

Appendix 1: RESPONSE TO “MISSING VOICES” RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Local Authorities	Responsibility	Response - May 2012	Update – November 2012
<p>The term ‘Advocacy’ is not easy for children and young people to understand and should always be presented with a clear explanation in words that can be easily understood. (Recommendation 1).</p>	<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>The information given to children and young people about advocacy is provided by NYAS. This is provided in a format that is clear and easy to understand. NYAS are also able to meet on a face to face with children to explain their role and what they can do to help.</p> <p>There is a range of specialist information for children with learning disabilities and communication problems in formats that they will be able to understand. There is also a specific advocate for children with disabilities with communication skills and toolkits that can be used to enhance communication. All NYAS advocates have also been trained in meeting the needs of children with disabilities.</p> <p>The Children’s Rights Officer also clearly explains advocacy in his literature and via face to face contact.</p> <p>Team Managers and Social Work and foster and residential staff are able to signpost children to NYAS and explain the nature and extent of the service.</p> <p>Customer Services Manager also signposts children to NYAS for support with complaints and is able to explain the nature of the support the child could receive.</p>	<p>Children’s Services have recently re-launched a LAC pack for children and young people which was designed and developed by young people and is in booklet and DVD format. This is widely available and included on the Children’s Rights webpage</p>

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<p>All eligible children and young people should be allocated an advocate at the point at which they enter the statutory childcare system. This advocate would be responsible for explaining their role to the child or young person. (Recommendation 2).</p>	<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>Issue based advocacy is currently available for all children and young people who are known to Children's Services and is extensively promoted. Children and young people are allocated an advocate when they request one with virtually no waiting time. A plan is developed with the child to identify issues and actions to be taken.</p> <p>Not all children will need an advocate when they become known to Children's Services but Caerphilly County Borough Council are confident that the current system is very responsive to children's needs. It has also been recognised that children need independent support that is more flexible than advocacy and the current advocacy provider NYAS are developing a peer mentoring service to enhance their service.</p>	<p>Since January 2012 advocacy has been available to children who are receiving support from the Team Around the Family service living in Caerphilly County Borough Council. This service is currently being provided by NYAS. This service together with Children In Need issues based advocacy has been extended for another 18 months from the 1st November 2012 as part of the newly commissioned advocacy service across Caerphilly, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent.</p>
<p>All induction programmes for social workers and youth offending team staff should ensure that there is a clear understanding of the benefits and practice of independent professional advocacy. This should include a clear understanding of entitlement of such provision as a right for children and young people and an introduction to the Welsh National Advocacy Standards. (Recommendation 3).</p>	<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>NYAS take part in induction training for social work, foster care and residential staff and attend team meetings across Children's Services at regular intervals. They also make publicity material available to all staff and have promotional materials in key places like children's homes and foster care team bases.</p> <p>NYAS actively promote good practice and share the message to all stakeholders internally and externally. They also respond to specific requests from organisations to do</p>	<p>From November 2012 the Operational Liaison meeting has been re-established with NYAS and will look at an action plan and specific development work that NYAS will undertake during the life of the contract. Improved training for social workers and foster carers has already been identified.</p>

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		<p>presentations so that information about advocacy for children can be cascaded to their staff.</p> <p>YOS induction for all staff and students includes information regarding the promotion and importance of advocacy services for young people and the availability of local advocacy services.</p>	
<p>Advocacy providers' quarterly reports to local authorities should be copied to all children and family social services teams to raise awareness of the service and to inform staff how advocacy services are being used. There should be regular attendance at local authority team meetings by the advocacy provider to ensure a clear understanding of the local practice and process. (Recommendation 4).</p>	<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>NYAS attend a range of meetings to continually raise awareness of advocacy, including team managers meetings and Children's Services team meetings. NYAS also liaise very well with our other commissioned services are able to do presentations so that information about advocacy for children can be cascaded to their staff.</p> <p>NYAS provide induction training for social work, foster care and residential staff and regular updates through visits, attendance at meeting and newsletters.</p> <p>NYAS have notice boards in key areas such as children's homes, foster care team bases, schools and publicity material is extensively distributed across team bases. They also have mail boxes so that social work staff can make suggestions on service improvements.</p> <p>NYAS also support local forums, such as 'Shout Out' to raise awareness of advocacy to</p>	<p>From November 2012 cyclical attendance by NYAS at Children's Services Divisional Management Team meeting and Children's Services Managers meetings will be re-established. This will enable them to present a report on the key themes that children report to NYAS and recommendations on how things can be improved for children.</p> <p>NYAS also attend Corporate Parent group in Caerphilly CBC and are able to deliver a report to this group, which has broader multi agency membership and member participation.</p>

