

## National Approach to Statutory Advocacy

### Local Authority Report - RCT 2023 - 2024

#### Collated Quarterly Report

#### Quarter 2: July - Sept 2023

#### Headline Report

During quarter two, 61 young people accessed the Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with 72 issues; a notable increase when compared to the previous quarter. Some 44 young people accessed the service for the first time, 18 more than in quarter one. We received Active Offer (AO) referrals for 44 young people in quarter two, 15 more than in quarter one and the highest number of AO referrals we have received in one single quarter to date.

#### Active Offer

According to information received from RCT, 107 children and young people became eligible for the Active Offer during the quarter:

CP:	5-9 yrs x 36	10 - 15 yrs x 43	16+ yrs x 5
CLA:	5-9 yrs x 6	10 - 15 yrs x 11	16+ yrs x 6

In quarter two, a total of 35 children and young people were recorded as rejecting the offer of an AO meeting when it was suggested by their social worker, and 38 recorded as accepting, eleven more than in the previous quarter.

Two young people were recorded as not being offered an AO referral. One because parents felt he did not have the capacity to understand the concept of advocacy. The other was already in receipt of issue-based advocacy support.

The reasons for rejecting the AO meeting were as follows:

Rejected without reason	5
Did not want to engage with any service or want to meet anyone else	3
Identified someone else to talk to including SW, family member or other professional	14
Didn't feel service was needed	3
Rejected by family due to level of understanding (age or ALN)	1
Not the right time	1
Already engaged with TGP Advocacy Services	1
Reason for rejecting left blank	7

It is unclear how the remaining 33 young people responded to the discussion with their social worker, and we will look at updated reports in the coming months to check if this information has been added.

Of the 38 young people who accepted the AO on the spreadsheet completed by RCT, 28 were referred for AO. The remaining two young people who are recorded as accepting the AO referral in quarter one but not referred have been sent to RCT for investigation.

TGP Cymru received 44 AO referrals in quarter two. 42 of those young people became eligible for the AO in either quarter two, or in the previous quarter.

## Headline Report Contd

The remaining two young people are not on this year's AO spreadsheet but could have become eligible in the previous calendar year. A total of 40 Active Offer meetings took place and 37 young people accepted the AO and went on to receive Issue Based Advocacy support.

Of the 44 AO referrals received, young people in the Child Protection (CP) arena made up 75% compared to 80% in the previous quarter. 11 Children Looked After (CLA) were referred for AO, almost twice the number referred in quarter one.

Half of the young people referred for AO were aged between six and 11, followed closely by those aged between 12 and 16, a change when compared to the previous quarter when most young people referred for AO were aged 12 or over.

AO referrals for females more than doubled, rising from nine in quarter one to 25 in quarter two and making up 57% of referrals, compared to just 31% in quarter one. Of the 44 young people referred for AO, 55% received it within five working days of the referral being made. The main reasons for delay were parents/carers requesting to postpone visits, mostly due to holidays, and advocates being unable to contact parents/carers to arrange a visit. Three young people changed their mind about meeting with an advocate following referral and we are waiting on more information from the referrers in relation to consent and capacity for several young people referred into the service. 70% of young people received the AO within 12 working days of the referral being made.

### Issue Based Advocacy

The number of young people referred for IBA in quarter two increased by 12 when compared to quarter one. The majority of IBA referrals were for children and young people in the child protection (CP) arena, making up 59% of referrals, just slightly less than in the previous quarter. The number of Care Experienced young people referred for IBA increased from 11 in quarter one to 19 in quarter two and increased their percentage share of referrals from 22% to 31%. Referrals for children subject to Care and Support Plans decreased slightly from eight to six, while we received no IBA referrals for care leavers in quarter two.

We observed increases in IBA referrals for both males and females in quarter two, however the more notable increase was for females who made up the majority of referrals in quarter two with 52%.

In quarter two, the age category with the highest referral rate was again the 12-16 group who made up 51% of all young people referred, compared to 55% in the previous quarter. Referrals for young people aged 6-11 increased by ten when compared to quarter one and made up 44% of IBA referrals.

Self-referral continues to be the most popular route into the IBA service for young people, followed by social worker referrals. Self-referrals made up 79% of IBA referrals in quarter two and are most often the result of a successful AO meeting, or a young person who has previously received advocacy support contacting their advocate directly with a new issue. We are continuing to record advocacy attendance at meetings separately and the recording of issues instead of meetings will tell us more about what young people want to discuss both in and out of meetings.

