

National Approach to Statutory Advocacy

Local Authority Report - RCT - 2020 - 2021

Collated Annual Report

April 20 - March 21

Headline Report

Over the year Covid-19 dramatically changed the way we work, forcing us to constantly adapt our practice to meet changing regulations in line with Welsh Government guidelines. The majority of visits have therefore been conducted virtually, either via Zoom or What's App, or by telephone, depending on availability and the child/ young person's preference. As many older young people engaged with peers virtually pre-Covid this caused little disruption to them, and many have preferred this type of communication. Engaging with children under eight has been more difficult due to their age and level of understanding. Some platforms have options to use backgrounds and change participant's appearances using funny faces and masks. These have been used as conversation starters and to help make the situation fun for younger children. Tools such as puppets, flash cards and cuddly toys have also been used, as well as many reports of family pets being used to break the ice and help build bonds. Advocates have also sent children and young people activities in the post prior to their meeting, to use as an engagement tool. Younger children have reported "having fun on the calls", which is positive. Complex cases, cases where young people are sharing information which is upsetting to them, or if the child/ young person has issues in relation to people they reside with, are harder to manage virtually due to sensitivity and the need to ensure young person is reassured and safe. Schools and residential settings have been extremely supportive, allowing young people to access equipment to undertake video calls away from the home environment. This has ensured a private and confidential discussion with an Advocate, in the knowledge that the adult is present and available to them after the meeting. Some young people asked to wait for advocacy until face to face visits resume and where the need has been urgent face to face visit have been requested and approved following the relevant guidance.

During the year referrals for Issue Based Advocacy rose steadily, with quarter four being the busiest quarter. Active Offer figures reduced and we continue to notice a large variance between children and young people eligible compared to referrals received.

Active Offer

During the year 61 Active Offer referrals were received. Quarter one was the highest with 19, while quarter two was the lowest with only 12. A total of 52 Active Offer meetings took place, with 42 young people moving onto access issue based advocacy support. Of the 61 young people 34 were female and 27 male. The majority of the Active Offers related to the Child Protection arena at 47. The age split was similar, with 28 young people aged between 6-11 and 26 aged 12-16. This year we also received five referrals for 0-5 year olds and two for the 17-19 age group.

100% of young people referred for Active Offer were contacted within 48 hours, while 87% were seen within five working days.

Issue Based Advocacy

Over the year 132 children and young people were referred to the service, with 80 of these being first time service users. Referrals have increased throughout each quarter, with quarter four seeing double the amount of referrals received in quarter two. Self-referrals have remained the highest source of referrals throughout the year with 76 coming through this way. Social Services have the second largest referrals at 38, with another 12 coming through IRO's. Foster carers have made four referrals, while residential care and third sector organisations also made one referral each over the year.

Headline Report Cont'd

Of the 132 children and young people referred we saw an equal number of males and females. CLA represented 60 of these referrals, while 56 were in the Child Protection arena, 11 Care and Support and five Care Leavers. The age representation was split with 59 being 12-16, 55 being 6-11, eight each from 0-5 and 17-19 age group and two aged 20-25.

Issues followed a similar pattern, seeing an increase each quarter and totalling 157 throughout the year. Support at meetings was the most prominent support request with 82.

Other issues referred this year were:

Placement issues x 22	Contact x 19	Social Services issues x 11	Emotional / wellbeing x 9	Home life x 8
Complaints x 2	School issues x 2	Care leaver issue x 1	Financial issues x 1	

100% of young people referred for IBA were contacted within 48 hours, while 92% were seen within five working days.

Service information

Staff have attended training virtually including training on homelessness rights, housing law, social media, safeguarding and Non Instructed Advocacy.

