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## **NYAS Cardiff Advocacy Service Update**

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### **1. Reasons for the Report**

The report aims to inform the Committee on the work undertaken by NYAS Cardiff Advocacy Service for the reporting period of Apr – Sept 2023.

### **2. Background to the Service.**

- The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is a national charity providing information, advice, advocacy, and legal representation to some of the most vulnerable children, young people, and adults across the UK. NYAS Cymru is a registered provider of advocacy services under Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 [RISCA] Regulations.
- NYAS Cymru is commissioned by Cardiff and the Vale to provide a regional advocacy service to children and young people in receipt of support from Children's Services.
- NYAS Cardiff Advocacy Service offers independent professional advocacy (IPA) to children and young people aged 0-25 who are involved with Cardiff Children's Services. The overall remit of the project is to enable and empower children and young people to have a voice and to effectively participate within decision making processes.
- The service ensures that the rights of children and young people involved with Cardiff Children's Services are upheld in accordance with legislative and policy framework within Wales.
- The service provides both the active offer of advocacy and an issue-based advocacy service.

#### **Active offer**

The National Approach to Advocacy (NASA) places a duty on Children's Services to ensure all children and young people who become either looked after by or part of the child protection system are provided with the opportunity to meet with an advocate and receive timely information on how the advocacy service can support them. Following an active offer meeting, the child or young person can either decline or accept the offer of advocacy.

### **Issue based Advocacy.**

This service provides issue-based advocacy, whereby children and young people define the issues they want help with and decide how they wish to resolve these issues with the help of their advocate. Once their issue is resolved, or they decide they no longer want advocacy to support them the referral is closed. However, children and young people can return to the project in the future if they require support around other issues.

### **3. Overview of Referrals Received**

- For the financial year April 2023 and up until Sept 2023, 408 referrals were received into the Advocacy Service. These are broken down as 178 Issue Based Referrals with a total of 244 issues supported and 230 Active Offer Referrals.
- The Advocacy Service has received a total of 17 referrals for children and young people placed out of county, including those from neighbouring authorities as well as those residing further afield in both Wales and England
- Service requests can be broken down by referrals to support children and young people within the Child Protection System (76), and by requests for the service to support care-experienced children and young people (82). The service also received referrals from care leavers (4) as well as children and young people who were 'care and support' (outside of child protection) (16), but these numbers were comparatively much lower in total.
- The majority of Issue based advocacy referrals received were made by children and young people themselves (120) followed by social services (46)

and a small number referred by education, foster carers, health and third sector agencies. Where issue-based referrals resulted from the active offer of advocacy these were recorded as self-referrals as the young person had identified the issue, they wanted support with themselves.

- Of the issues presented to date during this financial year the majority of requests were to support children and young people to have a voice and for them to participate within their Children Looked After and Child Protection Meetings (105 in total). The service has also so far received 37 contact issues, 21 placement issues, 5 access to services issues, 14 school-based issues, 7 care leaver issues, 2 health-based issues, 2 home life, 15 emotional and wellbeing issues and 29 social services-based issues. A total of 7 complaints have been received to date, all of which were resolved with the support of the advocate.
- The service has continued to provide an accessible and inclusive support for those referred in and have provided support to 10 UASC, 24 children with disabilities, 6 Gypsy and Roma travellers and 1 LGBTQ+ child and 17 were children or young people placed out of county.
- The service has provided NYAS Cymru bursary support for 7 Cardiff young people including providing a bicycle to help a young person supporting their family with caring responsibilities travel to college and an IPAD to help with education and learning English and specialist sports clothing to support a UASC attend a cricket club. The Deloitte bursary fund has also donated 17 refurbished Laptops to young people individually and to support children and young people living in residential settings in Cardiff.

#### **4. Awareness Raising**

- The service has continued to attend scheduled meetings with Children's Services teams including Personal Advisor, Independent Reviewing Service and the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC] team to provide information on advocacy support and raise awareness of the advocacy service for Children's Services staff. The Senior Advocate has been working

closely with staff within Cardiff's inhouse residential provision to develop the monthly visits with the residents. A monthly report is collated and included in the quarterly monitoring reports.

- The project co-ordinator developed and delivered a practice matters workshop as part of a partnership offer being supported by NYAS Cymru and Cardiff Local authority social services teams. The purpose of the workshop was to share advocacy with social service staff members and develop a wider understanding of the rights and entitlements to advocacy and the importance of children's views, wishes and feelings in all matters that are about them.
- A range of publicity information for children and young people was made available to Children's Services to disseminate to the workforce, this has included a new multi-lingual leaflet for UASC that has been developed by the UASC NYAS Cymru project team in consultation with young people. A poster has also been created and shared with wider partners to support accessibility for UASC. The service has developed a leaflet for parents of children with additional learning needs and disabilities to help them understand the role of an advocate and how advocates will deliver advocacy to their children and young people in an inclusive and accessible way. A leaflet to explain the way that the service will deliver non-instructed advocacy is under development, we look forward to sharing these when finalised for dissemination.
- The service has continued to attend St David's College and Cardiff and Vale colleges on a regular basis and is strengthening advocacy awareness to the large number of care experienced children and young people who attend and has provided support with any advocacy needs they may have.

## **5. Key Achievements and Challenges**

- Children and young people are routinely asked to provide feedback on the service, and this is recorded in the quarterly monitoring reports. From the feedback we have been able to record children and young people were extremely positive about their experiences and felt that advocacy had helped them have their voice, wishes and feelings heard in all meetings about them.

Also, they have felt supported in finding resolutions to the issues they were facing.

- Children and young people were regularly afforded the opportunity to participate in the running of the service in several ways. Young people took part in recruitment of both NYAS Cymru and social care staff, helped devise their own advocacy plans and new publicity material. Young People also participated in a recent practice matters event whereby they created and delivered a presentation to social care staff, sharing their experiences of the care system and providing examples for changes they felt would make a difference to the experiences they had. This was extremely well received and, with children's services staff feeding back how impactful this was. The young people have been asked to deliver another session planned later in the year.
- The service continued to see an increase in active offer referrals within this period which is positive. However, incomplete referral information has continued to cause delays in children and young people accessing the service and referrals are often arriving either too late to facilitate the timeline required to deliver the WAO, or after the Initial meeting has taken place. The service has continued to seek solutions by working with Children's Services business support team and the operational manager. Together they have implemented a variety of solution-focused approaches that the service hopes will have a positive impact, leading to a more effective delivery for the WAO.
- The service continues to offer a child led service and will continue to undertake advocacy meetings via Teams or face to face in line with their feelings and wishes as well as age-appropriate methods following Welsh Government guidelines.
- Whilst referrals continued to increase from care experienced children and young people and those within the child protection system, referrals remained low from children and young people subject to care and support outside of the child protection arena. The service has been raising awareness by meeting with teams from the relevant Children's Services departments to raise

awareness and promote the service. The service hopes to see a rise in referrals from these teams.

- The service received 2 requests to provide an appropriate adult to young people within the age assessment process. This has been on a spot purchase basis as this is not part of the core service.
- The service worked with their charity partners Deloitte, Grange pavilion and Splash projects to co-design a community garden redesign with fifty volunteers developing improvements to the garden spaces to provide alternative meeting spaces for the children and young people accessing the service. The redesigned garden was kindly opened by Councillor Lister and community leaders.

**Candice Lloyd**

Service Manager

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**4<sup>th</sup> December 2023**