

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

January 2010

INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME : Corporate Parenting: Safeguarding

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with a quarterly update on Young People's access to Independent Advocacy

2. Background

- 2.1 Independent Advocacy for looked after young people, care leavers and other users of Children's Social Care Services during 2008-2009 has been provided under a contract with Action for Children.

3 Service use and outcomes

- 3.1 In the year to date the total number of new referrals to the Advocacy Service has risen to 8, five of these in the current quarter.
- 3.2 All referrals this quarter are in respect of children or young people in foster care.
- 3.3 Referral rates in the current financial year remain low in comparison to 2008-09, but more consistent with the take-up rates in previous years.

4 Accessing the Service

- 4.1 Allocation of advocates continues to be rapid, and well within the 5 working days of referral as required in the service specification and usually within 24/48 hours.
- 4.2 Promotion of the service continues to include information in 'Change News'

- 4.3 There has been a slight increase in self-referral, but the overall numbers remain small

5 Young People with Learning Disabilities

- 5.1 Action for Children have commenced a pilot programme (as described in the report to the Board in July 2009) in consultation with Services for Disabled Children to provide direct outreach to young people with learning disabilities.
- 5.2 The target group in the first instance is young people with disabilities who are in transition years 14-19.
- 5.3 This is an area of work which is poorly represented nationally, and we hope will become a model of good practice
- 5.4 Progress will be monitored quarterly via the Advocacy Monitoring Group meetings

6 Contract Review for 2010 and beyond.

- 6.1 The current contract extension expires in March 2010. Work has commenced on procurement for the provision of the service beyond 2010.
- 6.2 The revised arrangements from 2010 essentially maintain the current system, with changed pricing arrangements which will be more cost effective. This will involve separate charging for management and promotion of the service at a fixed fee, and variable charges, depending upon demand, for the provision of Independent Advocates for individual young people.

7 Summary:

- 6.1 Service take-up is consistent with previous years in terms of overall numbers, but with an increasing proportion of children in foster care accessing the service.
- 6.2 The Service Specification for 2010 onwards should continue the present but with increased cost-effectiveness.

7 Recommendation

The Board is requested to note the continuing development of the service and the due arrangements for re-commissioning the contract.