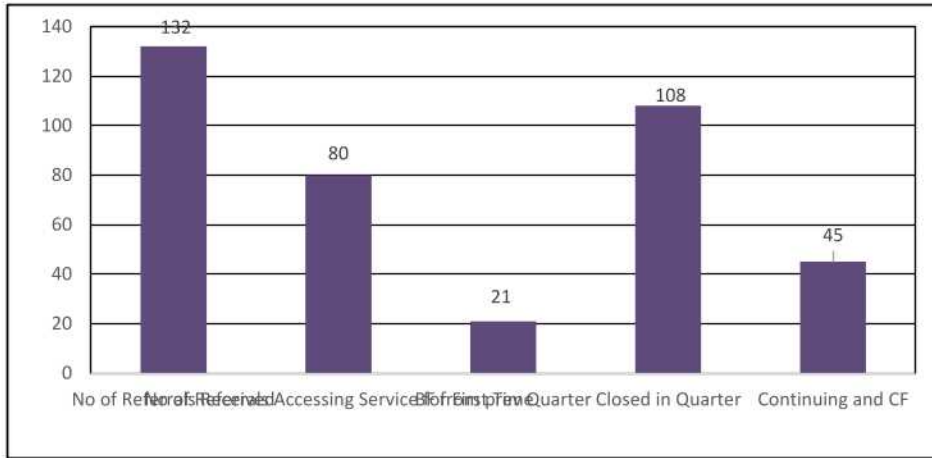
This year saw some staffing changes with the substantive manager going on Maternity leave in October 2020, and a temporary manager coming into post and a new casual advocate recruited to join the team.

Feedback provided has been positive with two quotes from different young people illustrated below:

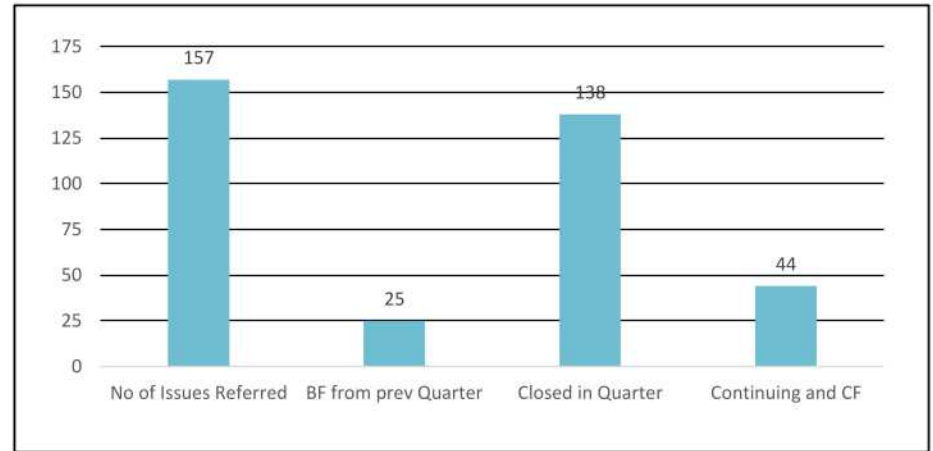
"I have had advocacy support and this has helped me explain to my social worker that I will be happier in a different placement which the social worker has now sorted".

"I was able to tell my advocate that I feel like a ping pong ball because of number of placements recently. The advocate told my views to my social worker and I know have been told of a more permanent placement".

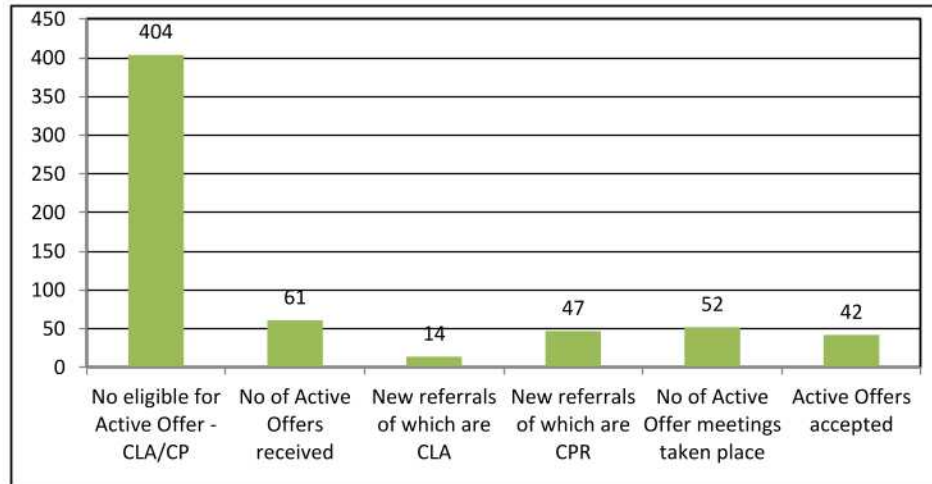
1a. Advocacy Cases - Young People - Issue Based Advocacy



