

SPEAK UP, YORK CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT AND REVIEW OF ADVOCACY

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019

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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 common 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

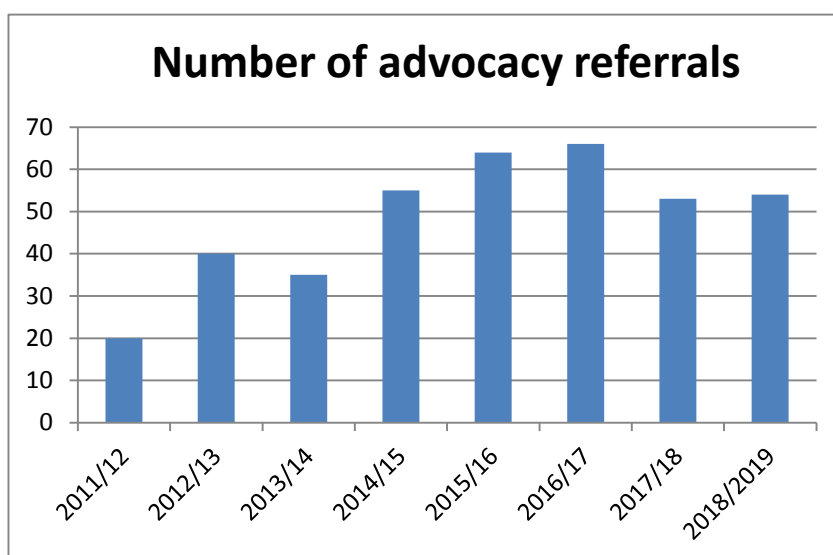
For Speak Up to function effectively, children, young people and professionals need to be aware of, and have an understanding of, the service. When a child or young person first comes into care, they are issued with an information pack which includes information about their rights and entitlements and 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.

