

**Cwm Taf Morgannwg Independent Advocacy Service
RCT Care Experienced Young People and Care Leavers
Report**

Quarter One April 2023 – June 2023

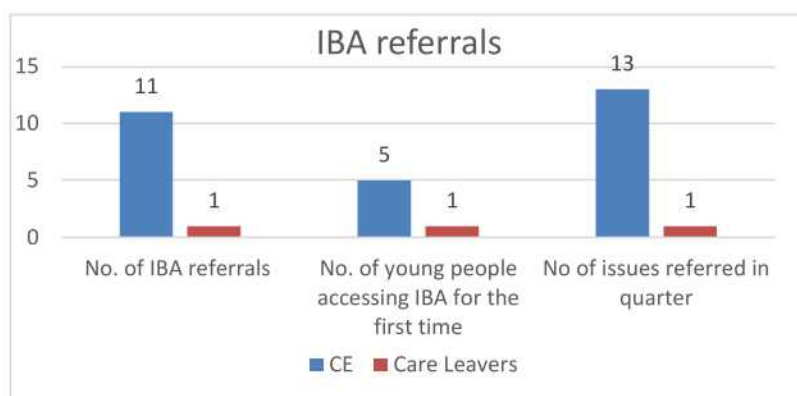


Activity Overview

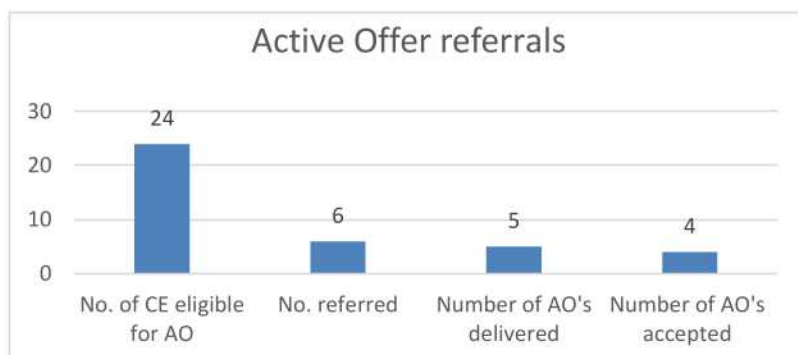
In quarter one, 49 young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) and 29 young people were referred for the Active Offer (AO) across RCT. The majority of young people referred for advocacy services in quarter one were in the child protection arena rather than care experienced.

This report provides information on the service delivered to care experienced (CE) young people and care leavers only.

In quarter one, 11 CE young people accessed IBA, five less than in the previous quarter. Those 11 young people presented with 13 issues. Six care experienced young people were referred for the AO, the same number as in quarter four, and one care leaver was referred for IBA.



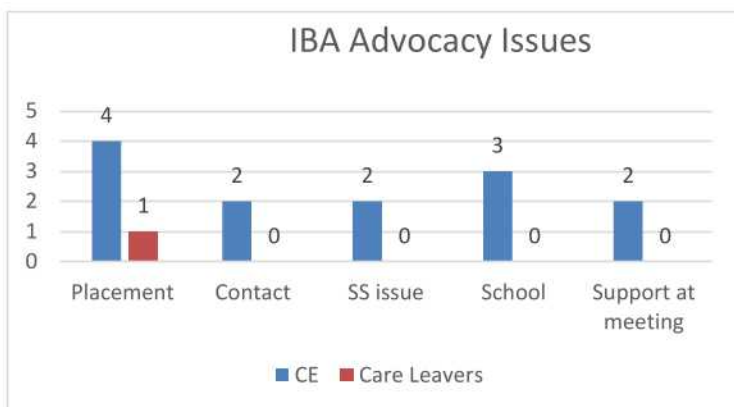
In quarter one, five of the 11 CE young people accessing IBA were doing so for the first time, two more than in the previous quarter.