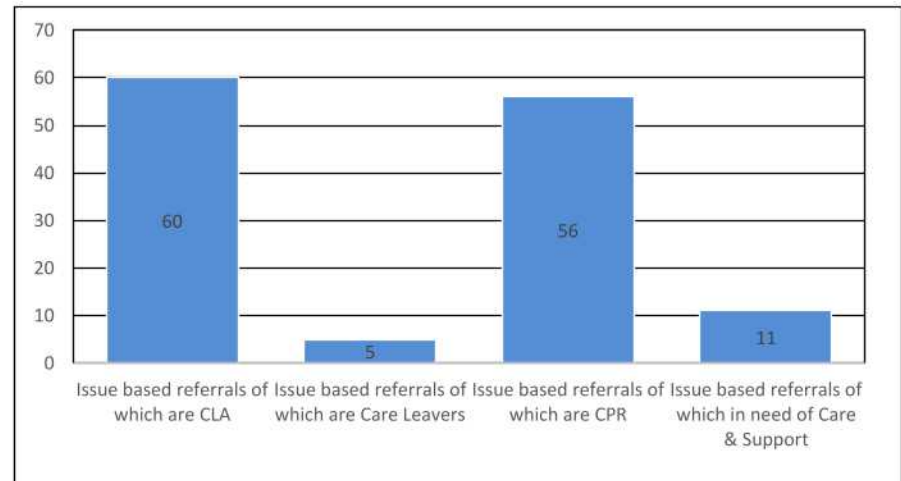
1b. Advocacy Cases - Interventions - Issue Based Advocacy



