

Please note refreshments are available in the Exchange from 5.30pm

## Agenda

**1. Icebreaker (10 mins)**

*Young people from LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council) and CLF (Care Leavers Forum)*

**2. Introductions and Apologies**

*County Councillor Clarke*

To note who is attending and any apologies for absence.

**3. Notes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from 19 September 2023 (5 mins)** (Pages 1 - 12)

*County Councillor Clarke*

To agree for accuracy the notes of the meeting and receive any matters arising.

**4. Participation Team Update (20 mins)**

*Young people from LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council)/CLF (Care Leavers Forum)*

To receive an update on what the Participation Team have been doing with LINX and CLF since the last Board meeting.

**5. National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) Annual Report (20 mins)** (Pages 13 - 36)

*Kirsty Clarke, National Youth Advocacy Service*

To receive and comment on the Annual Report.

**6. Family Hubs (20 mins)**

*Catherine Brooks, Early Help Service, LCC*

To receive an update on the launch of the Family Hubs and the work that is going on in that area.

**7. Permanence Service Performance Update (30 mins)**

*Gina Power, Permanence Service, LCC and Young People from LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council)/CLF (Care Leavers Forum)*

Group work on data that is provided by the Permanence Service, LCC for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

**8. Care Leaver Week (5 mins)**

*Young People from CLF (Care Leavers Forum)/Jane Hylton, Leaving Care Service, LCC*

To receive feedback from Care Leavers week that took place in October 2023.

**9. Any Other Business**

*County Councillor Clarke*

To receive any other business.

**10. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

*County Councillor Clarke*

Wednesday, 10 January 2024 at 6.00pm in Savoy Suite 1, The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ.

# Agenda Item 3

## Lancashire County Council

### Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th September, 2023 at 6.00 pm  
in Savoy Suite 1 - The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8XJ

**Present: Members**

County Councillor Stephen Clarke	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Jeff Couperthwaite	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Ron Woollam	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Julie Gibson	- Lancashire County Council (Virtual – Teams)
David Russo	- Fostering Forum
Jaymie	- LINX/CLF Representative
Emma	- LINX/CLF Representative
Horateo	- LINX/CLF Representative
Mary	- LINX/CLF Representative
Chris	- LINX/CLF Representative

**Co-opted members**

Audrey Swann	- Education Improvement, LCC
Andreas Feldhaar	- Permanence Service, LCC
Mandy Williams	- Family Safeguarding Service, LCC
Moya McKinney	- Permanence Service - Leaving Care, LCC
Gina Power	- Permanence Service - Children in Our Care, LCC
Hayley Kinowski	- Safeguarding, Audit and Inspection, LCC
Catherine Brooks	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Adam Riley	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
April Pollitt	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Louise Humphreys	- Department for Work and Pensions
Bev Maymond	- Fostering Provider
Alex Wood	- Residential Provider
Caroline Waldron	- NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Maureen Huddleston	- Enhanced CLA Health Teams, University Hospitals Morecambe Bay (Virtual – Teams)

**Other Attendees**

Brendan Lee	- Looked After Children and Children in Care, LCC
Louise Anderson	- Children's Social Care, LCC

Clare Smith	- Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, LCC
Jane Hylton	- Care Leavers Team, LCC
Aaron Walmsley-Fishwick	- Care Leavers Team, LCC
Sam Gorton	- Democratic Services, LCC

## 1. Introductions and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from County Councillors Sutcliffe and Kay, Katy Hodgkinson, Andy Smith, Janice Laing, Clare Platt, Neil Drummond and Jo Swords.

County Councillor Julie Gibson and Maureen Huddleston joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

The Board were informed of new members since the last meeting (excluding the young people's meeting) held in May 2023:

- CC Jeff Couperthwaite had replaced CC Anne Cheetham, Lancashire County Council
- CC Howard Hartley, Lancashire County Council had filled a vacant position
- Alex Wood had replaced Angela Epps as the Residential Provider
- Bev Maymond, Fostering Provider had filled a vacant position

Louise Humphreys was attending on behalf of Edna Skillen, Department for Work and Pensions.

The Board noted that this meeting was Jaymie's (young person) last meeting. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Jaymie for his support and contributions over the years in representing the Children in Care Council (LINX), Care Leavers Forum and for his support at the Board meetings and was wished all the best for the future on behalf of all the members on the Corporate Parenting Board.

## 2. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

**Resolved:** That the Committee noted the appointment by the County Council on 25 May 2023 of County Councillors Clarke and Sutcliffe as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee, respectively, for 2023/24.

## 3. Notes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from 10 May 2023

**Resolved:** That the minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

## **Matters Arising**

Page 3 - The Board were informed that following on from the request at the last meeting, for the Chair, on behalf of the Board, to write a letter to Facilities Management, Lancashire County Council, supporting the request for the Care Leavers Forum to have an identified space on Wednesday evenings at County Hall, that this had now been agreed and the young people have met a few times since the agreement and it was felt to be working well and will be kept under review.

Page 5 – CC Gibson raised the final bullet point which was that a motion had been taken to Full Council on 23 February 2023 where it had been highlighted that there was a campaign to make 'care experienced' a protected characteristic and that several councils across the UK had already supported this campaign and requested that Lancashire County Council also support the campaign. CC Gibson asked for an update on this piece of work, and it was noted that this was part of the discussion at Item 6, Care Leaver Covenant and also:

**Resolved:** That Brendan Lee, Head of Permanence will arrange a meeting, following discussions with Louise Anderson, Director of Children's Social Care, with the Chair, Deputy Chair and CC Gibson with regards to making 'care experienced' a protected characteristic and how Lancashire will take this forward.

### **4. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference of the Committee**

The Board discussed the revised Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 'A', and following discussion, it was agreed that further amendments should also be included, as below:

**Resolved:** That the Corporate Parenting Board reviewed and approved the revised Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 'A', which includes the additional responsibility of the Board for overseeing the county council's adoption and implementation of the Care Leavers Covenant 'whole Council approach' following the request of Cabinet on 6 July 2023. There should also be the addition of Health and amend Lancashire's Children in Care Council (LINX) to also include the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) under the section "The Board will receive advice and reports from the following...".