During quarter two 'support at meetings' was the main issue only seven times, however, advocates supported children and young people to share wishes and feelings at meetings 46 times, of which 26 times they shared them in person, either face to face or virtually. The meetings were made up of 18 Child Protection Case Conferences, 11 CLA Reviews, six Core Group meetings, four planning meetings, three Family Group meetings, three school meetings and a Secure accommodation Review (SAR) meeting.

When an advocate cannot, or it is inappropriate for the advocate to attend a meeting, they will usually email a wishes and feelings report to the social worker or whomever is chairing the meeting, and request the wishes and feelings be read out. The expectation is that the social worker will then respond to the young person via the advocate, and the advocate will then contact the young person to discuss the response. Advocates continue to report some difficulty in obtaining feedback for young people, particularly when they haven't attended the whole meeting.

In quarter two, most young people accessing IBA again wanted to talk about issues at home; either recorded as 'placement issues' or 'home life'. Young people also wanted advocacy support to help share wishes and feelings about contact arrangements and support them to share wishes and feelings at meetings. Other issues included school issues, social services issues, emotional wellbeing issues and access to services.

Contact was recorded as the main issue for 18 young people during quarter two. Some young people wanted to raise contact issues relating to more than one person meaning 18 young people asked their advocate to share wishes and feelings about contact for 32 individuals or groups of individuals. Most young people shared that they wanted to spend more time with loved ones, this was nine times in relation to a mother, eight times in relation to a father, seven times in relation to a sibling or siblings, and twice in relation to friends or wider family. Four young people raised wanting to stop spending time their father, while two wanted to stop spending time with grandparents and a stepparent.

Some 79% of young people referred for IBA had contact with their allocated advocate within five working days of the referral being made. Some visits were delayed following requests from families to postpone visits, and some young people were previous service users who were happy to have initial contact with their advocate over the phone.

### **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 two young people living in RCT community homes.

A review of the RVA services was postponed previously to allow us to concentrate on recruitment and advocacy capacity. We had hoped to continue this piece of work during quarter two, but unfortunately, due to sickness within the team we have not been able to restart this work. We hope to restart this piece of work when the team is back at full capacity.

### **Service Information**

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

The advocacy team manager was invited to the LAC Nurse team meeting in July but unfortunately the meeting was cancelled. Information about advocacy referral routes were shared with the team and we hope to be invited to attend a future meeting.

Following recruitment in quarter one, three new team members joined the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Advocacy Service in quarter two. These are, one full-time advocate, one senior advocate who will work 30 hours per week along with a new casual advocate. Unfortunately, we have experienced some sickness within the team in quarter two, with one full time advocate and the senior advocate having to take extended leave following medical procedures. Both team members are due to return within the next three to four weeks from which time, we are confident recent capacity issues will be addressed and allow us to respond effectively to the recent increase in advocacy referrals.

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.

## Young People's Feedback

As a team, we are continuing to discuss different ways of making it as easy as possible for young people to evaluate the service they have received from TGP Cymru. Young people can scan a QR code which allows them to fill in a short questionnaire about the advocacy service on their own mobile phones. Advocates carry this code with them, and they are also sent to young people following the end of a piece of work. A paper copy of the feedback form is also sent by the Quality Assurance Officer at the end of a piece of work along with a Freepost envelope. Young people can either post the form, scan the code or take a picture of the filled in form and email or text it to the service.

Advocates also carry the Freepost envelopes with them in case a young person wants to fill in the form during a final or closing visit and are encouraged to remind young people their thoughts and opinions about the service they receive are very important to TGP Cymru and they are welcome to share them in whichever way they feel comfortable.

To further encourage young people to share their feelings about the advocacy service we have also introduced a monthly prize draw, whereby children and young people who provide feedback will have the chance to win a £20 gift voucher.

We are pleased to report that in quarter two, the number of young people providing feedback has increased with the service receiving feedback from ten young people.

Of those ten:

Nine stated they found the service helpful; seven felt the service made a difference to their situation, eight felt they knew more about their rights, ten felt more confident since receiving support, nine felt more included in decisions, and ten felt their views were fully considered and their rights represented. Nine of the ten young people providing feedback in quarter two stated they would use the service again, and one person left this space blank.

