

The Children's Rights Service – Annual Report 2017- 18

SUMMARY

Children in Care Council Summary

On the 1st of April 2017 advocacy and independent visitor services changed from Volunteering Matters to SOVA. The annual report provides information about how SOVA have continued to provide these services. As part of the change two of the staff moved over from Volunteering Matters to SOVA.

Over the year SOVA have worked hard to keep their existing volunteers who provide the advocacy and independent visitor services, unfortunately some left when the move took place, so they have been busy recruiting and training more volunteers.

Over the year SOVA advocacy have provided help and support to over 62 young people in care. They have a monthly clinic in each of the residential homes so young people can speak to the advocates. It has been agreed with SOVA that they should at least provide 40 independent visitor matches to young people in care. At the end of the year there were 38 matches. Young people who live a way from Derby and who do not have any regular contact with family or friends are given priority for independent visitor matches.

SOVA also provide advocacy to help young people get their views across at the initial child protection conferences. These are children that still live at home. This has worked well over the year and continued to grow.

- 1.1 Provision of the Children's Rights Service 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.

The Children's Rights Service in Derby is made up of 3 services and from the 1st April 2017 it has been delivered by SOVA¹ the services include;

- The Independent Visitor Service

¹ Society of Voluntary Associates

- The Independent Advocacy Service for all children in care (Since January 2018 this has been expanded to include children who are privately fostered)
- Independent Advocacy at Child Protection Conference

1.2 Since taking over the contract for children rights service on 1st April 2017, SOVA has worked hard to develop partnerships and provide quality children's rights service. In 2017/18 SOVA have received 62 advocacy referrals, which covered a range of themes including placement issues, support for meetings/reviews and education issues. Advocacy clinics in residential centres have continued to take place on a monthly basis.

Advocacy in child protection conferences has continued to be provided and over 2017/18 73 young people were supported to participate in over 38 separate conferences.

In January 2018 SOVA agreed to provide independent advocacy to children that are privately fostered. There are a small number of children that are privately fostered.

In 2017/18 SOVA received 28 new referrals for independent visitors, There were some teething problems at the start of the years but these have now been resolved and currently at the end of year 38 young people have an independent visitor in place.

RECOMMENDATION

2.1 To consider content of report and make appropriate recommendations

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 As part of our contract there is a requirement for the service to provide an annual report. This is an important statutory service for children in care.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 Full annual report attached

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

| | |
|--|---|
| Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s) | |
| For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices: | Pervez Akhtar Deputy Head of Service Pervez.Akhtar@derby.gov.uk Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – SOVA End of Year Report 2017-18 Derby Children's Rights Service |

Appendix 1

IMPLICATIONS

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.