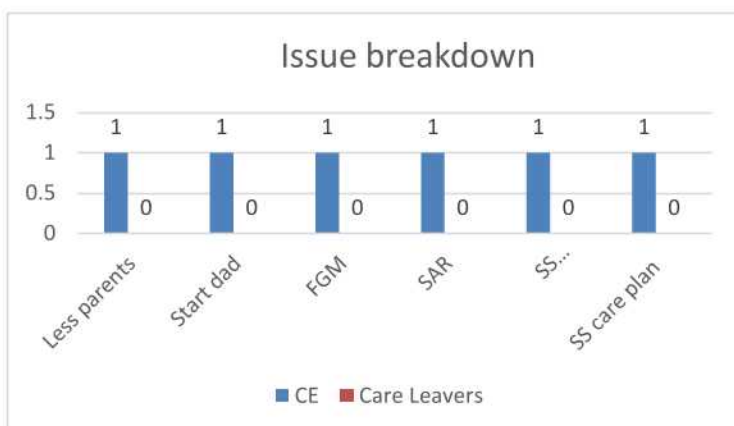
Four of the six young people referred for AO in quarter one became eligible for AO in the same period. The remaining two young people became eligible in the previous quarter.

Seven of the 24 young people who became eligible for AO via the CLA pathway were recorded as rejecting the opportunity to receive the AO in quarter one. They either did not want to meet with any professional or felt well enough supported by their social worker.

Six young people are recorded as accepting the opportunity to meet with an advocate and four were referred for AO. Two young people who are recorded as accepting have not been referred, although one of those two young people did receive advocacy services several years ago. Their names will be sent to RCT for investigation. We do not know if the seven remaining eligible CE young people have been offered the opportunity to receive the AO by their social worker as this is not recorded on the spreadsheet provided by RCT. This means 25% of those eligible in quarter one were referred for AO, compared to 18% in the previous quarter.



The most popular issues in need of advocacy support in quarter one, were placement followed by school issues. Placement was also one of the most popular issues in the previous quarter.

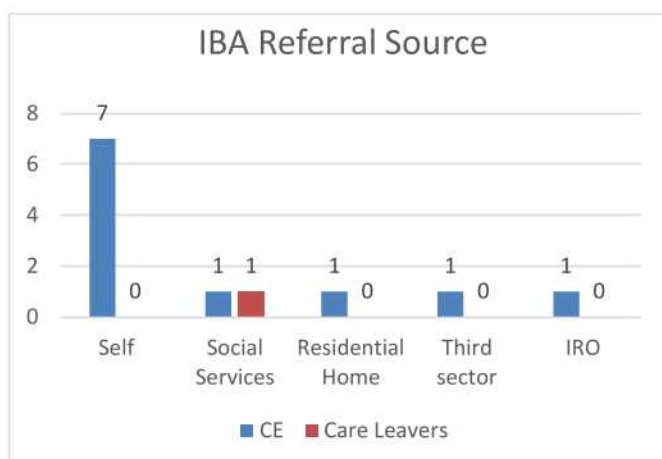


Two CE young people accessed IBA for support with two contact issues in quarter one. One relating to wanting to start seeing their dad, and the other wanted to reduce the time they spent with their parents.

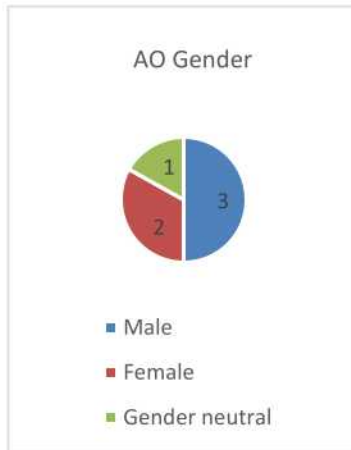
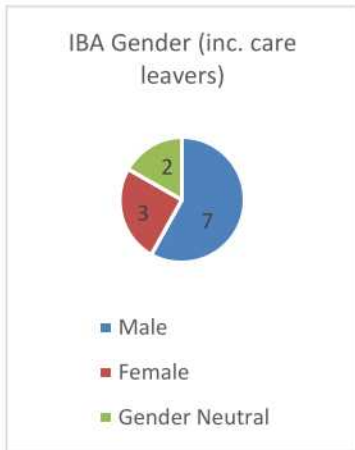
One young person asked for support at a family group meeting (FGM) and another asked for

support at a secure accommodation review (SAR).

Social services issues consisted of one young person wanting support around their relationship with their social worker and the other wanted to challenge some aspects of their care plan.

