

## The Children's Rights Service – Update

### SUMMARY

- 1.1 Provision of the Children's Rights Service (CRS) is enshrined in legislation for looked after children through the Children Act 1989 and through related regulation and guidance. The Council has a statutory duty to provide advocacy services for looked after children making complaints and to appoint independent visitors.
- 1.2 As the last CRS contract came to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, in preparation for this a review of the services was undertaken. A comprehensive tendering process was completed. SOVA (Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults) were awarded the contract and they began providing some elements of a CRS as from April 2017. As part of the wider review it was agreed the Children in Care Council element would be brought in house with the appointment of part time participation officer.
- 1.3 As from 1st April 2017 SOVA have provided:

#### The Independent Visitor Service

Where it is thought to be in their best interest, children and young people are asked if they would like an Independent Visitor. Independent visitors are carefully matched taking into account shared interests, location, personality and any matters raised by social care practitioners. The service agreement with Derby City Council is for 40 + matches at any one time.

#### The Independent Advocacy Service

An advocate can help a child or young person make a complaint or any other representation about their care. They can accompany them to reviews or other meetings and ensure that their voice is heard. Referrals can be made by anyone and once received they are responded to within two working days, allocated based on suitability, complexity, location and availability.

#### Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference

Independent advocacy support for children/ young people at initial child protection conference. Includes meeting with the child/ young person to obtain their wishes and feelings and take these to the conference or supporting the child / young person to do so. Meetings only ever take place with the child/young person if that is their wish and with the express permission of their parents.

From January 2018 - Independent Advocacy for children privately fostered  
This is a new element and has been agreed in January to provide independent advocacy services for children and young people that are privately fostered.

- 1.4 This is first year that SOVA have provided services and this update provides an overview of their challenges and achievements so far. A full annual report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee Programme in the next municipal year.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To receive the report  
2.2 To note the progress made by SOVA and comment as appropriate.

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 As part of our contract there is a requirement for the service to provide regular updates and an annual report. The CPC members need to be assured that the CRS is meeting the needs of young people in care.

#### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4.1 None

#### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 None

**This report has been approved by the following officers:**

<b>Legal officer</b> <b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Estates/Property officer</b>  <b>Service Director(s)</b> <b>Other(s)</b>	
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**For more information contact:**  
**Background papers:**  
**List of appendices:**

Pervez Akhtar Corporate Parenting Lead  
Appendix 1 – Implications  
Appendix 2 – Introducing Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial and Value for Money**

1.1 None arising directly from this report.

**Legal Statutory obligations for this service will be contained within the report.**

2.1 There is a statutory requirement to provide a Childrens Rights Service for children in care.

**Personnel**

3.1 None arising directly from this report.

**IT**

4.1 None arising directly from this report.

**Equalities Impact**

5.1 None arising directly from this report.

**Health and Safety**

6.1 None arising directly from this report.

**Environmental Sustainability**

7.1 None arising directly from this report.

**Property and Asset Management**

8.1 None arising directly from this report.

**Risk Management**

9.1 None arising directly from this report.

## **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 10.1 The content of this report underpins the priority commitment, Protecting vulnerable children, young people, adults and older people. Making sure that we take action to safeguard vulnerable adults and children that require higher levels of support including; our looked after children and vulnerable adults with learning disabilities. This will involve early intervention and prevention wherever possible.