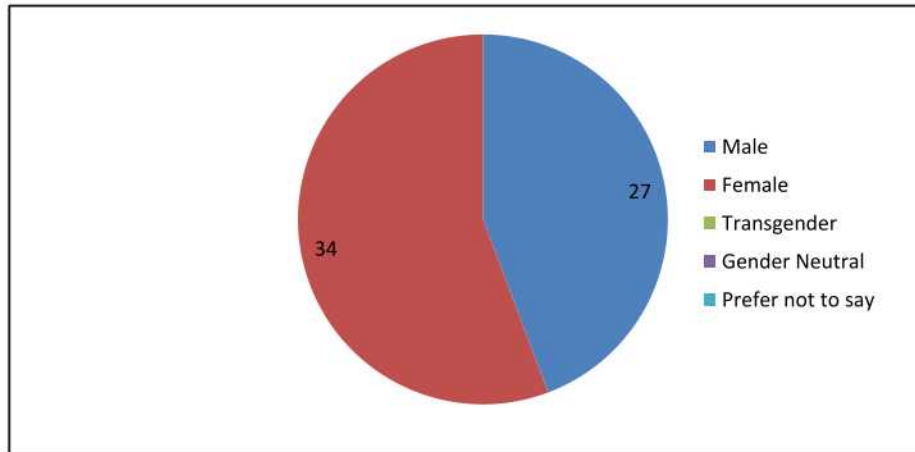
2a. Eligibility Criteria: Active Offer



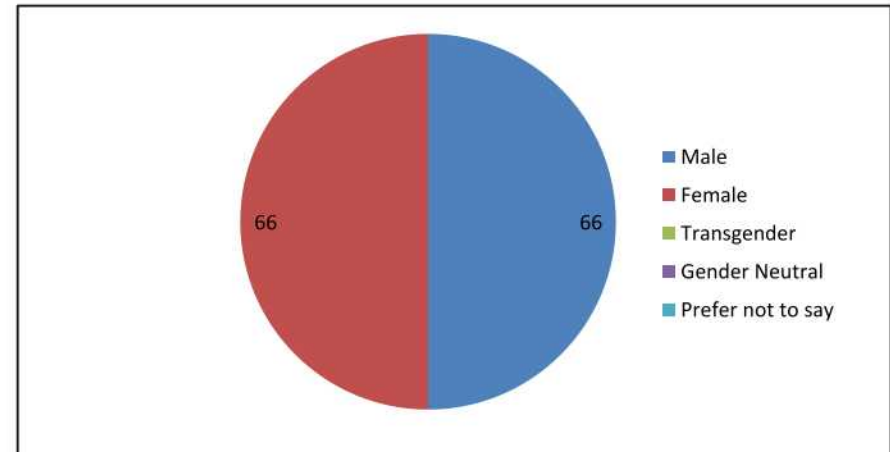
2b. Eligibility Criteria: Issue Based



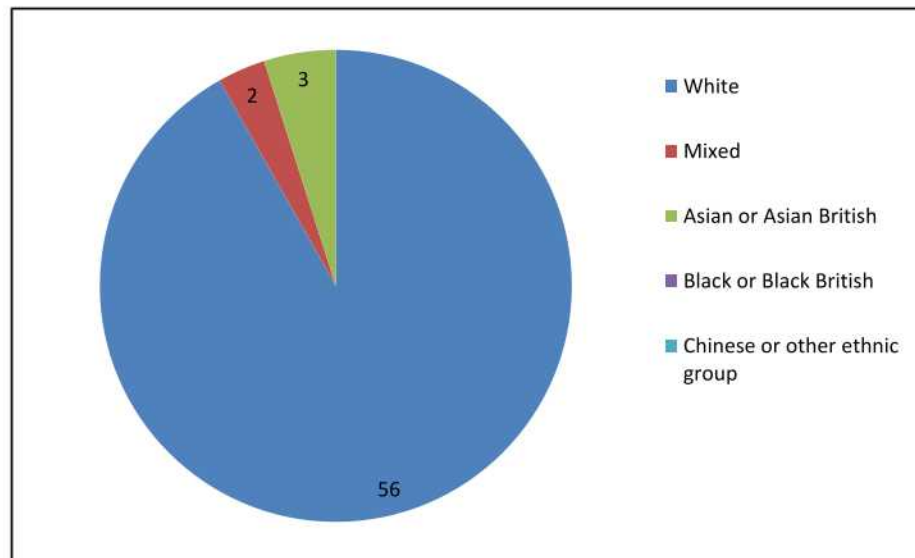
3a. Demographics: Gender - Active Offer



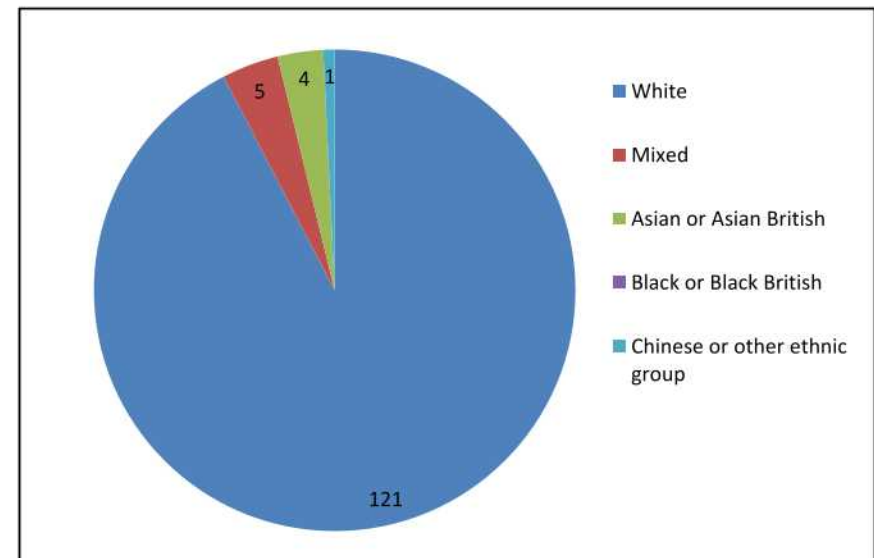
3b. Demographics: Gender - Issue Based



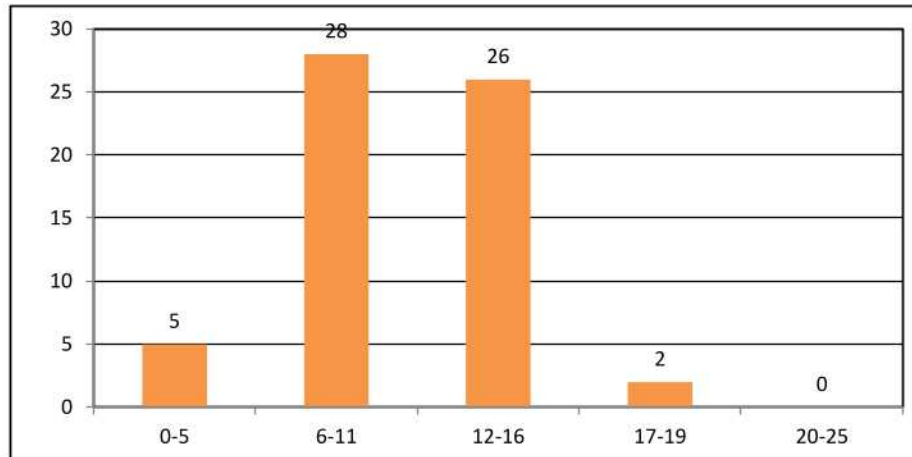
3c. Demographics: Ethnicity - Active Offer