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		<p>all children and young people practitioners.</p> <p>NYAS also raise awareness of Advocacy at YOS staff events.</p> <p>As part of the contract monitoring process NYAS provide reports that are taken to Children’s services managers meetings every six months. The report identifies common difficulties being experienced by children and highlight these issues to managers.</p> <p>NYAS also attend team meetings and other staff meetings and training events. Mail boxes are available at team bases so that social work staff can make suggestions on how NYAS can improve their services.</p> <p>A quarterly operational meeting has been held with NYAS since 2007 and this enables problem solving, improved communication with teams and specific development work to improve the service.</p>	
<p>Advocacy providers’ quarterly reports to local authorities should be copied to all elected members to raise awareness of the service and to inform members of how advocacy services are being used. There should be regular visits by the advocacy provider to the corporate parenting panel to</p>	<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>There is a comprehensive training programme in place for elected members.</p>	<p>NYAS also attend Corporate Parent group in Caerphilly CBC and are able to deliver a report to this group, which has broader multi agency membership and member participation.</p>

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ensure a clear understanding of the local practice and process. (Recommendation 5).			
Elected members must be well informed of the statutory responsibility they have to provide advocacy. All local authorities must provide training and information to elected members about advocacy. (Recommendation 6).	Local Authority	There is a comprehensive training programme in place for elected members.	Children’s Services are reviewing the training programme with NYAS to ensure that elected members understand their statutory responsibility to provide advocacy services for children. An action plan will be developed before March 2013 that will set out a new training programme.
Local authorities should ensure that advocacy is a standing item on all relevant scrutiny committees’ agendas to ensure there is a robust advocacy reporting mechanism to assist corporate parenting. (Recommendation 7).	Local Authority	An annual report is presented to scrutiny committee summarising work undertaken in the Corporate Parenting Group and the work of NYAS in relation to Children’s Rights. NYAS are a member of the Corporate parenting Working Group and have a key role in achieving children’s rights.	An update on advocacy arrangements within Caerphilly CBC will be provided to Scrutiny in January 2013, which will include the NYAS Annual report. The report summarises the key themes that children have reported to NYAS during 2011-2012 and makes recommendations on how things can be improved. This will also provide an opportunity to explore some of the options that go in the action plan for 2013.
Parents, foster carers and guardians should be routinely provided with clear information and training about	Local Authority	NYAS provide induction training for new foster carers and regular updates through the foster carer meetings and newsletters.	

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<p>professional independent advocacy. (Recommendation 8).</p>		<p>NYAS attend foster care support groups periodically to raise awareness.</p> <p>Social Workers and IRO's inform children, young people their parents and carers at LAC reviews about advocacy and the support role that they can provide the child.</p> <p>Young people and families involved with the Youth offending service are informed about advocacy services as part of their interventions. YOS staff make referrals on behalf of young people to NYAS.</p>	
<p>The advocate allocated to a child or young person should be responsible for explaining their role to the child's parent, foster parents or guardian. (Recommendation 9).</p>	Local Authority	<p>When NYAS allocate an advocate to a young person they will explain their role to the young person and their parent or carer provided it is appropriate to do so and does not infringe the child's confidential relationship with NYAS.</p> <p>General information about NYAS is available to parents and foster carers and this is extensively available at key points across Caerphilly County Borough.</p>	
<p>Local authorities should review local take-up of independent professional advocacy services to eligible children and young people in their area and investigate any patterns of low take up. This should include a similar review of arrangements for children and young people in out of county placements.</p>	Local Authority	<p>Monitoring information provided by NYAS has illustrated both common issues and take up by children. NYAS have developed actions plans to better target children not using the service e.g. children under 8 and those in residential settings. This is an ongoing initiative, which is evaluated both in the monitoring meeting and the operational group. As an example this has</p>	<p>NYAS reported an improvement in the take up of services by children under 10 and have had children as young as 4 making referrals. As part of their action plan NYAS will look at more ways to engage young children including pictorial ways of children expressing their feelings.</p>