### **5. Participation Team Update**

Young people from LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council) and the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) provided findings from the Corporate Parenting Board Youth Takeover event on 26 July 2023. The Board noted that 52 people from across different services in Lancashire County Council including Elected Members, NHS, private providers and other partners as well as 19 young people. A presentation with further feedback can be found appended to the minutes. The meeting included:

- An ice breaker.
- A young person spoke about their positive experience which included a good news story around support for getting employment and training.
- A creative activity about participation based on the Lundy model.
- Carousel style table discussions on Corporate Parenting Board priorities (Financial Support, Lasting Homes, Health and Wellbeing, Employment Education and Training) where each table looked at five main questions:
  - i) What is already happening?
  - ii) What is yet to happen?
  - iii) What would make the biggest change?
  - iv) Who or what can make this happen?
  - v) How can young people find out what's going on or of the change made?

There was positive feedback received at the end of the session which included:

- Less professional works better
- Good speech
- Great day – loved being able to speak to young people and hear their views – so important you take them forward.
- Lots to think about for me about how we undertake participation.
- Was a very good day should do it again to look at the progress of the points we spoke about.

Following on from the meeting in July 2023, young people focused on some points from what would make the biggest change, and spotlighted key areas on each topic:

### **What would make the biggest change?**

Feedback showed some common overarching themes which were:

- That young people need to be involved as early as possible.
- There needs to be better working together across the different services and better communication between the Council, other agencies and those that help young people such as social workers and personal advisors.

The Board were informed of things that young people think will make a difference, include:

- Health - helping with the skills to ensure young people are in good health.
- Lasting homes - extending the Housing Project and being more open when young people express a preference to live in a particular area.
- Education, Employment Training - being more directly involved in leading and managing Personal Education Plans (PEP).
- Financial support - more support particularly with making transitions would be really helpful. Young people can be confused about what is available.

## **Education, Employment and Training:**

The feedback that has been provided suggests that there may be some helpful solutions which could help all care experienced young people. Different organisations and teams are working together to help young people, however, some more support is needed.

Young people mentioned about them being more involved with their Personal Education Plans (PEP) however, they feel this can be difficult and need support to develop the skills to help them do this.

Young people commented that growing up can be worrying and stressful and that more support is needed to help them really understand the available options and what support is available. They also need help to be able to develop the range of skills that will help them with future employment. They feel that the way in which the various organisations communicate and share information with young people can be improved. They feel that young people need to be more directly involved in helping with communications and the methods in which it is shared. Many young people are active and know where to get information, however, it needs to be presented in a more young person friendly and accessible way.

## **Lasting Homes**

Young people commented that the transition to independence is a really important time in their life and there are things in place to help with this, however, if this is to be successful then some further support would be helpful, particularly in extending the House Project, given the challenges of housing across Lancashire and putting in place a preparation programme that is more flexible in how it will seek to engage with young people, and lessen any barriers that might otherwise put young people off from participating.

Points that stood out for young people the most were:

- Expanding the House Project.
- Changes within Social Housing to prioritise care leavers.
- Increase in one bedroom accommodation across the county.
- Support for practical tasks like DIY, a place to ask simple questions.
- Local connection being able to be challenged when a young person may have lived in a number of areas, or they want to move for career/education reasons.
- Managing transitions better so young people know what is going on.

## **Financial support**

Young people know there is a wide offer for children and young people regarding financial support, however they feel there are still some gaps in young people knowing what they are entitled to ie staying close, staying put, wider funding for aspirations and hobbies eg young drivers, College bursary, summer bursary flexibility, extended work placements and free school meals.

## **Health and wellbeing**

Young people commented that within this group there had been vast discussions around health and wellbeing around what is already available and what is yet to happen as well as the additional support that is needed. The key points that stood out to young people are to extend offers past 25 years, increase dental pathways, moving areas should not put you at the bottom of the list and automatic referrals take a while. They also feel that the access to GPs and support could be reviewed to ensure that young people have easier ways to talk to them or ensure they are receiving the right support they need.

During the session, young people also wanted to see if anyone had any new ideas on how care experienced children and young people can be informed of new changes and developments and to ensure that consistency is key by using a range of methods as it is not one size fits all. Some examples are provided in the presentation attached.

Following the young people's presentation, the following comments were made:

- Some of the points young people have raised are already being done and why do they not know about them, and other things are longer term fixes, where conversations are being had about them and other issues are fixes that can be done quickly.
- The Board needs to support the issues raised and discuss what needs to happen next as a Board and bring it together as an action plan.
- There is a separate health meeting where health and Children's Social Care colleagues meet to ensure that all requirements highlighted in the health priority are being met and this is something that needs to be reported back into the Corporate Parenting Board, and discussions will take place regarding this, on the best way forward.
- Again, in health, some of the issue raised are already happening, some can be done and also the information that has been provided by the young people will also inform some of the national work that is going on because there is a strong inference that the current guidance that shapes support for care leavers and children in care is being reviewed by Government and they are asking for young people's viewpoints.
- Feedback on the Health priority will be feedback to the Health Subgroup.
- It was agreed that Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service and April Pollitt, Participation Team, Lancashire County Council devise an action plan and have this signed off by the relevant management board and present this back to the Corporate Parenting Board so it can be monitored, and key



performance indicators (KPI's) set. Clare Smith, Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health Team, Lancashire County Council also agreed to support this area of work.

- The Corporate Parenting Board really value young people's input and really want to listen and act on what they are saying.
- Young people need to ensure issues are as specific as possible for the action plan.
- There were around six pages of bullet points from the meeting on 26 July 2023 and it was agreed that April Pollitt, Participation Team would circulate the relevant bullet points to the teams so that these can be actioned and utilised within the relevant services.
- The Board also needs to celebrate its' successes and look at how this can be done.
- Following on from the Young People's meeting look at having a 1/2/5-year plan and put timescales in there and seek the young people's top priorities which they want to be achieved first with timescales.

