



NYAS

Children Services six monthly Narrative Report

1st August – 31st January 20017

Cardiff Advocacy Team

1. Overview of service this period

- NYAS worked with a total of 151 new referrals this period.
- NYAS provided advocacy representation in relation to 174 issues.
- 87 issues were carried over from previous months.
- A total of 261 issues were supported by the advocacy service this quarter.
- 153 cases were closed within this period.
- The majority of referrals were to work with children in the child protection. Service, followed closely by looked after children and young people. We have experienced an increase in referrals from unaccompanied asylum seeking young people for advocacy and/or appropriate adult representation in the age assessment process.

2. Promotion, development and training

We have continued to actively promote and develop the advocacy service within children's services as well as the private and voluntary sector this quarter.

- At the last contract monitoring meeting it was agreed that an operational group would be set up to address specific areas of development to ensure accessibility of nyas services to all children and young people. Two meetings have taken place within this period. It was agreed that meetings would take place bi-monthly. Initial key areas of development have been agreed which include taking forward the creation of advocacy champions within service areas, lunch and learn sessions for staff, a nyas awareness day, raising awareness of the participation service and devising and implementing a referral process and raising awareness of the independent visiting service and implementing an outcomes framework to evidence value of the service. It was also agreed that other wider issues (identified by the service through our direct work with children and young people) could be addressed through small task and finish groups which would result in improvement of services to children and young people within these specific areas.

- Training to children's services staff in Cardiff and the Vale took place in December. Twenty participants were booked on to training but only six actually attended which was disappointing. Despite the small number, the session went well and feedback was positive, one participant fed back that they would have liked more focus on children's rights, Nyas will discuss further with children's services the wider learning needs of their staff in relation to children's rights and how we may be able to assist in meeting these. We have a further training session scheduled for March, which will need to be promoted widely with children's services if we are to secure attendance of greater numbers of staff.

3. Participation, visiting Advocacy , wider Consultation and Research

Participation. Work included:

- Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee listening event. Nyas worked in partnership with children's services and housing to run a participation event for care leavers to provide them with the opportunity to give their views on the planning, delivery and evaluation of leaving care services. Nyas produced a report on the event which made several recommendations as to how leaving care services could be developed and improved, which was presented to the committee in June. The committee held a feedback session with young people in September whereby the report's recommendations were agreed in full or in part
- Bright Sparks Awards. Nyas worked jointly with Cardiff Children's Services to plan and deliver yet another successful awards ceremony which took place on December 9th 2016 at Cardiff City Hall. Several planning sessions with young people were held to organise the event, which was on a bigger scale than usual due to this being the awards 10th anniversary. It was indeed an inspiring and heart-warming event, which celebrated the many achievements of looked after young people and care leavers within several areas of their lives. The Children's Commissioner for Wales Sally Holland was in attendance and spoke at the event which was hosted by our participation workers and three young people from our participation group, the event also showcased the talents of children and young people across the city of Cardiff with singing from Rhymney Primary School choir and Sound in Motion dance group.
- Our participation group has continued to meet on a fortnightly basis at our Nyas office base in Cardiff. Group membership has remained stable but we wish to recruit newer members to the group, including young people from other service areas which are currently underrepresented such as care and support, in order to achieve this it is essential for us to work collaboratively with children's services to raise awareness of the group and encourage and support children and young people to get involved. We intend to take this forward at the next operational meeting. The group has also embarked on other work within this period, including consultation on young people's involvement and membership of the Corporate

Parenting Advisory Committee , finalising the design of the fostering handbook and working with Children in Wales on their views on health issues for looked after young people .

- A number of care experienced young people from Cardiff have been recruited as peer advocates and peer mentors/mentees with nyas. They have recently undertaken accredited training with us and are currently completing their induction before being matched up with a peer mentor/mentee or being placed within local agencies and organisation to gain work experience as peer advocates.
- Nyas have been a co-opted member of the Corporate Parenting Committee since May 2015. The committee is currently reviewing its membership and attendance and with this it has been recommended that nyas step down from their position due to the recruitment of two young people and the forthcoming recommissioning of the advocacy service. Nyas are concerned about the impact of such a decision on the wider voice of children and young people and feel that the committee will lose an important children's rights perspective from a professional independent body. We have put together a paper highlighting our concerns and made the request that these representations be heard by committee members before any decision is made.
- Nyas in Cardiff are offering a social work placement for the second year running. Our student was placed with us in the September of this reporting period and she finishes placement in March this year. We wish to extend our involvement with social work training this year and input further on the social work degree courses within South Wales.
- We have continued to visit Crosslands Residential Unit on a monthly basis. The advocate has engaged well with the children and young people. 1 referral was received via visiting advocacy this quarter.
- NYAS has continued to have a strategic presence in Wales through regular attendance on the Advocacy Providers Group and through attending the task and finish group within the Welsh Government that will look to take forward the national approach to statutory advocacy in Wales. Nyas welcomed the opportunity to present evidence to the Welsh Government as part of their enquiry into the commissioning of advocacy.

