - Transferred to Adult Services residential care - (YTD)	3	1	1	4	0

4.16 94% of care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were deemed to be in suitable accommodation and 75% were in employment or training, both considerably higher rates than national and regional comparators.

Table 13: Suitability of accommodation for care leavers

	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
% of care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 17-21 (19-21 until 2016/2017) - (Snapshot)	95.00%	92.00%	97.44%	91.00%	94.25%
Benchmark - National Data	81.00%	83.00%	84.00%	-	-
Benchmark - Regional Data	86.00%	85.00%	86.00%	-	-
Benchmark - Comparator Data	83.20%	84.80%	84.75%	-	-

Table 14 : Number of Care Leavers aged 17+ years in employment or training

	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
% of care leavers in employment, education or training aged 17-21 (19-21 until 2016/2017) - (Snapshot)	57.50%	68.00%	75.64%	71.00%	73.56%
Benchmark - National Data	48.00%	49.00%	50.00%	-	-
Benchmark - Regional Data	53.00%	52.00%	50.00%	-	-
Benchmark - Comparator Data	49.20%	49.50%	52.00%	-	-

5. The review process.

5.1 Despite the pressures that the IROs have experienced during the year performance in relation to timeliness of meetings has significantly improved since the dip that was associated with the 2016 restructure .

Table 15 : Timeliness of Reviews

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
% of children looked after cases which were reviewed within required timescales - (Rolling 12 Months)	90%	85%	67%	95%	94.1%

	2018-19	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
% of children looked after cases which were reviewed within required timescales - (Rolling 12 Months)	94.15%	90.76%	93.40%	94.97%	94.15%

Table 16. Number of meetings chaired

	2016-17 total	2017-18 total	2018-19 total	April-June 2018	July-Sept 2018	Oct-Dec 2018	Jan-March 2019
CYPIC Reviews	553	580	572	148	139	166	119
CP Conf	321	314	360	89	89	103	79
CIN reviews	474*	271	417	103	96	103	115
Total	1,348	1165	1349	341	328	377	333

5.2 A key responsibility for IROs is to ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are known and are influential in formulating the care plan. IROs must also establish whether the child knows their own rights and entitlements in law, for example that they can make a complaint, have an advocate or apply to court under S8 of the Children Act .

5.3 It has been a key priority for the service to increase the level and effectiveness of IRO engagement with children and young people, however despite the teams' enthusiasm and commitment to better engaging with and promoting direct participation of children and young people in their care planning, no tangible improvement has been made to the number of young people being effectively consulted by IROs, or directly participating in their care planning.

Table 17 : IRO consultations

Percentage of Children	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	201718	201819	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
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separately visited and consulted prior to Review	45%	35%	34.5%	34%	33%	32%	35%	27%	38%
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5.4 IROs report that only 1% children and young people don't have their views represented in the meeting at all, however currently only 32% are choosing to actually attend and directly contribute with 39% either having their views represented by a third party or via written report / consultation record.

Table 18 : CYPIC participation in their reviews

	2013 14	2014 15	2015 16	2016 17	2017 18	2018 19
Child under 4 at time of Review	15%	13%	18%	17.4%	19.4%	25.5%
Attends or speaks for him/herself	40%	41%	38%	39.5%	36.7%	32.6%
Attends, views rep. by Advocate	2%	0.5%	1%	1.3%	.8%	0.1%
Attends, views given non-verbally	0%	2.5%	0.3%	0.6%	1.0%	0.52%
Doesn't attend but briefs advocate	7%	11.5%	15%	10%	10.6%	10.6%
Does not attend but conveys views	32.5%	24.5%	23%	21.3%	24.6%	28.8%
Does not attend or convey views	3%	6%	4%	9.5%	6.3%	1.04%

5.4 The IRO Service is very determined that this must change, and this has been one of the primary drivers in the decision for IROs to cease overseeing Child in Need plans. The reduced caseloads will significantly increase IRO's ability to spend time meaningfully consulting children and helping to promote their voice and influence in the plans that are being made with and for them. It is our intention to try to get 80% of those aged over 4 years to attend their meeting.

5.5 Building on the work that has been undertaken by the IROs with the Speak Up Youth group to develop a new participation toolkit for child care reviews, the IROs have been instrumental in initiating a new Children's Champion task force, working with representatives from every team across the directorate to further review, update and embed an improved range of consultation and evaluation tools, processes and forum including safeguarding processes.

5.5 A key IRO function is to identify issues and trends in services provided to CYPIC, and report these to senior managers and elected members. IROs do this by routinely completing monitoring data after every review, and reporting on the issues that are being raised by IROs and addressed through informal & formal disputes. This data is readily available to managers as a live report and as part of the improved quality assurance framework a weekly bulletin monthly scorecard and quarterly analysis of this data will be shared with the management group and quarterly service report will be produced for strategic partnership.

5.6 IRO's evidence their monitoring of the progress of plans between reviews by conducting a brief "mid-way check" between reviews, an evidenced dialogue between IRO and social worker to ensure that care planning is on track. IROs also demonstrate their "footprint" on a case by making a record of their intervention and

oversight on the children's records. By actively monitoring progress in this way IROs are able to identify and address potential drift and it becomes less likely the IRO is faced with any unexpected developments on cases.