**Resolved:** That the Corporate Parenting Board:

- i) Thanked young people for their feedback from the Corporate Parenting Board Youth Takeover meeting on 26 July 2023 and that their comments are noted and will feed back into the different services.
- ii) Agreed that Health colleagues need to discuss further, how to feedback outcomes from the meetings that are held with Children's Social Care colleagues around issues raised by young people in the health priority.
- iii) Agreed that Caroline Waldron, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board, would ensure that issues raised under the health priority, will inform national work that is being reviewed by Government on current guidance that shapes support for care leavers and children in care.
- iv) Agreed that Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service and April Pollitt, Participation Team, Lancashire County Council devise an action plan and have this signed off by the relevant management board and present this back to the Corporate Parenting Board so it can be monitored, and key performance indicators (KPI's) set. Clare Smith, Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health Team, Lancashire County Council also agreed to support this area of work.
- v) Agreed that April Pollitt, Participation Team, Lancashire County Council would circulate the relevant bullet points from the feedback at the meeting on 26 July 2023 to the teams so that these can be actioned and utilised within the relevant services.

## 6. Care Leaver Covenant

Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council provided the Board with an update on the Care Leaver Covenant and Protected Characteristics. Further information can be found in the [presentation](#) that was attached to the agenda. The Corporate Parenting Board agreed to adopt the Care Leaver Covenant in 2022 and it was agreed by Cabinet in July 2023 that Lancashire County Council would adopt the 'whole Council approach' and the Terms of Reference of the Board were amended to reflect this as discussed at Item 4.

Clare Smith, Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council reminded the Board that the Council had also made a commitment to consider care experience as a protected characteristic and that this will support how the covenant is implemented. The campaign is being led nationally by Terry Galloway and 51 Councils nationally have passed motions of a similar nature regarding considering Care Experience as a protected characteristic alongside the other nine that are covered under the Equality Act 2010 making it illegal to discriminate for those reasons (eg age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity). Lancashire was the 16<sup>th</sup> Council in the country to pass the motion at Full Council on 23 February 2023.

The Board were asked to note and discuss how this can now move forwards as per the Lancashire Resolution which was passed on 23 February 2023 which was:

- i) When making decisions in relation to policies or plans to revisit present strategies that we recognise care experienced people as a vulnerable group who can face discrimination.
- ii) That we recognise the Council has a duty to put the needs of vulnerable people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration with them.
- iii) That the Council commits to consider those with care experience in the publication and review of its Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment.
- iv) That the Council considers the impact of care experience when reviewing relevant strategy and/or policies alongside protected characteristics.
- v) To promote our Corporate Parenting principles to other bodies and consider care experience with Council strategy alongside protected characteristic policy.
- vi) To formally call upon other bodies to adopt Corporate Parenting for children in care and care leavers.
- vii) Thank the Corporate Parenting Board for their leadership under County Councillor Clarke, recognised as Good in the January 2022 Ofsted Report.

The Board were asked how this can now be implemented with points iii) and iv) above being the most pertinent. In terms of the Equality Objectives a target could

be set by the Board to increase the number of care experienced apprentices, for example that Lancashire County Council employ as a local authority by a certain percentage, with four years to improve it. Also, going forwards, the Board may wish to agree that the Council considers the impact of care experience when reviewing relevant strategy or policies alongside protected characteristics.

The Board noted that there are also some national forums (both for professionals and young people) being formed to discuss how the authorities that have passed the motion can put it into practice to strengthen the work on behalf of care experienced people.

Under the whole Council approach, there are four priority areas that have been identified that the Council work on for care experienced young people which are:

- i) Training and Employment
- ii) Policy Partnerships
- iii) Social Value
- iv) Economic Development

The Board were asked to discuss in groups the four priority areas and:

- Brainstorm
- Pick the top two priorities.
- How will we do it and who do we need to support us?
- How do we monitor progress and outcomes?

Feedback was then provided from each group and is appended to the minutes.

The Council as part of the whole Council approach to the Covenant will make a joint public statement with Spectra to say this is what Lancashire is committing to.

In terms of the protected characteristics and ring-fencing jobs for care leavers the Board were reminded that this was discussed a few years ago, that whenever the Council went out to tender there was a certain number of apprenticeships that were ringfenced for care experienced young people. It was also noted that the Trade Unions should also be involved to support this.

The Board noted that the report will be presented to the Council's Chief Executive's Leadership Team by officers and care experienced young people and then to the Wider Leadership Team and a pledge will be requested from each Service, which will be reported and measured on.

There was also a suggestion with regards to a public campaign to raise awareness around the protected characteristic and those groups are protected and that maybe this was something the Care Leaver Forum could look at leading on raising awareness of what brilliant and fantastic young people Lancashire has

and to alleviate the negative stereotypes and this can be part of a detailed comms strategy.

**Resolved:** That this item would be brought back to future meetings on progress made, following on from the discussions and following presentations at Leadership meetings.

## 7. Care Leaver Week

Jane Hylton, Leaving Care Team, Lancashire County Council gave a presentation to the Board on the upcoming Care Leavers week which would be held 23-27 October 2023.

The Board noted the following that had been planned for the week:

- Events across the county planned by the locality Leaving Care Teams.
- Outdoor activity day at Borwick Hall.
- Outdoor activity day at Hothersall Lodge (Corporate Parent offer).
- Celebration Evening in The Exchange – 26 October 2023.
- In My Shoes Challenge – Care Leavers Forum

At the Celebration Evening there will be a raffle for young people and Board members were asked that if they had any community contacts to let Aaron Walmsley-Fishwick know, and he will contact them to see if they would donate a raffle prize. Alternatively if any Board members wished to donate a prize, to contact either Jane Hylton, email [jane.hylton@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:jane.hylton@lancashire.gov.uk) or Aaron Walmsley-Fishwick, email [aaron.walmsley-fishwick@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:aaron.walmsley-fishwick@lancashire.gov.uk).

The Care Leaver Forum have come up with an idea called Reality Paypoint 'In Our Shoes' challenge. Members were asked to get involved and live off a care leaver's allowance for a day and to feedback thoughts and feelings for that day through a diary, photographs or short story for examples. The information from the day will be collated with corporate comms and shared through Care Leavers Week to have an impact on strengthening the relationships and reflection on the life of a care leaver. Please forward replies to April Pollitt, email [april.pollitt@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:april.pollitt@lancashire.gov.uk) or Matt Rowe, email [matthew.rowe@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.rowe@lancashire.gov.uk) by Monday 16 October 2023.