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(Recommendation 10).		led to changes in processes for CP and LAC reviews.	
There should be a consistent single point of contact within each local authority in relation to the commissioning of advocacy services. (Recommendation 12).	Local Authority	Children’s Services have 2 points of contact: the Contracts Officer and a Planning Manager, which is clearly specified in the contract and has been consist for over 7 years. Both officers not only provide a point of contact but problem solve, channel issues to the appropriate team/social worker and offer information and advice to ensure the smooth running of the service.	
Local authorities and advocacy providers must provide opportunities to raise awareness about the purpose of advocacy among all staff working with children and young people. This should include developing an understanding of how to access advocacy and working relationships with advocacy provider managers and advocates. (Recommendation 14).	Local Authority	NYAS are given the opportunity to attend a range of meetings from social work team meetings, managers meetings and senior managers to both publicise what they do and talk about issues affecting children. Both these mechanisms and staff training programmes provide a comprehensive dialogue between NYAS and the Local Authority. Publicity material and NYAS notice boards are displayed across offices and other establishments and NYAS suggestion boxes are also within team rooms. NYAS are a very approachable organisation and are willing to participate in events across the Local Authority.	The Children's Rights Officer actively promotes advocacy and children's right to have unconditional access to it during his staff briefings, training programmes and visits to Foster Carer focus groups accompanied with relevant advocacy literature and promotional materials.
Local authorities should ensure the elected member with statutory responsibility for children’s services	Local Authority	The Social Services Lead Member supports children’s rights and is responsive to requests to champion specific children’s rights. The	

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acts as a local champion of advocacy and provides strong leadership in this area. (Recommendation 16) .		Lead Member is invited to attend the Corporate Parenting Working Group and receives reports.	
Children and young people should be involved in all aspects of advocacy service development and review. (Recommendation 17) .	Local Authority	<p>Caerphilly County Borough Council's looked after children Shout Out Group meets regularly and is jointly facilitated between NYAS and the Children's Rights Officer. Group have developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Charter • Training for professionals • Consultation events for staff and members <p>They have also met with Assistant Director of Children's Services, politicians and the Children's Commissioner. The group will continue to have a participation and development function and increase the membership.</p>	<p>Shout Out Group continues to meet on a regular basis and was extensively involved in the development of the new LAC pack within Caerphilly.</p> <p>Several young people across Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, and Torfaen County Borough Councils also participated in the commissioning process for the new advocacy service from November 2012. They developed their own questions and helped to select the new provider at the interview/presentation stage.</p>
Local authorities and advocacy providers should establish appropriate operational procedures and protocols within a service level agreement for information to be provided to children and young people about advocacy services. (Recommendation 18) .	Local Authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council have a detailed contract and specification setting out the service that they expect from NYAS which includes minimum standards and clear targets for responding to referrals, recruitment and training of staff, qualifications, monitoring and frequency, outcomes to be achieved, management and financial responsibility and mechanisms for the overall delivery of the service. Contract monitoring meetings are held quarterly and operational meetings to	In May 2012 Caerphilly County Borough Council lead a competitive tender to secure an advocacy service for children known to Children's Services and children receiving Family First Services across Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen County Borough Councils. The new service has been in place since October 2012. NYAS again secured the

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		<p>problem solve and make improvements to the service and achieve specific developments. This has achieved improvements to publicity material for children including specific information for children with learning difficulties and communication difficulties.</p>	<p>contract and the 3 local authorities have maintained continuity of service and provided additional service to children received Team Around The Family support.</p> <p>Information on advocacy is provided to children and young people at the time that they become looked after and is updated annually. Other children receiving services are provided with information by social workers.</p>
<p>Local authorities and advocacy providers must promote their independent relationship between the commissioning process and the delivery of advocacy to individual children and young people. (Recommendation 20).</p>	<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>NYAS publicity material makes it clear that the organisation is independent of the local authority and impartial. This is also explained to the child during the first face to face meeting and is reinforced for the duration of the relationship that NYAS has with the child.</p> <p>Both contract and commissioning staff and social service managers that are involved in meetings with NYAS ensure that all matters relating to children are presented and discussed in a format that does not identify the child.</p>	
<p>Complaints Officers must continue to inform children and young people about how to make complaints and to offer the support of an independent advocate when making a complaint.</p>	<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>Customer Service Manager and team established for all Social Services complaints. Specific child-friendly information developed and assistance available from the team for any child wanting to make a complaint. Team work</p>	

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(Recommendation 21).		<p>closely with NYAS and regularly signpost children to the service for support with making a complaint and getting it resolved to their satisfaction. Customer Service Manager is a member of the quarterly operational meeting with NYAS and has standing agenda item.</p> <p>Information packs and leaflets are readily available and accessed freely via web site.</p>	