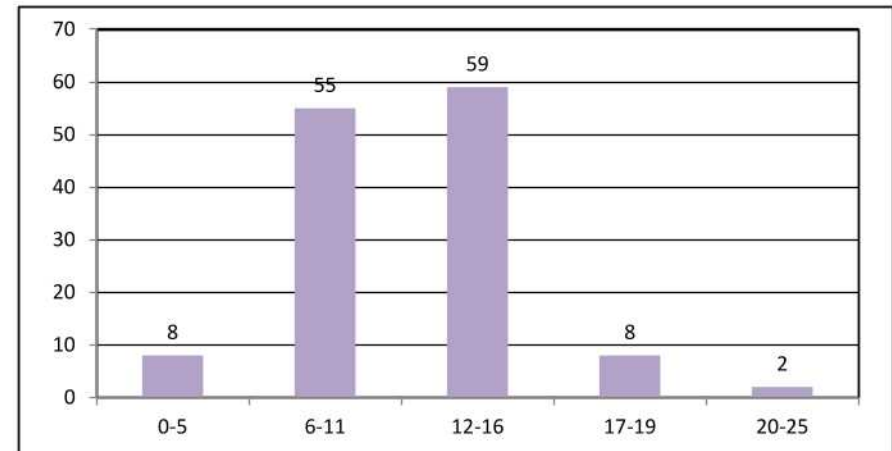
3d. Demographics: Ethnicity - Issue Based