**Resolved:** The Board noted the Care Leaver week information and accepted the Challenge set.

## **8. Local Member Grants**

Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council informed the Board that on 5 May 2022, Cabinet agreed that any funds left over in the Local Member Grant budget at year end over the £200 that each member can carry forward be allocated to schemes or projects designed to support looked after children and care leavers, with details of these allocations to be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Board noted that the projects that have been identified for 2023 are as follows:

- Care Leavers' Week
- PROUD Awards Ceremony
- Care Leavers' Residential Weekend
- Child in Our Care Activity and Engagement Days

**Resolved:** That the Board noted the projects that will be supported from the unspent Local Members Grant fund as agreed by Cabinet in May 2022.

## **9. Any Other Business**

### **Former Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board**

The Board paid their respects, following the passing of the former Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, Sue Pryn, who was a passionate advocate for children in care and care leavers.

## **10. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at 6pm in the Savoy Suite, The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ.



**Corporate Parenting Board**

Meeting to be held on 22 November 2023

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Caring for the vulnerable;

**National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and Independent Visitor Service  
Annual Report**

(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

Contact for further information:

Kirsty Clarke, Project Co-ordinator, National Youth Advocacy Service,  
email: [kirsty.clarke@nyas.net](mailto:kirsty.clarke@nyas.net)

**Brief Summary**

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is commissioned to deliver the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service across Lancashire and support a wide cohort of young people including;

- Children in our Care and Care Leavers
- Children in Need including unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)
- Children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan
- 16/17 Homeless Young People

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) annual report describes the number of advocacy referrals for each eligible cohort but what is evident is that both referrals and complexity of advocacy need has increased significantly from 257 referrals in 2021/2022 to 338 in 2022/2023.

In terms of Independent Visitors, the service received 40 referrals in 2022/2023.

There is a waiting list of 18 young people awaiting a match. The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) are providing ongoing communication and support to children and young people who are awaiting an Independent Visitor and are promoting the service as fully as possible.

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) annual report (Appendix 'A') also describes the types of referrals that have been received and from which service within Children's Services.

A significant priority for the Service is to explore innovative recruitment processes as recruitment to the Independent Visitor is challenging. The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) has comprehensively promoted opportunities to volunteer. However, the National Youth Advocacy Service's (NYAS's) involvement with other local authorities and the National Independent Visitor Network (NIVN) shows this to be a national issue post covid pandemic with significantly less applications.

### **Recommendations**

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to:

- (i) Comment and receive the report.
- (ii) Consider the suggestions made within the Annual Report (Appendix 'A') regarding the necessity to recruit more Independent Visitor Volunteers through Lancashire County Council which could be achieved through the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership.

### **Detail**

The Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service has had another successful year of delivery as detailed in the Annual Report (Appendix 'A') and the PowerPoint presentation (Appendix 'B'). Awareness raising continues across a broad range of providers and services which is strengthening understanding of the provision.

The Service has an increased number of referrals in 2022/2023, compared to 2021/2022, undertaking 338 referrals.

- 74 Child Protection
- 264 Issue Based (205 for Children in our Care and Care Leavers)

Young people are supported on a wide range of topics including the most common:

- Children Looked After reviews
- Homeless Protocol
- Change of placements
- Living arrangements
- Local Authority Stage 1 complaints

Feedback from young people and professionals is overwhelmingly positive, with young people reporting that they feel that their rights and entitlements were clearly explained, and they felt more equipped and confident to attend meetings and understand decision-making.

Children and Young People who are supported by Independent Visitors also report long-lasting matches to IVs who get to know them well and provide a wide range of creative and supportive opportunities.

### **Appendices**



Appendices 'A' and 'B' are attached to this report. For clarification they are summarised as below and referenced at relevant points within this report.

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 'A'	National Youth Advocacy Service Annual Report 2021/2022
Appendix 'B'	Presentation





## **National Youth Advocacy (NYAS) Annual Report 2021/2022**

### **Advocacy and Independent Visiting**

#### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of the Service is to provide support to Children and Young People (CYP) who meet the criteria for the Service, through the following elements:

- Advocacy
- Independent Visitors (IV)

The Service aims to ensure that vulnerable children and young people have the opportunity to influence decisions, policies and practices that affect their lives. The purpose of the Service is to provide independent advocacy support to eligible children and young people and to manage and sustain a pool of Volunteer Independent Visitors for Children Looked After (CLA), to fulfil the requirements set out in legislation and the accompanying regulations and guidance.

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) continued to deliver the advocacy and Independent Visitors (IV) services throughout the pandemic, offering face to face visits as well as virtual contact where and when required. Promotion of the service has continued with all stakeholders.

Referrals for advocacy have remained consistently high and there has been an increase in Independent Visitors (IV) referrals. Throughout the pandemic it has become increasingly more challenging to recruit new volunteers so this and an increase in referrals has led to a higher-than-normal waiting list.

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) have continued to offer services to young people living outside of Lancashire by accessing advocates and volunteers in other areas. 82% of advocacy referrals received lived in Lancashire, 18% out of area and include Manchester, Bolton, Wigan, Blackpool, Blackburn, Birmingham and Bury.

22% of Independent Visitors (IV) referrals from 2021/22 live out of area in Wigan, Bolton, Blackpool and Blackburn.

The National Youth Advocacy Service have developed a local participation plan for Lancashire, have consulted with many young people and are now offering interview training to young people who would like to sit on the interview panel with staff.

## 2. Referrals

### a) Breakdown by district/ type/ outcomes/ signposting

Advocacy referrals – following data queries and continued adaptations to NYAS' new case management system CHIP – the figures below differ slightly to those already submitted in previous quarterly reports:

35	Child Protection (CP)
222	Issue Based Advocacy (IBA)
<b>257</b>	<b>Total referrals</b>

	<b>Child Protection (CP)</b>	<b>Issue Based Advocacy (IBA)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Q1	7	53	60
Q2	10	46	56
Q3	6	59	65
Q4	12	64	76
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>257</b>

Of the 257 advocacy referrals the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) can identify 189 by Children's Social Care Team:

#### **Central teams submitted 55 referrals:**

Central: 7

Chorley/South Ribble: 16

Preston: 24, West Lancs: 8

#### **East teams submitted 75 referrals:**

East: 13

Burnley: 20

Pendle/Rossendale: 11

Hynburn/Ribble Valley: 31

#### **North teams submitted 59 referrals:**

North: 10

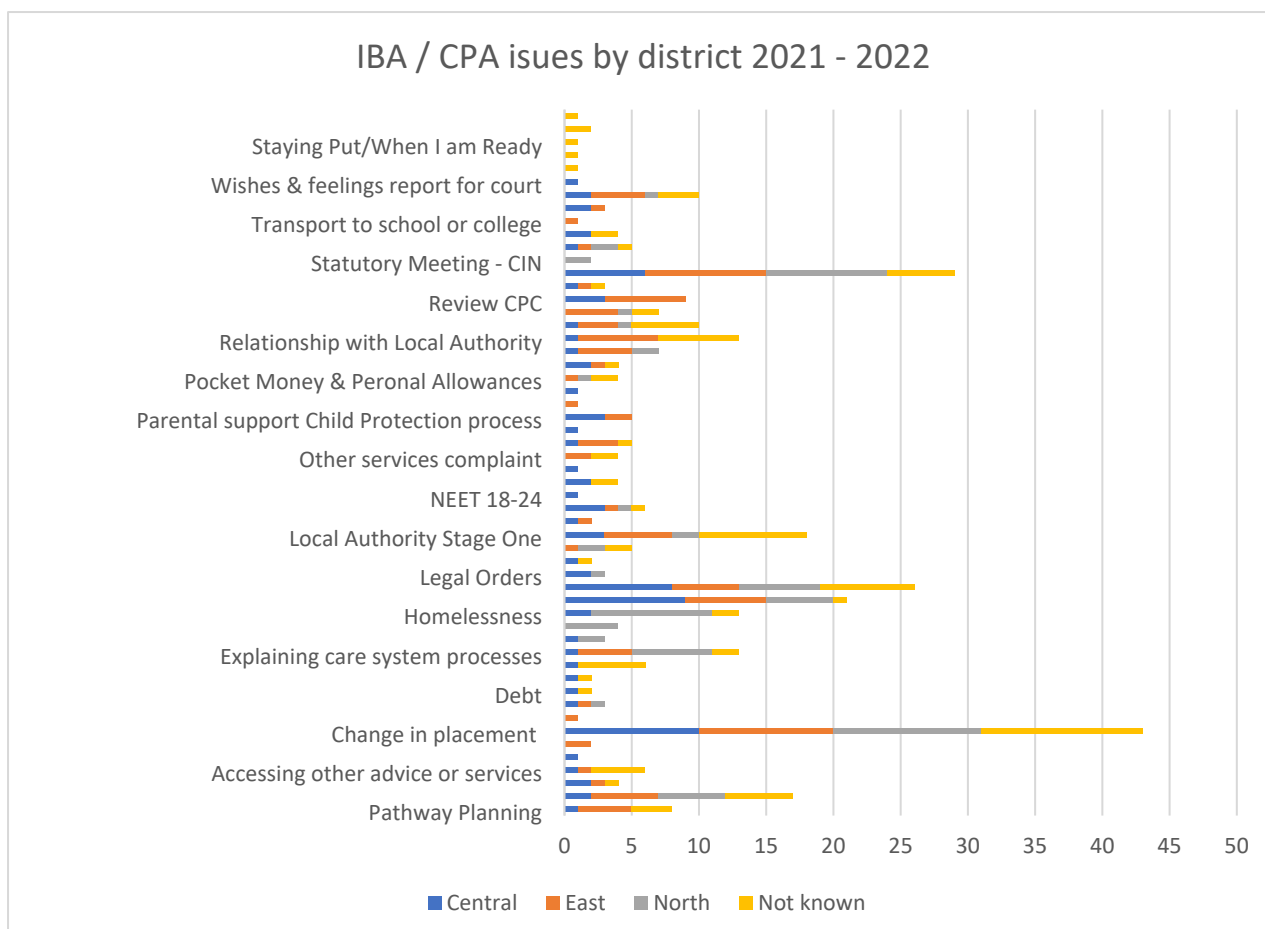
Lancaster/Morecambe: 31

Fylde: 18

There are 68 referrals where the team has not been added by the referrer, which make a full analysis difficult.

The National Youth Advocacy Service also received a further 16 referrals that did not progress due to incomplete referrals and information not being shared when followed up and where referrals were submitted without consent of young person.

The chart below shows 257 issues by district, please note there are further 106 issues not linked to a team (it is helpful if the referrer adds the social care team at the point of referral).



The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) have closed 229 advocacy cases and 275 issues within the contract year. Breakdown of issue outcome is as follows:

- Resolved -189 (69%)
- Partially resolved – 31 (11%)
- Service ended before resolution ie non engagement/ service declined – 50 (18%)
- Unresolved – 3 (1%) – the 3 unresolved issues are due to meeting cancellation, stage 2 complaint outcome was not in line with young persons wishes with their placement move, unable to challenge financial entitlements for young person to remain in foster placement on special guardianship order (SGO)
- There are 67 open advocacy cases at year end

The Independent Visitors (IV) service received 50 referrals this contract year, this is an increase on previous years and referrals in quarter 4 doubled in comparison to referrals in previous quarters.

52% of the Independent Visitors (IV) referrals are for females, 48% male. The majority of referrals (58%) are for young people aged 12-15 years, 26% for those aged 16+ and the remaining 16% are for under 12-year-olds.

52 young people have been matched to a volunteer in the contract year and we go into 2022/23 with 25 young people waiting to be matched to an Independent Visitor.

### 3. Awareness Raising

The National Youth Advocacy Service attended the following meetings to raise awareness of the service:

- Lancashire County Council Social Worker Academy x4
- Targeted Youth Support
- Compass Foster Care Agency
- Lancashire County Council Participation Summer Activity Days
- ROC Northwest Residential Visiting Advocacy sessions
- National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) Residential Visiting Advocacy teams
- Edge Hill University
- UCLAN

Literature distributed to:

- Commissioners- to promote via Lancashire County Council intranet
- Virtual School
- Children in Care Council
- National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) Residential Visiting Advocacy teams
- Social workers in North, Central and East teams
- Children in Care Council
- We are with you Lancashire (substance misuse)
- Universities – UCLAN, Edge Hill, Lancaster, Blackpool
- Swiss Foster Care
- Promoted within private and Lancashire County Council residentials during IVCO/Advocate visits.