4. Themes / Issues/recommendations this period.

- Nyas has been undertaking the appropriate adult role within the age assessment process since May 2016, the role of the appropriate adult is to ensure that unaccompanied asylum seeking young people have an independent person to ensure that their rights are upheld, their welfare safeguarded and a fair process is adhered to. We are concerned about the

often substantial delay some young people are experiencing in being age assessed, these young people have had to wait several weeks from when they are first referred to children's services for an age assessment, many of these young people are left under the support of National Asylum Support and living in accommodation with older adults. There also appears to be an inconsistency in practice in relation to whether young people are accommodated by social services whilst the assessment is ongoing and a decision on age is pending. Some of these young people are then later assessed as children, and have not been in receipt of looked after services whilst other unaccompanied asylum seeking young people are accommodated pending assessment and get the full ambit of services, such a practice also raises safeguarding issues for this vulnerable group of young people who find themselves placed in adult accommodation.

We wish to ascertain whether the local authority have an internal policy which clarifies working practices in relation to the age assessment of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, and would welcome the opportunity to work with the local authority to improve systems and processes for this client group, which could be achieved through our operational meetings.

- Niyas are also aware of the need to improve upon the referral process to the appropriate adult service so we have the necessary information needed to effectively act in this role, which again can be taken forward within our operational meetings.
- Wider issues have also become apparent through our advocacy casework with unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. We have made representations on behalf of one young person who has felt unsupported by children's services in relation to support with his asylum claim. We have received feedback from the service that there is a capacity issue in supporting young people with aspects of their claim such as attending solicitors appointments, support in court when exercising rights to appeal as well as support if detained in an immigration and removal centre. Whilst we recognise that children's services have limited resources they have a duty of care for this extremely vulnerable group who urgently require robust intervention and support at this difficult and traumatic point in their lives.
- The service has experienced ongoing issues with the complaints process this period, which has been highlighted in previous reports and within Corporate Parenting Committee. Children and young people have continued to experience substantial delay in having their complaints dealt with within the prescribed timescales within regulations, we have also raised issues in respect of team managers being tasked with the investigation of complaints where they have been involved in the decision making that the actual complaint relates to, resulting in a lack of impartiality within the process. We welcomed the opportunity to highlight these and other issues within the local

authorities internal review of their complaints process which has been led by someone independent from social services. Concerns have also been discussed at operational level whereby we felt feedback was taken on board and assurances given that these issues are being addressed, we will continue to monitor and make representations on behalf of children and young people and work with the local authority in a bid to improve the complaints process.

5. Is anyone better off?

Nyas aim to achieve 100% feedback from children and young people at the point of case closure. This quarter NYAS Cardiff closed 61 cases and received feedback from children and young people by way of feedback forms, feedback 1-5 scale and verbal feedback from children and young people.

The following feedback has been received from children and young people, carer's, parents and professionals.

Direct feedback from Young people

CYP 1 – “Thank you for helping me”

CYP 2 – “Nice to be listened to”

CYP 3 – “All good”

CYP 4 – “I feel good, I'm happy with things”

CYP 5 – “I like you. You helped me”

CYP 6 – “Really good”

CYP 7 – “Feel ok, a bit better about things

CYP8 – “I want you to always be my advocate, I am still happy and sad but happy more”

CYP9 – “Thank you , if it wasn't for you I wouldn't have been paid the money by social services”

CYP10 – “Thank you x, I feel better having you there when I speak with social services, thank you have really helped me and been there for me”

Feedback scale 1-5

A total of 49 young people were asked on a scale of 1-5 how they felt about the issue affecting them at the outset of the advocacy intervention and then again at the end of the advocacy intervention, to ascertain distance travelled. 59% of children and young people had said that their situation had improved and 41% reported that it had stayed the same.

6. IV Service Outcomes

Active IV Cases

At time of writing nine young people are currently in receipt of an IV service from nyas in Cardiff. A total of thirty five recorded visits were made to children and young people within this period. Two new IV relationships commenced and appear to be going well

Two matches came to an end within this period. Both have been long term matches , one young person was an older care leaver and the relationship came to a natural end whilst the other young person and independent visitor have agreed that they will maintain contact with one another although the official IV relationship has come to an end

Two referrals were closed this quarter due to the young people deciding they no longer felt a need for the service.

Waiting and New referrals

We currently have five young people waiting to be matched:

Male/female	area	referral status
Female	Cardiff	matching questionnaire to be completed
Female	Cardiff	matching questionnaire to be completed
Female	Cardiff	matching questionnaire to be completed
Female	Cardiff	matching questionnaire to be completed
Male	Cardiff	matching questionnaire to be completed
Male	North England	Matching questionnaire completed. Targeted recruitment taking place.

Six new referrals were received within this period, one referral was received for an unaccompanied asylum seeking young person but was then closed due to him being reunited with his birth father in England. We have received very few applications from people wishing to become IVs with the service and the service coordinator is currently undertaking a recruitment drive to attract volunteers to the service. One young person waiting to be matched has profound disabilities and will therefore require an IV who has the necessary experience/skills to form a befriending relationship.

We have continued to promote the service amongst child care practitioners within the local authority, and are currently devising an outcomes reporting framework which will be able to feed into the looked after reviewing process and evidence the value of the service. The operational group is currently addressing both this issue of awareness raising of the service as well as well as improving interface between Children's services and nyas. Nyas has also being actively involved in the All Wales Independent Visitor Network , a professional forum which meets three times a year to for IV Coordinators to share common issues and best practice in order to improve standards and consistency of IV services. The overall aim is to improve standards and reach of IV services for children in care.