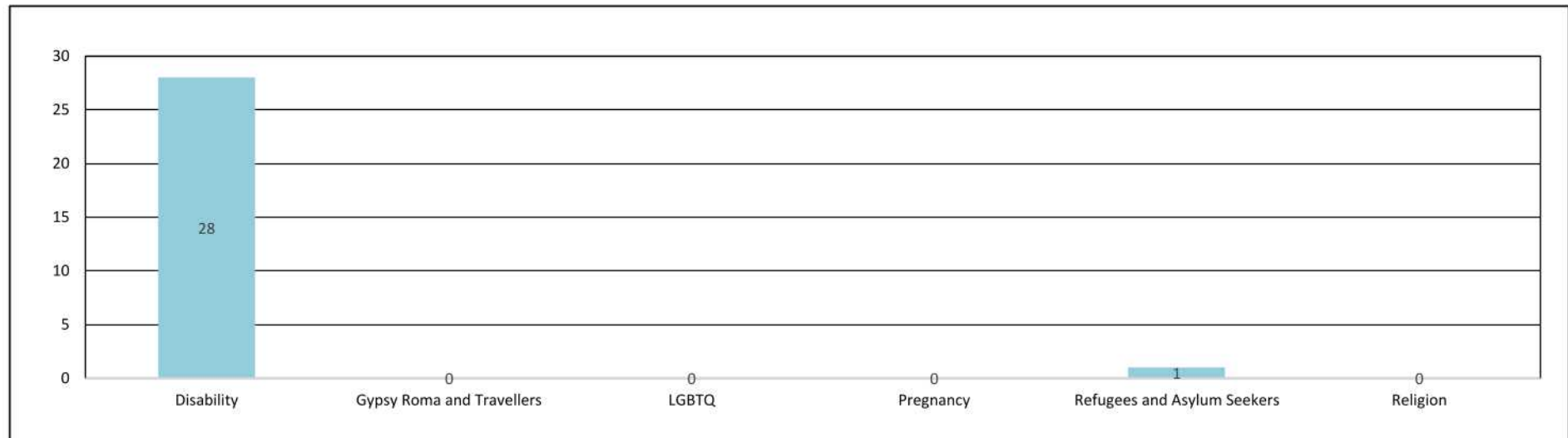
3e. Demographics: Age - Active Offer



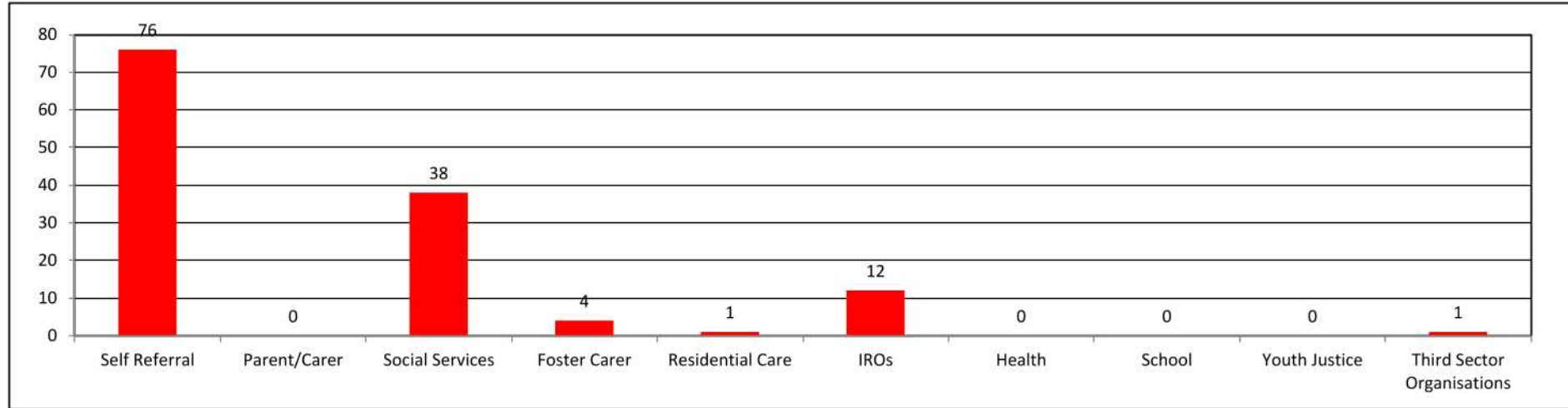
3f. Demographics: Age - Issue Based



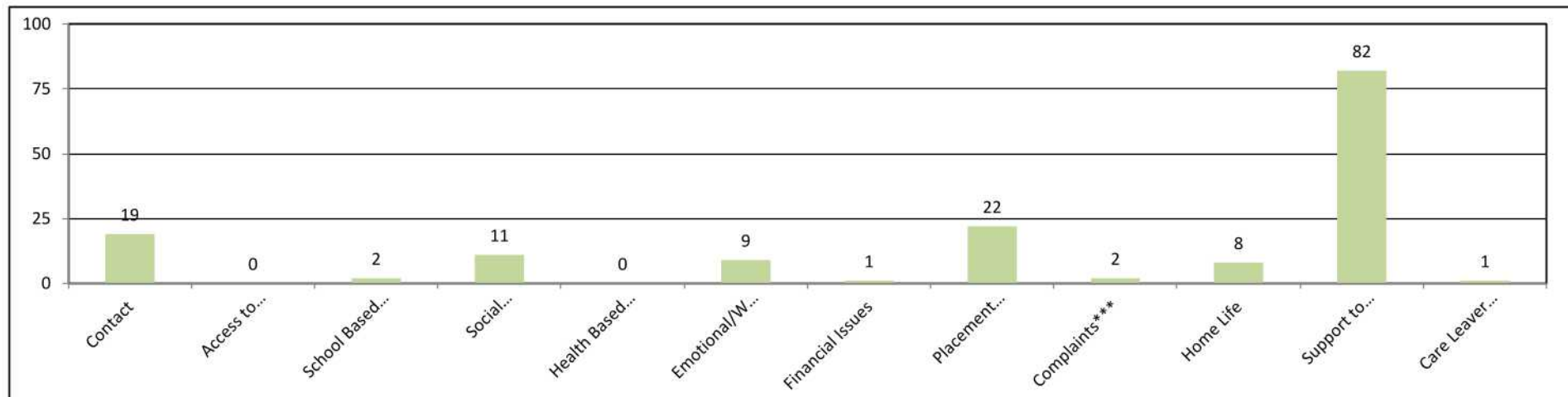
4. Protected Characteristics



5. Referral Source per young person - Issue Based only