To promote opportunities to become a volunteer Independent Visitor:

- Universities – UCLAN, Edge Hill, Lancaster, Blackpool
- Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) – Lancaster, Bolton, Blackburn, Burnley, Rossendale, Skelmersdale
- Our Lancashire
- Radio interview on BBC Lancashire to promote the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and Independent Visitors (IV) service. As a result, the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) have been contacted by other radio stations interested in doing similar features which the National Youth Advocacy Service are currently investigating. You can listen to the full interview on BBC Sounds <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09jg2vr> From 1hr 10mins onwards (7:10am).
- Our Lancashire Chorley and South Ribble newsletter
- Our Lancashire Fylde and Wyre newsletter

- Paid advertisement through Instagram and Facebook, targeted in the areas where young people are waiting to be matched.
- Edge Hill University and UCLAN volunteer roadshow
- Do it website
- Existing IVs shared within their networks
- Posters in local shops and community centres

Of the 23 volunteers who have applied, 10 completed the 'Equal Opp's data which shows 90% are female, 10% non-binary, 90% White British, 10% Black British and 20% consider themselves to have a disability. There is an even split amongst age groups as shown below:

16-24	2	20%
25-29	2	20%
30-34	3	30%
35-39	1	10%
50-54	2	20%
<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4. Partnership working

Positive working relationships have been developed across Children's Social Care teams, attending team briefings, social work academy presentations and promoting the service across the local authority.

Ongoing work with Lancashire County Council Participation Service; the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) promote Children in Care Council and Care Leaver forums and attended summer activities day to help recruit new young people to the forums. National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) shared contact details of 9 young people who are interested in joining the Children in Care Council.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) continue to develop relationships with local universities to raise awareness of the service and recruit new volunteers.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) has excellent relationships with Community Volunteer Centre's across the county and in bordering towns where volunteers are needed for 'out of area' referrals.

#### 5. Participation of children and young people

- All young people agree a communication plan to determine how they would prefer to be contacted by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), whether this is in person, on the phone, text messages or via video calls.
- Advocacy Action Plans are completed with young people where appropriate – agreeing who will be spoken to and what outcomes are desired.
- Children and young people accessing the IV service complete matching questionnaires to say what sort of volunteers they would like and what their interests are; it is up to young people if they chose to meet a volunteer after seeing their 'About Me' booklet.

- Young people have attended interview training skills and can now be part of the interview panel for potential volunteers.
- Feedback is sought on an ongoing basis.
- A NYAS National Participation Manager has been appointed and regional participation officers will be recruited in 2022.

## **6. Covid 19 and adapting to new ways of working**

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) have continued to deliver all services throughout the pandemic.

During lockdowns many National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) visits took place online or outdoors only, particularly for the IV service. IV's posted activity packages, and connected via video call for virtual activities such as bake off's, movie night, afternoon tea etc. Where it was safe to do so, subject to risk assessments advocacy visits continued face to face. National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) found schools to be very accommodating to visits in this time.

## **7. Successes**

- Hybrid model of delivery – a virtual offer of advocacy and Independent Visitors (IV) continues, if young people prefer this as we make our way out of the pandemic; communication plans are agreed with all children and young people.
- Christmas participation event for the Independent Visitors service provided the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) with valuable feedback on what is working well and areas for development, as well as providing an opportunity for volunteers and young people to meet as a group and have some fun.
- Feedback received from young people and other professionals about advocacy and IV services is consistently positive.
- Young person interview training delivered and already put to use, receiving excellent feedback from the young person, potential volunteers and staff members involved.
- Increase in advocacy referrals for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and development of resources in different languages (ongoing).
- National Youth Advocacy Service's (NYAS's) Director of Policy and Research has been re-elected to serve a further two years as co-chair of the national *Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers*.



## National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) celebrated National Volunteer Week in June 2021:



National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) celebrated volunteers by sending them a thank-you package containing a gift per day.

Unfortunately, two planned outdoor best practice celebration events had to be cancelled due to local guidance in relation to the Delta variant.

All volunteers were invited to a virtual talk, 'Promoting Resilience by Prof Robbie Gilligan' demonstrating the value of the Independent Visitors (IV) relationship.

The following video has been created, with the help of two Lancashire volunteers, to show appreciation and raise awareness of the volunteer Independent Visitor role.



VID-20210517-WA0  
014 Vol Week Video

### Campaigning:

- National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) are asking local authorities across England and Wales to sign up to and implement the **My Things Matter pledge** which promises care-experienced children and young people that moving home will be a positive experience. 1 in 3 care-experienced children and young people will move home this year. That is over 26,000 children in England and 2,200 children in Wales.
- **'Trouble with the Law'** calls on all Police and Crime Commissioner candidates to recognise vulnerable children and young people within their election campaigns across England and Wales.
- Independent Visitors are continuing to stay in contact with children and young people, listening to them and providing vital care and stability to those who feel lonely, isolated and anxious. **The Right Friend Campaign** aims to protect and promote the voice and well-being of care-experienced children and young people. Watch the **'Independent Visitors – Our Legal Right'** Animation video below from the National IV network The film was produced by a group of eighteen care-experienced young people to produce what they feel is a really engaging film that draws on their personal experiences of having an Independent Visitor and reflects the uniqueness of the IV relationship. <https://youtu.be/BxoZSHrH4GE>

### 8. Key Challenges

- Covid 19 lockdowns, local tier 4 restrictions and individuals requiring isolating after testing positive, having symptoms or having had a close contact with someone

with covid-19 has meant some IV visits have been sporadic, but have reverted to virtual contact where young person was happy with this.

- Reduction in requests for virtual contact with volunteers as the pandemic continued meant for some young people there was less contact than expected, but this was their choice as many wanted to wait until it was safe to meet in person.
- The development of Peer Advocacy has been delayed due to challenges posed by the pandemic and will be developed during the 2022/23 contract year.
- Decrease in the number of volunteers applying to become an IV, particularly from January 2022. This is not specific to Lancashire, this has been a national issue within NYAS as well as other IV service providers, as discussed at the National Independent Visitor Network (NIVN).
- Transfer to new case management system, CHIP and ongoing development work.

## 9. Development areas and priorities for 2022- 2023

- Peer Advocacy
- Volunteer Recruitment to reduce the waiting list of young people
- Increase Child Protection Advocacy referrals
- Increase the amount of feedback received from young people; National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) will look to develop an online/text survey.
- Independent Visitors (IV) outcomes framework to be developed locally, as the national piece of work through NIVN is expected to take some time to implement.