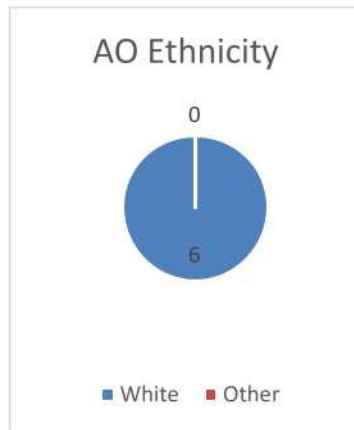
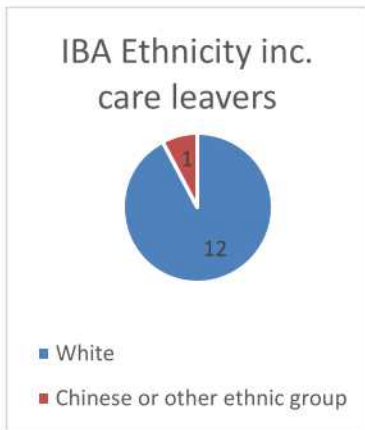


‘Self-referral’ and social services referrals continue to be the most popular route into the IBA service for care experienced young people. Self-referral is usually either the result of the young person accepting the AO and going on to received IBA, or the young person contacting their advocate directly with a new issue. One referral was made by a TGP Cymru FGM Coordinator.



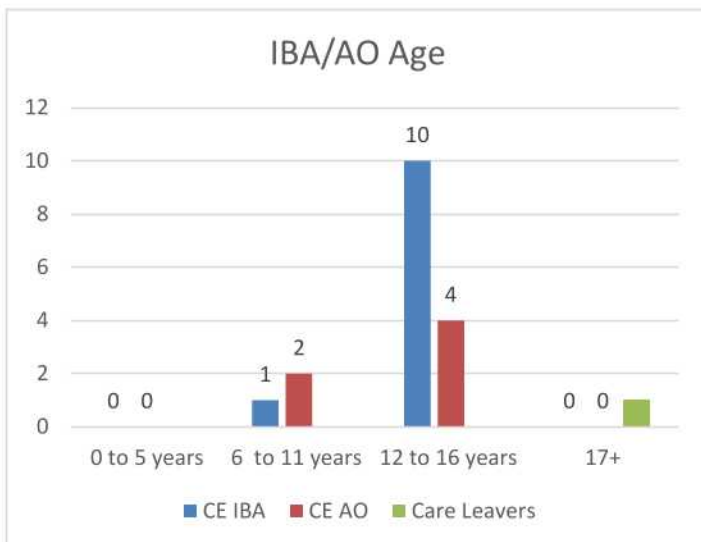
The majority of CE IBA referrals were for males for the second consecutive quarter. Two gender neutral young people were referred for IBA and one gender neutral young person was referred for AO.

Males also made up the majority of AO referrals, while more females were referred for AO in the previous quarter.



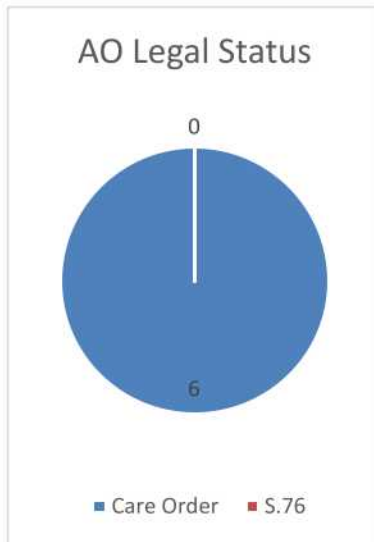
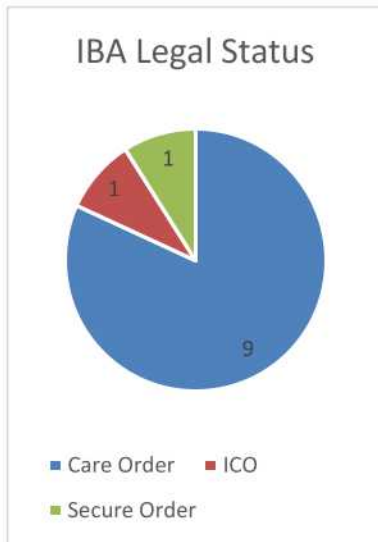
All but one of the 13 CE young people and Care Leavers receiving IBA in quarter one described themselves as white.

