

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>Report on Barnardo's Coventry and Warwickshire Children's Rights Service – incorporating Advocacy and Independent Visitors</b>	
<b>Districts/ Areas covered</b>	All Warwickshire districts and Coventry	<b>Wards affected: ALL</b>
<b>Author</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sue Berry, Development Children's Services Manager - Barnardo's</li> </ul>	
<b>Other managers who have provided input into this report:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Wager and Louise Cunningham – Project Co-ordinators for Barnardo's</li> </ul>	
<b>Summary of issues</b>		
<p>This report summarises the service provided to Warwickshire looked after children and children in need through the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service provided by Barnardo's from April 2012 until the end of February 2013. The new contract began as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012.</p>		
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		
1	<b>The Panel to continue to acknowledge the importance of Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service in safeguarding supporting vulnerable children, many of whom are looked after.</b>	
2	<b>Both Barnardo's and Warwickshire Local Authority will continue to promote the service to all looked after children and young people to ensure that everyone has equal knowledge and access to the service</b>	
3	<b>Barnardo's to work with the Commissioners to continue to evaluate the most effective way of delivering advocacy to children and young people in Warwickshire</b>	

## 1. Background

1.1 Barnardo's secured the contract to run the advocacy services for Warwickshire and Coventry in February 2012 with the new contract running from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012. In order to meet the contract within the agreed budget Barnardo's undertook a staffing review. The current staffing position is as follows:

- Advocacy co-ordinator (24 hours) – Sarah Wager
- Advocacy Co-ordinator (24 hours) – Louise Cunningham
- Independent Visitor co-ordinator (21 hours) – Gail Pajak
- IV project worker 1 (37 hours) – Brett Lees-Smith
- IV project worker 2 (18.5 hours) – Julie Faulkener
- Advocate (37 hours) – Michael Spillane
- Advocate (18.5 hours) – Claire Reeves
- Advocate (18.5 hours) – Rosemary Brownhill
- Advocate (18.5 hours) – Ann Thompson

We have one advocate who is on maternity leave and currently have this post advertised. We have had a number of staffing changes over the year but have managed to recruit experienced and skilled advocates quickly which has meant that we have consistently met the demands for the service with no real waiting list for advocacy. The service is currently managed by Sue Berry – Development Children's Services Manager for the East Midlands who is overseeing both Coventry and Warwickshire Children's Rights Service and Get Ready Personal Advisors Team.

1.2 The contract is to supply issue based advocacy, residential visiting advocacy (for Coventry only), and independent visitor service to Warwickshire Children and young people. The aim of the service is to support children and young people who are in contact with social care to get their points of view heard by people who make decisions about them, and through the independent Visitor Service offering long-term positive adult role models for looked after children. The commissioners have agreed that the priority for advocacy services are looked after children but we have seen in the year a large increase in referrals for advocacy in child protection conferences.

## 2. Development of Quality Assurance measures

2.1 Barnardo's uses a variety of quality assurance tools to ensure that the service is delivered to a high quality to children and young people. Firstly Barnardo's works to the National Advocacy Standards as outlined below:-

Standard 1

**Advocacy is led by the views and wishes of children and young people**

Standard 2

**Advocacy champions the rights and needs of children and young people**

Standard 3

**All advocacy services have clear policies to promote equalities issues and monitor services to ensure that no young person is discriminated against due to age, gender, race, culture, religion, language, disability or sexual orientation**

Standard 4

**Advocacy is well-publicised, accessible and easy to use**

Standard 5

**Advocacy provides help and advice quickly when it is requested**

Standard 6

**Advocacy works exclusively for children and young people**

Standard 7

**The advocacy service operates a high level of confidentiality and ensures that children, young people and other agencies are aware of its confidentiality policies**