## 10. What do children, young people and families say?

All feedback received has been reported each quarter, this is a brief summary:

*Hello, I got your package today and as soon as opened it my jaw dropped. I don't think I have ever seen so much kind in my life. Thanks sooo much and I hope you have a wonderful easter (young person to their Independent Visitor (IV)).*

*I didn't know about the service till I was struggling and speaking to my social worker. I enjoy my visits and everything we do. I thought I was matched quickly and the service is great. (young person).*

*Hannah is a Legend! I have a few things going on at home and have been distant with her but she is kind and considerate and given me space and not judged me. She has given me good advice but more like a shoulder to rely on, she is funny, likes the same things as me, loves culture and matches my energy...I really didn't think this service would work but it is an amazing match. She is the best! Hannah is brilliant in every way and is now my friend. We are 'normal friends' but the only difference is we are doing it through NYAS but we are friends. (young person).*

*"You listened to me, you believed what I said and trusted me to know myself. Thank you for not forgetting me." (young person).*

*They put Muslim with Muslim and imagine we are the same thing. We are not the same sometimes, actually I am far more similar to my new carer who is white British and is not Muslim. I didn't feel like I was in a family before, I felt like it was a business. Just because they were Asian does not mean our cultures are the same, sometimes not even similar. We eat different food, we practice our religion differently, we speak*

*different languages. My new carer is not Muslim but I feel free to pray and to follow my culture. He provides Halal food and is really careful when we buy food that there are no ingredients that are Haram. They take me out, they don't count every penny - they buy me a drink when they have a drink, it feels natural. I feel like I have people who care about me. You listened to me, you believed what I said and trusted me to know myself. Thank you for not forgetting me. (young person)*

*Her IV has been amazing for Leana. Miriam is lovely, positive, thoughtful, and always thought about Leana's interests when planning her visits, although they have been mainly virtual. Leana has enjoyed the packs and actually made her pizza yesterday, her T/shirt was a great result she tie dyed. Small thing but had a positive impact. One of Leana's siblings whom Leana has issues with has the same name as her IV. Leana referred Miriam/IV as the nice Miriam (carer)*

*Thank you for the advice to support Carol to refer for an advocate, I can't believe how quick it was to sort, yes hopefully that's what she needs someone to really listen to her feelings (Grandparent of young person accessing the IV service)*

*I thank u very much for everything, wouldn't be where I am without u you're like a replacement mum 😊 really appreciate it thank you. ❤️👍 (young person)*

*I feel that you are the only professional that has succeeded in getting to the position we are at now. (parent)*

## **11. What do referrers say?**

All feedback received has been reported each quarter, this is a brief summary:

- *We are so pleased to have your help too, it has proven invaluable, due to your knowledge of the education system. (LCC Social Worker)*
- *Very very much appreciated for doing this with Kenzie! I have forwarded onto the relevant person and we are also going to ask the judge if he can meet with Kenzie if we can organise this. (LCC Social Worker)*
- *Thank you, for all your hard work. I felt Jimmy really benefitted from the way you worked with him and the way he was able to express his wishes and feelings through music. The rap was great and I'm looking forward to hearing it again 😊 (LCC Leaving Care Worker)*
- *Thank you, 😊 this is the first time I have used an advocate in my whole 4 years and just wanted to say the service you offer is wonderful! Thank you for all your help (LCC Social Worker)*





# Advocacy & Independent Visiting

Corporate Parenting Board

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023

Appendix B



## our vision

- Every child and young person has the right to be heard.
- Every child has the right to feel safe.
- Every child has the right to be involved in decisions being made about them.

## our mission

At NYAS we **listen** to what children and young people want, care about what they say and **empower** them to have their voices heard.

We ensure their wishes and feelings are expressed and acted upon to improve their situation and help them build a better future.

We will never stop in our efforts to influence, lobby and campaign to bring about positive changes and ensure children's and young people's rights are understood and upheld.

## our values



### Collaborative

We work closely with colleagues and partners to deliver an outstanding service to the children and young people who need us.



### Accountable

We are open, transparent and accountable, taking responsibility for what we do.



### Respectful

We value and respect each other and the people we work with, embracing diversity and nurturing trust.



### Empowering

We listen to children and young people when they feel they are not being heard, inform them of their rights, and empower them to change their lives for the better.

# Advocacy & Independent Visitor Service - Lancashire

2022-2023 Annual Overview

# Advocacy

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The Advocacy Service is available to:

- CYP who are Looked After (CLA) by LCC
- CYP who are Care Leavers, until they reach age of 25
- Children in Need (CiN) under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including unaccompanied asylum seeking CYP and trafficked children
- CYP subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Young Carers following assessment by the Young Carers Service
- 16/17 Homeless young people
- CYP (approaching 18 years) undergoing assessments to enable them to participate effectively in the planning and review processes for their transition to adult services. The Service is available where the CYP would have substantial difficulty in engaging with the care and support process; has no one else appropriate who is able to advocate on their behalf and wants an independent advocate.
- CYP with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) in transition to adult services
- CYP accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in transition to adult services
- Young Carers in transition to adult services.



# Advocacy Referrals 2022-2023

Quarter	CP	IBA	Total
Q1	18	43	61
Q2	31	73	104
Q3	19	66	85
Q4	6	82	88
	74 (35 previous year)	264 (222 previous year)	338 (257 previous year)