All six of the CE young people referred for AO in Q1 described themselves as white.



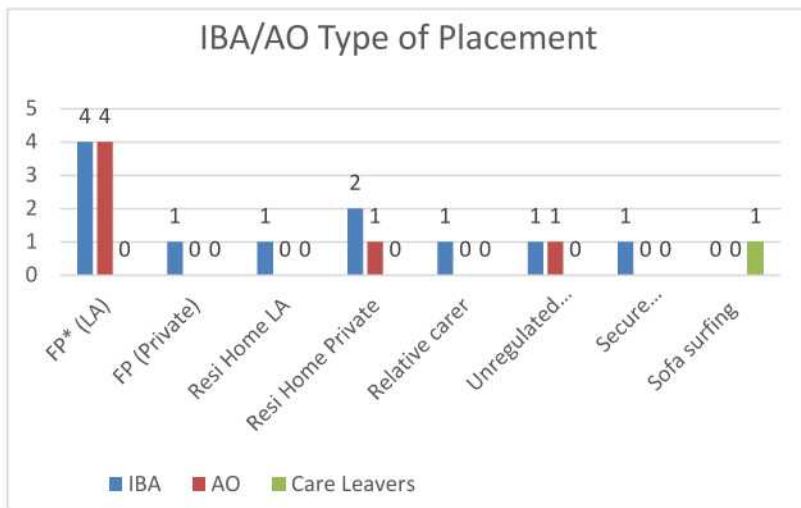
Most CE young people accessing the IBA service in quarter one were again aged between 12 and 16 years, followed by those aged between six and 11.

The majority of CE young people referred for AO were also aged between 12 and 16 years, a change from the previous quarter when most young people were aged under 12 years.

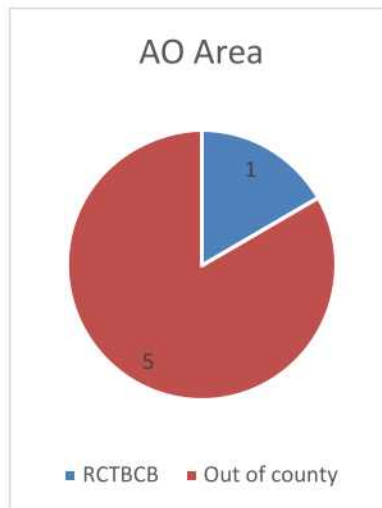
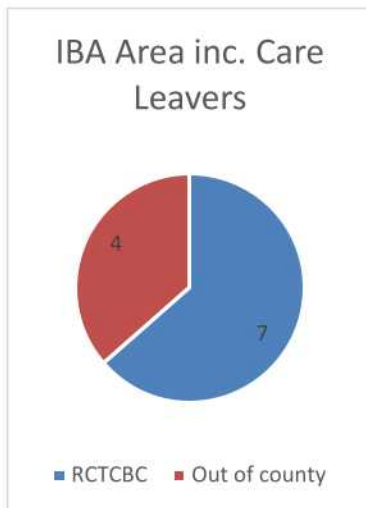


Most CE young people accessing IBA and AO in quarter one were again subject to full care orders.

One young person was subject to an interim care order and another subject to a secure order.



Most CE young people accessing advocacy services in quarter one were living in LA foster placements and community residential homes.



Advocates supported four CE young people living outside of RCT in quarter one. Other areas included Swansea, Neath, Cardiff and Torfaen.

Only one CE young person referred for AO lived outside of RCT, in Cardiff.

Other information

Three CE young people with additional needs were referred for IBA in quarter one. One has a diagnosis of ASD and ADHD along with physical disability, while another has additional learning needs.

One young person, whose needs mean they are unable to access the mainstream IBA service has accessed the Non-Instructional Advocacy (NIA) service instead. Several visits have been completed and an NIA report has been sent to the young person's IRO in relation to a school issue.