6. Issues Presented

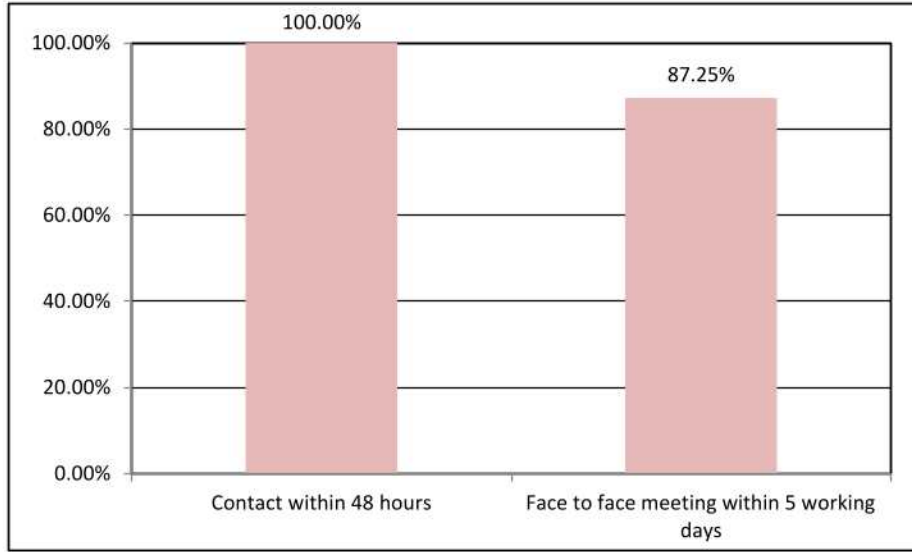


* School based issues including: SEN/ALN, exclusions, bullying, transport.

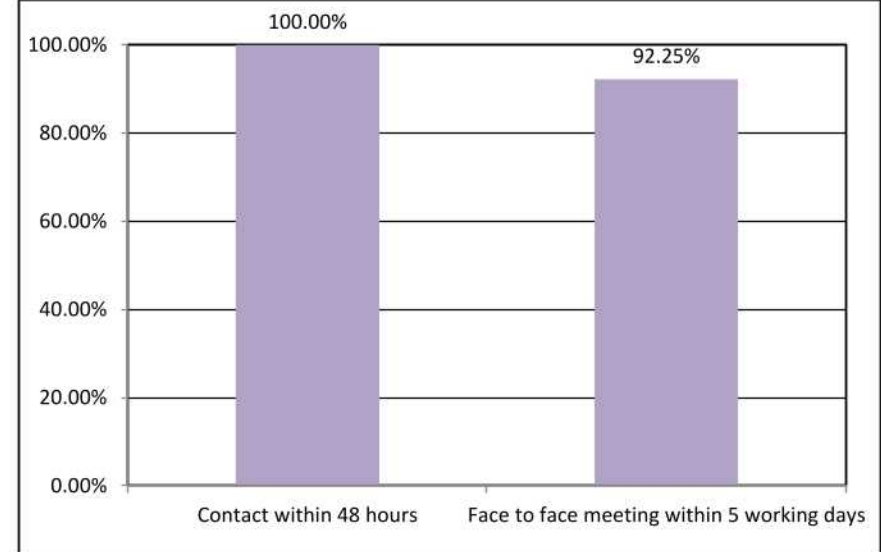
** Social Services based issues including: relationship with worker, care plan, service provided.