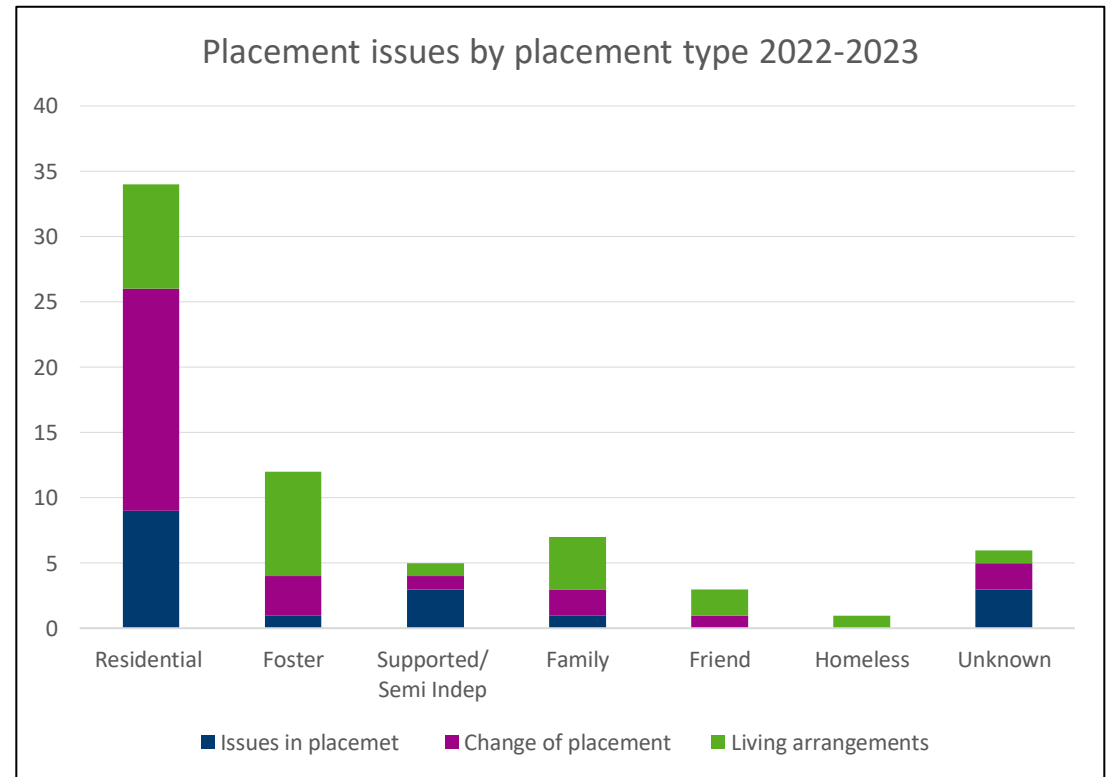
Care Leaver – 21  
 S20 – 42  
 S31 – 115  
 Interim - 27

# Advocacy Support

Most common reason for advocacy:

- CLAR review
- Change of placement
- Living arrangements
- Issues in placement

Breakdown of placement related issues by placement type. NYAS CHIP system is unable to differentiate between in house and private residential or foster care placements.



# Feedback

- *Thank you so much for ur work u have done with me. u stood strong next to me fighting my corner every step of the way. u don't understand how much work u have done for me, it's means a lot (CYP about their advocate)*
- *Having an advocate really helps, it helps understand what is going on and I have someone to talk to*
- *I just wanted to say thank you for putting my voice online to social workers and stuff.*
- *Personally, and professionally I never had any doubt from day one that Suzanne was truly committed to this advocacy process and, to ensuring that M's voice was not only heard but valued within that process. I have learned so much from working alongside Suzanne on this case. The final touch of actually recording M's experiences so that they could be shared with the local authority nearly had me in tears. I learned so much about active listening, active questioning and listening for what was not being said in the process from Suzanne. I actually feel more confident in my day-to-day practice on these points and I put that directly down to working on this case. M was not at all confident when this process started – why would he be? As a recently arrived UASC who was suffering from extreme anxiety he had no idea of what he could ask for or expect and, he knew nothing of this system of 'care' and support that he was now within. Suzanne made an instant rapport which balanced showing an expert knowledge of what the complaints system was all about and an easy and clear communication style with someone for whom English is a third language. In our role as support workers at Salaam Care it is also part of our job to advocate for the rights and entitlements of the vulnerable young people we support. I truly feel that is what we have done by working alongside Suzanne through NYAS, the experience has been illuminating and inspiring. To have achieved a positive outcome for M is quite something and he feels lifted by seeing that advocacy and knowing your rights can have a life-changing impact on your life prospects. In another life, I feel that Suzanne and I and my colleagues would be part of a crack team of lawyers advocating for rights brought in when nothing else has worked. Please do congratulate Suzanne for her dedication, knowledge, expertise and support through this from M as well as us, the staff. (Following stage 1 and stage complaint and positive outcome)*
- *Brenda is simply brilliant! I have worked with Brenda in relation to a few young people over the last 5 years or so and she is just so good. I have heard a few other PA's on our team also praising her. So knowledgeable, understanding and there has never ever been any judgement on our young people and she just explains everything so brilliantly to our young people and is 100% their voice when they are struggling to be heard. Brenda is also so informative to PA's as well, keeping us all in the loop and helping us understand processes as well. Brenda always copies us in emails and rings us back if she misses a call. I honestly think you have an absolute star of an employee with Brenda, and I know you will already know but I really just wanted to tell you from mine/our perspective.*

# Independent Visitors

- The IV service received 40 new referrals this contract year.
- 10% of IV referrals from 2022/23 live out of area in Blackpool, Bury, St Helens and Barnoldswick.
- 46 young people matched to a volunteer in the contract year
- 18 young people are waiting to be matched to an Independent Visitor



# Feedback

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- *She is full of joy and happiness, knows how to relate to children my age, she is fun to be around, she is a good listener and gives good advice and she is able to build a relationship quickly. I look forward to seeing her. (About their IV)*
- *I just want to say that the match between Philip/Sandy and June/April is an amazing one. The girls rely on Philip and Sandy; the IV's know this and adapt quickly to the girls needs. June can leave my house in a bad mood but come back happy. Sometimes visits are short and at other times it can be a full day. In all honesty I don't want their visits to ever end as it helps me get some rest from the girl's demands.*
- *Being an Independent Visitor is a very fulfilling role, by supporting and befriending young people, you are helping them develop new skills and interests, and you can learn along the way too! I enjoy visiting with the young person I am matched with, because we are always joking around and having fun doing the activities that we both like!*

# Priorities and request to CPB

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- A significant priority for the service is to explore innovative recruitment processes as recruitment to the Independent Visitor is challenging. NYAS has comprehensively promoted opportunities to volunteer. However, NYAS's involvement with other local authorities and the National Independent Visitor network (NIVN) shows this to be a national issue post covid pandemic with significantly less applications.
- Can members of the CPB assist with sharing and promoting the volunteer Independent Visitor opportunity?