



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)
257	Total referrals

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

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

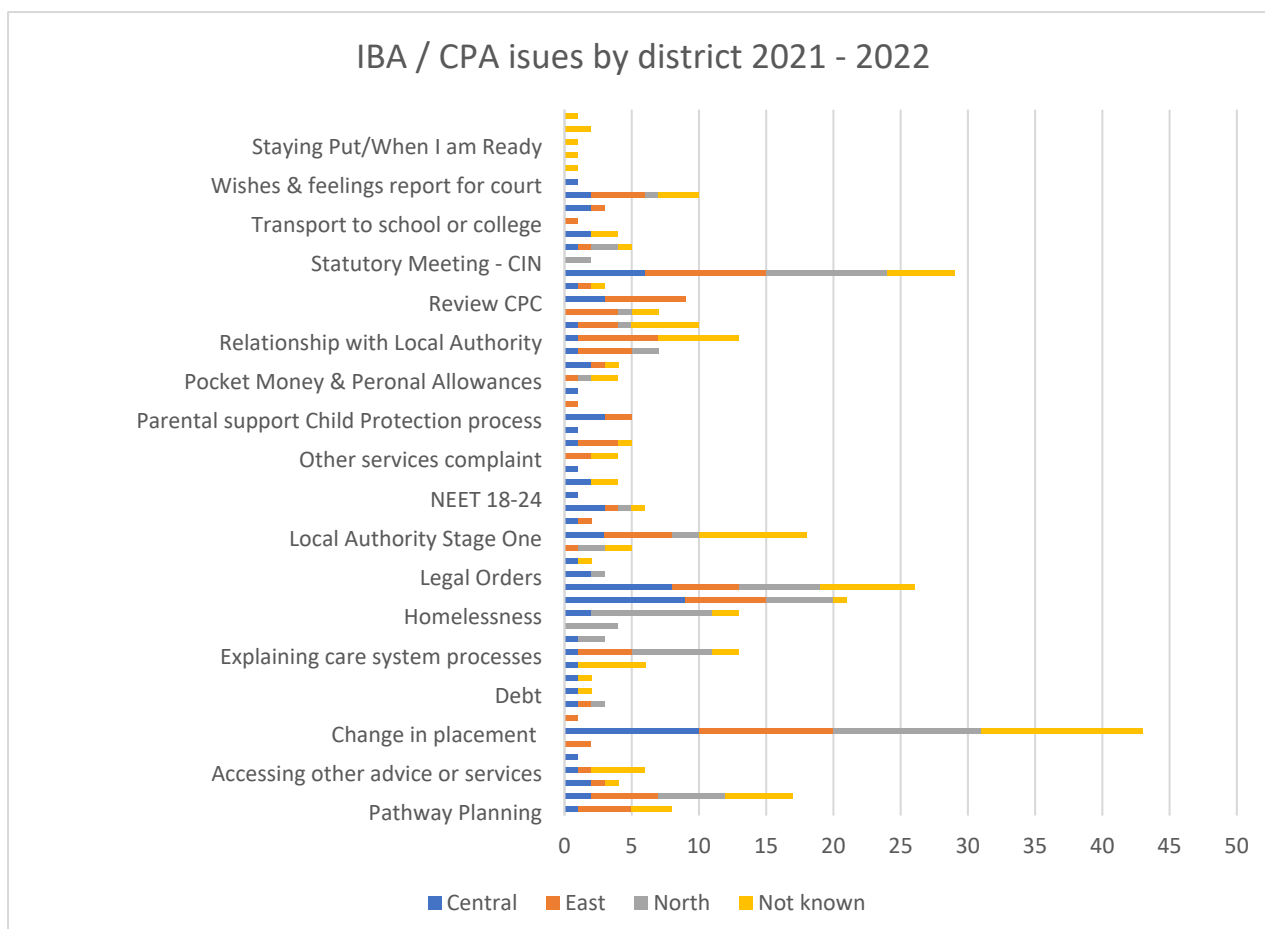
Lancaster/Morecambe: 31

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%
Total Applications	10	100%

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)*