

COPORATE PARENTING BOARD

10 July 2012

Independent Advocacy Contract update

Report of the Executive Director Children's Services

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: Learning City

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT: Delivering Customer Focused Services

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Corporate Parenting Board on the contract to deliver independent advocacy for Sunderland's looked after children.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Independent Advocacy contract with Action for Children has been in place since April 2008. The contract was reviewed and extended in 2011/12 and new monitoring arrangements were put in place.
- 2.2 Young people who are or have been looked after are involved in the regular reviews of the contract. The most recent review of the contract was held on Tuesday 19 June 2012. The review meeting was attended by 3 young people from Change Council and managers from Commissioning, Safeguarding and Complaints.

3 Progress since last Review

- 3.1. Visits to the 6 Children's Homes have been completed.
- 3.2 Fifteen referrals for Advocacy Service have been made and allocated within the agreed timeframe. Currently 13 cases have been closed and 2 are still open.
- 3.3. The 3 completed evaluations show improved outcomes.

4 Issues discussed in the Review

- 4.1 The review was very positive in that the young people participated well in the discussion and highlighted areas for improvement.
- 4.2 The young people attending the review stated they had not received an advocacy leaflet when they came into care and that they had not been aware that the Advocacy service was available.

- 4.3 The young people suggested a number of improvements to raise awareness and make the service more accessible.

5 Actions agreed through the review

- 5.1 The Complaints Officer will update the leaflet and include it in a mail shot with an explanatory covering letter.
- 5.2 It was agreed that Action for Children will provide some new posters for the Children's Homes, and information will be included in the children's homes "Welcome" pack promoting by young people's understanding of the Advocacy Service.
- 5.3. Social workers will do more to promote the Advocacy Service.
- 5.4. The take up of the Advocacy service will be monitored following the promotional activity detailed in 5.1, 5.2. and 5.3.
- 5.5 The number of evaluations in relation to closed cases will be monitored.
- 5.6 The Annual Advocacy report will be combined with the Complaints Annual report.

6 Young People's Evaluation of the Advocacy Service

- 6.1 The evaluation form is completed before and after the advocacy process. The young people suggested that young people should be given the choice whether it is completed with or without the advocate, so that they have the option to take it away and return it.
- 6.2 The review highlighted the importance of taking into consideration young people's views regarding the service.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Corporate Parenting Board note the content of this report.