Visiting Advocacy

Residential Visiting Advocacy (RVA) continues in five Local Authority community homes across RCT. Face-to-face visits have continued monthly in Bryndar and Beddau. The remaining three homes, Carn Ingli, Nantygwyn and Ty Brynna have advised monthly visits are not appropriate and have requested the advocate visits every two months and stays connected via telephone contact instead. The RVA advocate is currently providing IBA to three young people living in RCT community homes.

The review of our RVA services is ongoing, although we made the decision to pause this piece of work to concentrate on recruitment and advocacy capacity during quarter one. The newly recruited senior advocate will lead on this piece of work following his induction period. This will include further consultation with staff and young people who live in community homes in RCT and Bridgend. The outcome of the review will allow us to make informed changes to ensure the RVA service is working as effectively as possible for young people living in community homes across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Service Information

The (C.E.) young people and Care Leavers advocacy quarterly progress report was shared at RCT Corporate Parenting Panel at the end of June.

The sudden resignation of a full-time team member due to illness in the previous quarter, and a change in circumstances for a casual advocate, has led to a decline in the number of young people who have had contact with their advocate within five working days of referral. Following recruitment in quarter one, we are pleased to report that three new team members will be joining the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Advocacy Service in the next quarter. These are, one full-time advocate, one senior advocate who will work 30 hours per week along with a new casual advocate. We are confident this will address recent capacity issues and allow us to respond effectively to the recent increase in advocacy referrals.

Following the retirement of Jackie Murphy, Rhiannon Beaumont-Walker has taken up the role of Chief Executive Officer of TGP Cymru as of the 1st of June. Rhiannon has been with TGP Cymru since 2006, when she joined the organisation as Team Leader to develop the Be Heard Advocacy Service in Newport.

In recent months, advocates have continued to report difficulty in obtaining feedback for young people when they have sent wishes and feelings reports to some social workers. On receipt of referral, social workers are made aware that the expectation is that the recipient of any wishes and feelings report will respond to the young person's wishes and feelings and the advocate will then visit the young person again to discuss the response. The lack of response, as well as being frustrating for the young person, also adversely affects the capacity of the advocate as it can mean some young people's cases are open longer than they need to be.

Conclusion and looking forward.

Referrals for CE young people and care leavers have remained fairly consistent when compared to the previous quarter. While we did observe a decline in those accessing IBA in quarter one, more CE young people accessed the service for the first time than in quarter four. We were also pleased to observe an increase in the percentage of eligible CE young people being referred for AO. We will continue to keep in contact with RCT and share information with a view to understanding the take up of advocacy services in the area.

Case Example

Please find below an example of advocacy work undertaken during the quarter from within RCT. The names have been changed to protect the young person's identity.

Situation: Mase is 15 years old and currently living in foster care. Mase was originally referred in 2021 after becoming looked after, and has accessed the service three times since, with three separate issues. Each time Mase has accessed the advocacy service, he has worked with the same advocate. In quarter one, Mase asked to speak to his advocate as he felt he wasn't being listened to by his social worker.

Action: The advocate asked Mase if he would prefer a phone call or a face-to-face visit as he had previously preferred to engage over the phone. Mase explained as he felt his issue was

urgent, he would prefer to speak on the phone, therefore the advocate arranged to call Mase at a time convenient to him. Mase explained last year, he travelled to see a family member for an event, and he was hoping to do the same this year but stay overnight rather than travel there and back in the same day. Mase was frustrated and anxious as the date was drawing nearer but despite calling and emailing his social worker for several weeks, he hadn't received a response. The advocate agreed to contact the social worker on Mase's behalf, and after several phone calls and emails managed to contact the social worker via the children's services admin team. The social worker explained he hadn't been in work due to illness, and apologised this hadn't been communicated to Mase. The advocate explained the urgency of the situation and the social worker agreed to undertake the necessary checks straight away.

Outcome: Unfortunately, despite the social worker completing the necessary checks, and initially indicating a positive outcome, a serious safeguarding concern meant Mase was unable to stay with his family member. Despite the outcome, Mase was happy with the advocacy support he received. We are pleased Mase has accessed his advocate for the third time and are confident he will continue to do so if further issues arise.