Standard 8

**Advocacy listens to the views and ideas of children and young people in order to improve the service provided**

Standard 9

**The advocacy service has an effective and easy to use complaints procedure**

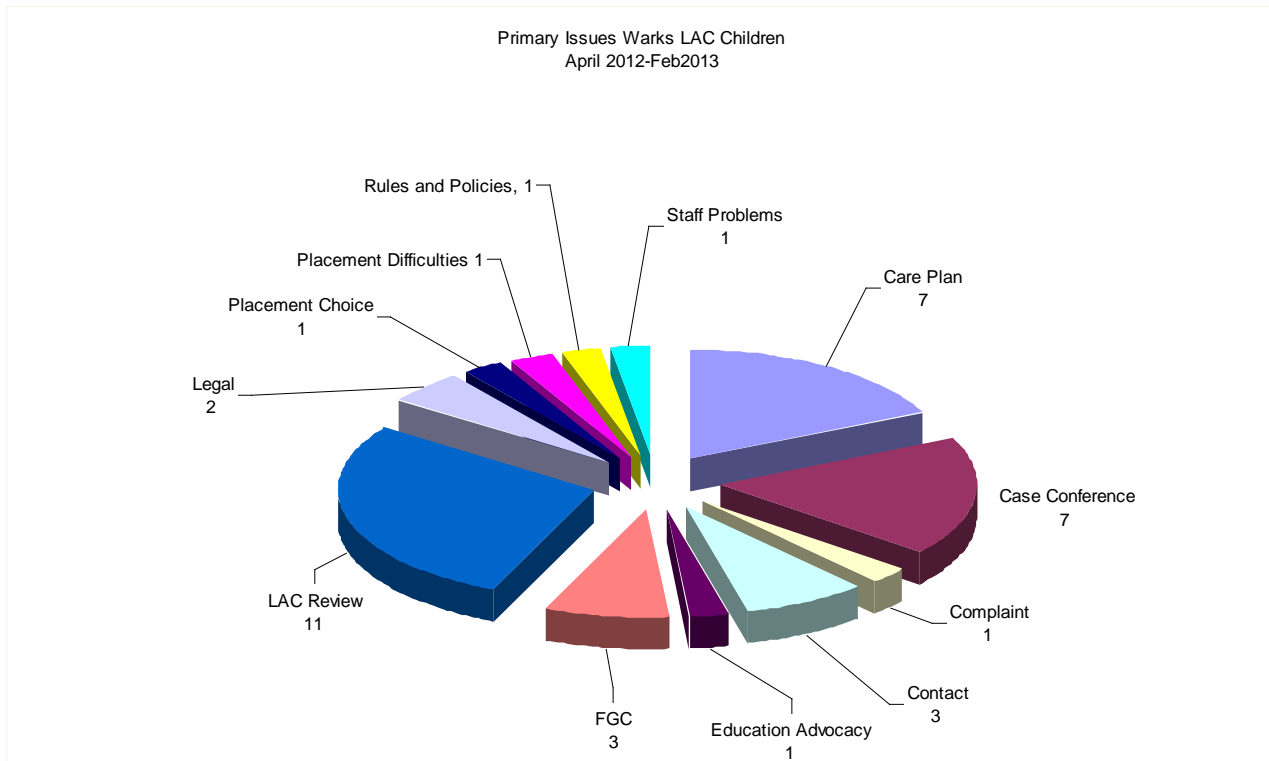
Standard 10

**Advocacy is well-managed and gives value for money**

- 2.2 All staff have a full induction programme into Barnardo's which covers training on safeguarding, information sharing, health and safety, equalities and diversity, and data protection. A full on-line programme of induction is complemented by further activity in service, including shadowing of staff until people are ready to take on cases on their own with supervision. This year the staff team at CWCRS have undertaken a day's training on child sexual exploitation which was delivered by our specialist CSE service that is based in Birmingham. We have also done a day's training on recording and equalities. Each advocate/staff member has an individual learning plan that is reviewed annually and will access appropriate training either through Barnardo's or other local training providers where possible.
- 2.3 All new staff and volunteers are subject to the full range of pre-employment checks, including CRB and reference check, using Barnardo's rigorous recruitment processes before taking up employment.
- 2.4 All staff receive monthly supervision to reflect on practice and be accountable for what they are delivering. In addition to this managers are available to offer guidance and support to staff as/when issues arise with a case. Managers use Barnardo's quality assurance tools to ensure that the service is adhering to standards. These include file sampling of records, quarterly performance reports to an ADCS.
- 2.5 We have just revised and improved our lone working procedures to enable our advocates to work safely out in the community.

### 3. Themes and Issues for Warwickshire Advocacy

3.1 Thirty seven out of the 132 children referred to the service by Warwickshire are looked after. The themes raised by looked after children have remained similar to those that are national issues for children in care. See chart below which identifies the issues which young people looked after by Warwickshire have raised with us.