5.7 In York IROs continue to report that the placement, legal status, care plan and quality of corporate parenting are good for the vast majority of children, with the expectation that formal resolution activity is promptly initiated to address any shortfalls. Ongoing training is being provided to IRO's to ensure that there is a clear and shared understanding of what good looks like and quick identification and escalation of any deviation from this. New practice expectations have been produced for the full directorate to help embed these expectations.

Table 19 : Quality of care plan and corporate parenting

Quality of care plan in IROs view	IRO rating	2015/16 total	2016/17 total	2017/18 total	2018.19	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2019
	Outstanding	1.4%	1.8%	1.2%	1%	1%	1%	-	1%
	Good	89%	80%	81.6%	88%	84%	88%	93%	86%
	Req Improv	9%	18%	12.6%	30%	14%	9%	4%	3%
	Not recorded	0.2%	0%	5.5%	1%	-	1%	1%	2%

Table 20 : IRO Resolution Activity

See annex A for details of the issues raised

5.8 Where IROs raise concerns they generally tend to be practice issues, relating to poor quality or out dated Education Plans, Care Plans, Health Assessments and Placement Plans. The most common issues arising from child care reviews tend to be concerns about the quality of the social workers report / updated assessment, and concerns about the quality of the child's written care plan, placement plan or delegation of parental responsibility. Of concern there has also been persistent concern across the year about the timeliness and recording of some statutory visits to children in care— such issues have continued to be particularly prevalent where there has been a high turn over in allocated social worker - particularly in the safeguarding social work teams.

5.9 Competing workload demands within the social work teams is such that there is sometimes some delay in identified issues being completed even after the social work team have acknowledged and agreed to address the shortfall. Improved reporting tools and cycles are being developed to help promote improved tracking and responsiveness to issues raised at an informal level, to help disseminate learning and avoid issues needing to be escalated through the formal resolution process

5.10. An action arising from the recent all service review is the decision to launch revised practice expectations across the directorate to help drive consistently good practice, compliant with best practice models and statutory requirements – the IROs will be pivotal in helping to embed and promote adherence to these.

5.11 IROs have good professional relationships with children's social work teams. Where issues or differences of opinion exist, IROs will always seek to resolve the matter informally with the social worker or the social worker's manager. Co location of the IROs with the social work teams facilitates prompt identification and resolution of most issues. This approach supports York's relationship based approach in which the IROs employ a solution-focussed, collaborative approach to prevent issues escalating into a formal dispute, and most key performance indicators evidence practice improvements since the preceding year.

5.12 The IRO Unit are co located and maintain close working relationship with the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service. The Service offers advocacy to children and young people in care and, if necessary, will support them through the City of York Corporate Complaints procedure. Advocates continue to support CYPIC with issues similar to those identified by the IROs. IRO's were responsible for 4% of the referrals made to the advocacy service this year, and have helped to promote many of the referrals made to the service by social workers and foster carers.

Table 20 ; Issues that the advocacy service has supported CYPIC with.

Support to have voice heard in decision making	16 (23%)
Placement issues	23 (32%)
Contact issues	11 (15%)
Other	9 (13%)
Unhappiness with social work service	7 (10%)
Education	3 (4%)
Access to support/services	2 (3%)
Total	71 (100%)

In Summary

Based on the data arising from IRO consultations with young people, Quality Assurance Monitoring and referrals to the advocacy service key issues to be addressed in the coming year include:

1. The need to maintain manageable IRO caseloads to enable statutory compliance and expedient and robust service development
2. Sufficiency of local placement provision is currently impacting on placement stability and social work workload. In addition to the plans to commission new placement provision within York it also continues to be a priority to recruit, train and appropriately support a larger and more diverse pool of local authority foster carers to reduce the use of costly out of area and independent care provision.
3. Some children continue to experience multiple changes of social workers and interim cover by different agency and duty social workers as a consequence of

increased social work sickness and recruitment issues. Significant investment is being made within children's social care to improve recruitment, training, support and retention via use of a range of live learning and consultant agencies, Frontline Program and development of a social work academy in partnership with York University to embed a well resourced and supported post graduate employment scheme for newly qualified social workers.

4. Staff retention and competing workload demands are impacting on quality and timeliness of completion of some social work assessments, reports and key statutory processes. There is a need to ensure that all workers are aware of and adhere to required practice standards at all times, and that IROs have effective and expedient mechanisms to quickly and effectively escalate any non compliance and contribute to further development of best practice models. The escalation process is to be relaunched, supported by improved reporting tools and cycle.
5. Competing caseload demands are similarly impacting on the time that workers are spending with children and young people to properly consult and engage them in planning for their own futures. Priority focus needs to be shifted back to this direct work being seen and understood as the most critical and important aspect of both the social work and the IRO task.

Sarah Olorenshaw
Service Manager Independent Reviewing Service
Report dated August 2019

Corporate Parenting Board – Draft Work Plan 2019-20 – for discussion

Meeting Date	Strategic Themes	Reports Supporting Strategic Theme	Other Reports
Tues 3 Sept 2019 – 5pm	Respect and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Advocacy Report 2018-19 • Show Me That I Matter Annual Report • U Matter Survey 2018 • IRO Annual Report 	None
Tues 26 Nov 2019 – 5pm	Good Safe Placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement Sufficiency Report • Pathway report 	None
Tues 11 Feb 2020 – 5pm	SMTIM /ISM led session	Pledge and ISM/SMTIM Update	
Tues 28 April 2020 – 5pm			

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