*** Complaints refer to any complaints made against statutory services, including Social Service, Police, Health, YJS

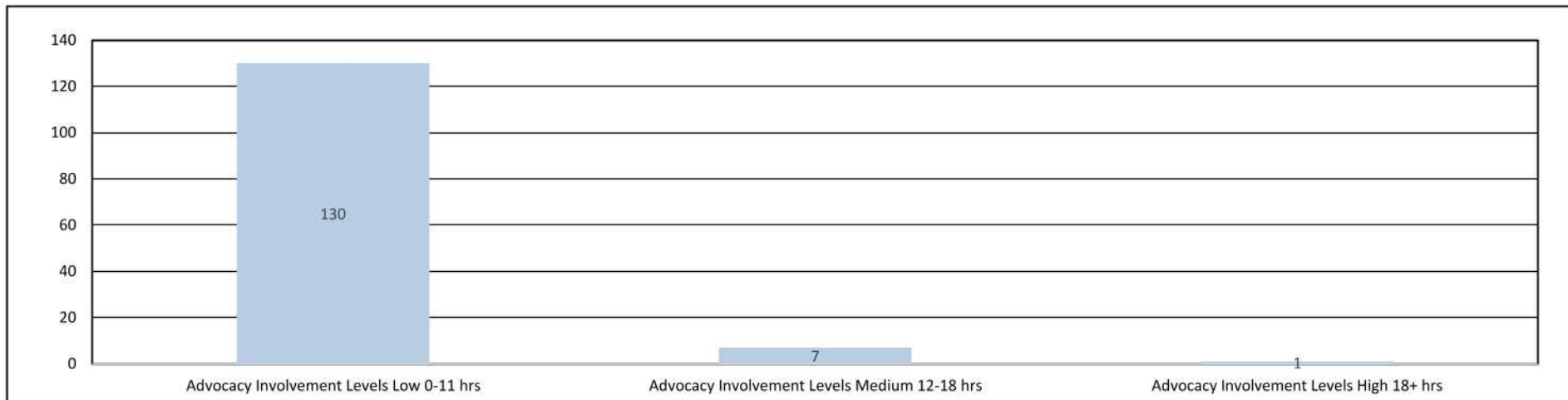
7. Service Performance - Active Offer



Service Performance - Issue Based



8. Level of Advocacy Intervention at point of Issue Closure



9.Outcomes: linked to The National Advocacy Standards & Outcomes Framework

		Comments
Outcome 1	Children and young people find good quality independent advocacy easily available and accessible.	<p>Performance across both Active Offer and issue based has remained at 100% across each quarter for contact within 48 hours. Although performance against the five day contact has reduced over the year, it remains high, with late visits mainly being the result of COVID restrictions and the need for face to face visits.</p> <p>The impact of COVID and changes to working practices have had an impact over the year to working practices.</p> <p>Advocates have remained flexible throughout the year adapting to the changing guidance linked with COVID as needed.</p>
Outcome 2	Children and young people have their privacy and confidences respected and their wellbeing safeguarded and protected.	<p>Confidentiality and safeguarding continue to be explained to all new children and young people accessing the service and throughout the advocacy intervention. Due to the change in the way of working to virtual meetings for much of the year, Advocates were mindful of the potential difficulties this caused. Meetings were postponed when it was felt that confidentiality was compromised and face to face visits requested as soon as possible where Advocates felt it was necessary.</p> <p>Advocates reported some challenges in explaining GDPR and confidentiality to younger children via virtual means, and at times younger children struggled to maintain attention, especially when there were distractions within the home environment. In order to overcome these challenges, Advocates conducted several short virtual visits and made them as fun as possible using puppets and games.</p>
Outcome 3	Children and young people are valued for their diversity, treated with respect and all forms of discrimination against them are challenged.	<p>We continue to advertise and offer the service in both Welsh and English, and have access to translation services for a variety of languages. This year we have only been required to provide one translator in Kurdish Sorani . All other support has been conducted through the medium of English.</p>

<p>Outcome 4</p>	<p>Children and young people are empowered to take the lead in relation to advocacy services and their rights, wishes and feelings and championed.</p>	<p>Advocates continue to champion self-advocacy and children and young people are always encouraged and supported to take the lead when able to.</p> <p>Advocates will endeavour to support all children and young people to provide feedback about the advocacy service at the end of the advocacy relationship. Collecting feedback has been additionally challenging this year as most meetings have taken place virtually. However feedback collected has mainly been positive and examples of this are noted in quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Outcome 5</p>	<p>Children and young people participate in the design, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of advocacy services.</p>	<p>TGP Cymru successfully secured funding from WCVA for a six month long participation project towards the end of the year. All children and young people from across Bridgend who received a service this year were contacted and asked to participate. The outcomes of this project will be available in due course.</p> <p>We are currently recruiting for a Quality Assurance Officer who will lead on the monitoring, evaluation and feedback of TGP Cymru advocacy services across Wales. This is very exciting as it will bring about increased opportunities for children and young people to shape service design and delivery.</p>