Issues include:

- Contact with birth family – siblings and parents – with children frequently requesting greater contact.
- We have seen an increase in children raising issues with us about wishing to stay in placements longer when funding is becoming an issue e.g. out of county agency fostering where children have settled.
- Financial entitlements of children and young people in agency placements
- We have also raised a number of safeguarding issues with Warwickshire that young people tell us as advocates – we are very clear that we always pass these on to the social worker and have a close working relationship whilst remaining independent. One example of this was recently a child disclosed to her advocate that her foster carer had allegedly smacked a younger child in placement – this was immediately reported to the social worker and our advocate attended a strategy meeting to report what she had been told by the child. It subsequently proved to be unfounded.

3.2 We have seen an increase over the year in the number of referrals for advocacy at child protection conferences and have worked with both Warwickshire and Coventry to improve notifications for both review and initial conferences to enable us to undertake meaningful work to ascertain the wishes and feelings of children and young people concerned. We have seen a decrease in the number of referrals

from asylum seeking children which has meant we have spent less resource on interpreters but do still offer this where it is needed.

- 3.3 Most referrals for advocacy initially come from social workers but many re-referrals are from children and young people themselves – see statistics later in this report for more details on this.

#### **4. Publicity and Promotion**

- 4.1 After moving premises earlier in the year we have had a revised leaflet printed with our new contact details. This will be sent out to all teams and is distributed to looked after children. We have also offered to visit most teams in the year.

#### **5. Participation of Young People in the Service**

- 5.1 The views and wishes of young people are paramount in an advocacy and Independent Visitor service. The main aim of the advocacy service is to enable the wishes and views of the young people to be heard at a time when they are vulnerable. We use a variety of tools to do this depending on the young persons' ability, interests and needs. Barnardo's staff over the year have liaised with the Children in Care Councils of both Warwickshire and Coventry but it is acknowledged that there is further work that we could undertake here. We aim to get young people involved in service delivery decisions where possible. We recently recruited one young Warwickshire young person to sit on our Independent Visitors Panel where decisions are made about potential new volunteers. . We also aim to introduce a young persons panel for future recruitment to the service.
- 5.2 We offer non-instructive advocacy for children who are unable to communicate directly but we do make every attempt to communicate in a variety of ways first and have a number of tools that we use to do this as well as staff who are trained in Makaton and other communication techniques.

#### **6. Partnership Working**

- 6.1 We have been attending the Virtual School partnership in Warwickshire throughout the year to feedback issues that looked after children raise with us about their education.
- 6.2 Although the 'Right to be Cared For' pilot in Warwickshire has come to a close we have continued to get a list of these young people aged fifteen and a half plus who were entitled to this service and have targeted them with a letter offering advocacy.
- 6.3 We have offered visits to all social work teams in Warwickshire to explain the service.
- 6.4 We are included as part of social workers induction in Warwickshire – offering visits to explain our service to them.

- 6.5 Since moving to our new premises earlier this year in Albion Court, Nuneaton we have developed closer working relationships with our sister projects in the locality – both the Barnardos Fostering Service and Barnardo’s Get Ready Personal Advisor Team. We have joint team meetings, a shared management structure, sharing social work students and learning from the other services operating in Warwickshire.
- 6.6 To support Warwickshire LAC who are living out of county we have developed closer working relationships with other Barnardo’s advocacy services around the country – for example when one Warwickshire young man moved to London we got our London advocacy service to see him and liaise back with our advocate here.

## **7. Plans for Continual Development of the Service**

- 7.1 We have been exploring with Warwickshire police how we develop advocacy for children at risk of child sexual exploitation – which includes looked after children – we will be writing this into our business plan for 213/2014.

## **8. Statistics for 2012/13**

The statistics below show the number of **new** referrals to each section of the service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013. These show a comparison with Coventry who jointly commission the service. We evaluate their satisfaction with the service and at the end of quarter two 74% of children were satisfied with the service and 67% felt that our advocacy service had improved some aspect of their lives.