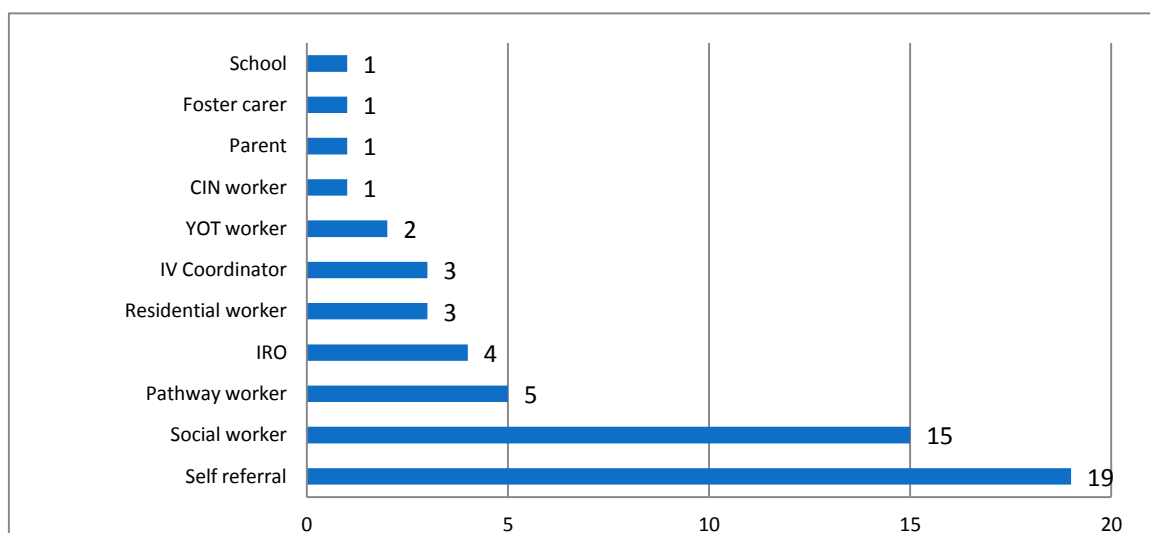
ADVOCACY REFERRALS - STATISTICS

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



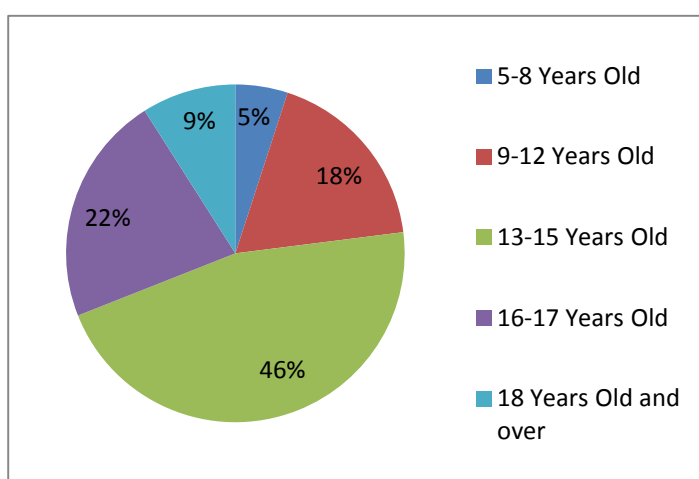
The majority of referrals this year came from young people directly (35%) and social workers (27%) which is similar to findings from previous years. The range of referrers suggests that awareness of the service is increasing, which is a real positive.

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.

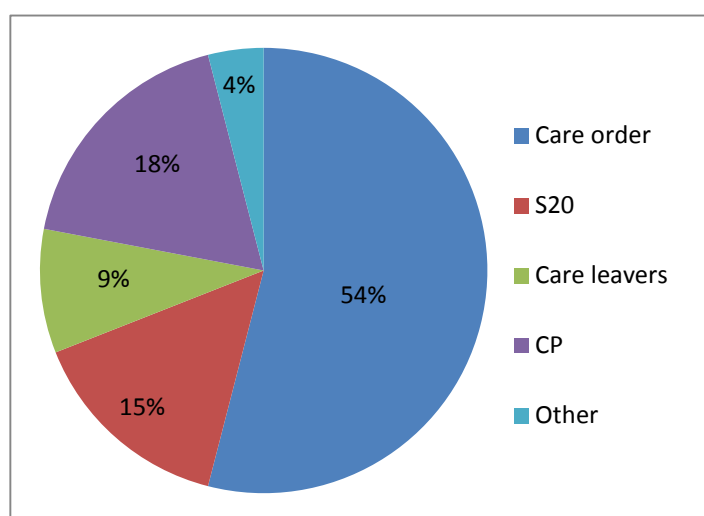
Last year, advocacy became available to care leavers up to the age of 21. Last year, 8% of the referrals were for care leavers and this year that increased slightly to 9%, which was expected.

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.

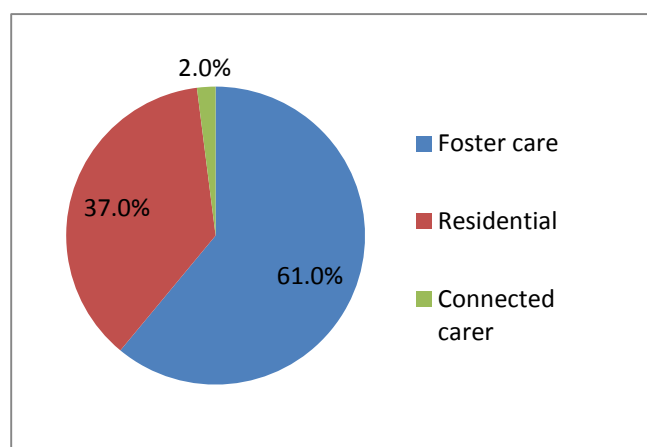
	No. of advocacy referrals 2018/19	Population snapshots on 31/03/2019	Advocacy referral as % of total population
CYPIC	38	162	23%
Care Leavers	5	107	5%
Child Protection	10	109	9%

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

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

Annex A

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

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the 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

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*