Files moved to Open status 01-Apr-2012 to 28th Feb -2013	Childrens Rights Files		Volunteer Independent Visitor Matched (CHILD) Files		Volunteer Independent Visitor Unmatched (CHILD) Files	
Total Referrals	Cov	War	Cov	War	Cov	War
	128	132	4	6	5	10
Source of referral	Cov	War	Cov	War	Cov	War
Education	1	2				
Health	1					
Local Authority-Social Care	121	118	4	6	5	10
Other Statutory Agency	3	7				
Self	2	2				
Family member		2				
Unknown		1				
Reason for Referral	Cov	War	Cov	War	Cov	War
Looked After	31	37	4	6	3	8
Vulnerable person needing support	96	95			2	2
Young Carer	1					
Age of Referral	Cov	War	Cov	War	Cov	War
under 1	1	2				
4	1	1				
5	1	3				
6	3	5				
7	3	2				
8	12	4				
9	7	8				
10	13	11		1		1
11	15	12	1			
12	10	12		1	1	1
13	10	18				
14	16	9				3
15	14	17		1		1
16	9	14	2	3	3	4
17	6	4	1		1	
18	3	5				
19	3	1				
20	1	2				
21		2				
Ethnicity	Cov	War	Cov	War	Cov	War
Asian/British - Bangladeshi	3					
Asian/British - Indian	8	3				
Asian/British - Other Background	6	2				
Asian/British - Pakistani	2					
Black/British - African	6	1				
Black/British - Other Background		1				
Mixed - Other Background		1				
Mixed - White/Asian	4	2				
Mixed - White/Black African	3	3				
Mixed - White/Black Caribbean	5					
Other Ethnic Groups	2					
White - British	87	112	4	6	5	10
White - Other Background	2	7				
Disability	Cov	War	Cov	War	Cov	War
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	8	1	1			
Behaviourally based disability	2	5				
Communication Impairment						
Complex needs excluding invasive care	2	2				
Complex needs including invasive care		2				
Learning Disability	7	9	1	2	3	4
Physical Impairment	2					
CP Plan	Cov	War	Cov	War	Cov	War
Current	66	64			2	3
Historical	5	11				

Files moved to Open status 01-Apr-2012 to 28th Feb -2013	Volunteer Independent Visitor (CHILD)Files (Closed)	
Total Referrals	Cov	War
	5	9

Source of referral	Cov	War
Education		
Health		
Local Authority-Social Care	5	9
Other Statutory Agency		
Self		
Family member		
Unknown		

Reason for Referral	Cov	War
Looked After	5	7
Vulnerable person needing support		2
Young Carer		

Age of Referral	Cov	War
under 1		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		1
10		
11		1
12		
13		
14		
15	2	2
16		4
17		
18		
19	3	
20		1
21		

Ethnicity	Cov	War
Asian/British - Bangladeshi		
Asian/British - Indian		
Asian/British - Other Background		
Asian/British - Pakistani		
Black/British - African		
Black/British - Other Background		
Mixed - Other Background		
Mixed - White/Asian		
Mixed - White/Black African		
Mixed - White/Black Caribbean		1
Other Ethnic Groups		
White - British	5	8
White - Other Background		

Disability	Cov	War
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	1	1
Behaviourally based disability		3
Communication Impairment		1
Complex needs excluding invasive care		
Complex needs including invasive care		
Learning Disability		2
Physical Impairment		

CP Plan	Cov	War
Current		1
Historical		



8.1 The actual open cases reflects some longer standing cases than just new referrals - Currently we have 188 advocacy cases open and 45 matched IV's – and 7 children waiting to be matched – many of these matches will be occurring in the next few weeks. There is no active waiting list for advocacy.

## 8.2 **Independent Visitor Service**

We have held three new Independent Visitor (IV) training courses in the year for new volunteers. One of our volunteers this year won the Marsh Trust Volunteer of the Year for the Barnardo's Midlands. We have received a number of referrals from Warwickshire this year to match young people with IV's out of county – we are in the process of matching one young person from Dorset and another from Gloucestershire but this inevitably takes us longer than matching in county. We complete evaluations with all young people on the IV service and have just completed this with all children.

## 9. **Financial Implications (including Value for Money)**

9.1 The service is jointly commissioned by Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council for a total amount of £269,000 per year. This amount is not set to rise throughout the durations of the contract so Barnardo's will agree with commissioners about how to prioritise the service in future years as inflation impacts upon the total budget available.

9.2 In addition to this Barnardo's have agreed to contribute an additional £70,000 per year for the service. This year we are targeting this additional money at children who have been/or are at risk of sexual exploitation. This is a known risk factor for many looked after children and young people as highlighted by recent nationally publicised cases

## 10. **Risk Management Issues (Including Legal Implications, and Equality and Diversity Implications).**

10.1 The Advocacy and IV service minimises risk to both Warwickshire Social Care Department and to young people who are looked after. It does this through offering a professional advocacy service to ensure that the voices and concerns of children are heard by other professionals. The IV service minimises risk to isolated looked after children through offering an appropriately matched befriender/mentor.

**Sue Berry**  
**March 2013**