When explaining why they felt the advocacy service had been helpful, one young person said:

*"Gail read out the letters in the meeting like we asked and has been very nice and helpful."*

When explaining how advocacy support helped them feel more confident, one young person said:

*"Because I feel more confident in myself."*

When explaining how advocacy made her feel more included in decisions, one young person said:

*"I can say my views at meetings and people listen."*

### 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** Ryan was 16 years old when he was referred to the advocacy service by his Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). In the referral, the IRO described concerns raised by Ryan's carers about his school placement and wanted Ryan to access advocacy services as there were differing opinions about whether Ryan was happy at school, and if he would choose a different setting if he were able to express his opinions. Ryan's additional needs mean it isn't possible for him to access the mainstream advocacy service, and an advocate was allocated to assess whether or not a Non-Instructed Advocacy (NIA) piece of work was appropriate.

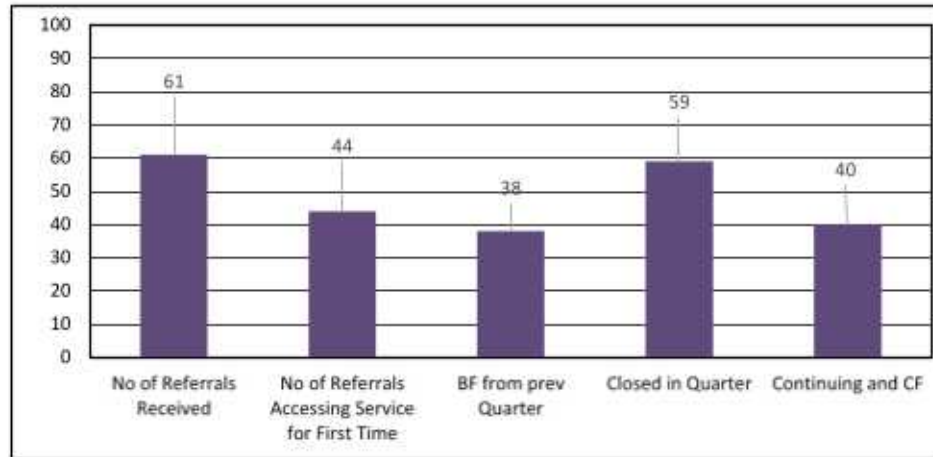
Before arranging to visit Ryan, the advocate contacted both his carers and the referrer to gather information on his communication methods, and any other information about his triggers or anything that would indicate he was uncomfortable with the advocate's presence as Ryan was unable to consent to a visit from the advocate.

The advocate also gathered information from those that know Ryan best, about the most appropriate place to visit him and any information relating to safeguarding.

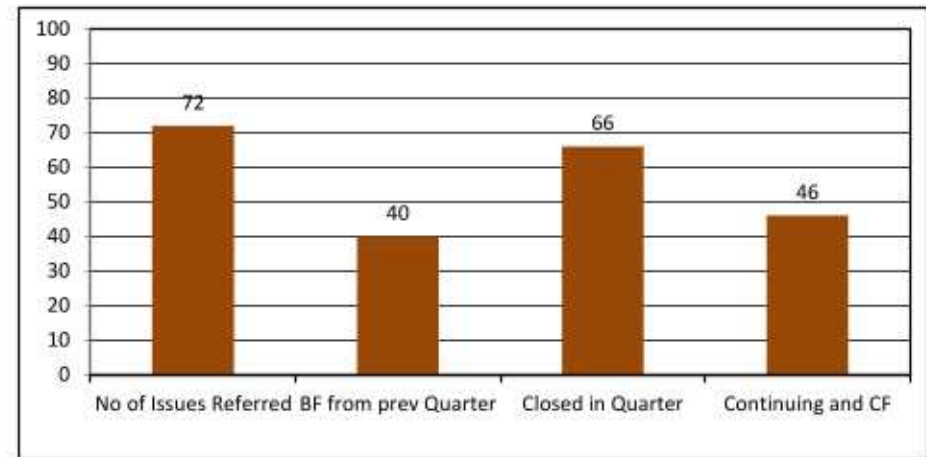
**Action** The advocate then visited Ryan several times in different settings, making detailed notes of both Ryan's behaviours and interactions, and any other information, specifically about how Ryan communicates his likes and dislikes offered by Ryan's care givers both at school and at home.

**Outcome** After the observations were complete, the advocate produced an NIA report, outlining the observation visits and posing questions based on those observations. The questions centred around Ryan's school placement being able to offer him opportunities to express choice and influence in his daily life, as well as express his individuality supported by those who have a relationship with him and understand his limited communication. The questions are designed to encourage decision makers to think about Ryan's situation from his point of view, as he is unable to clearly share his wishes and feelings. The report was shared with the IRO who made the referral and was considered in the discussions around Ryan's school placement.

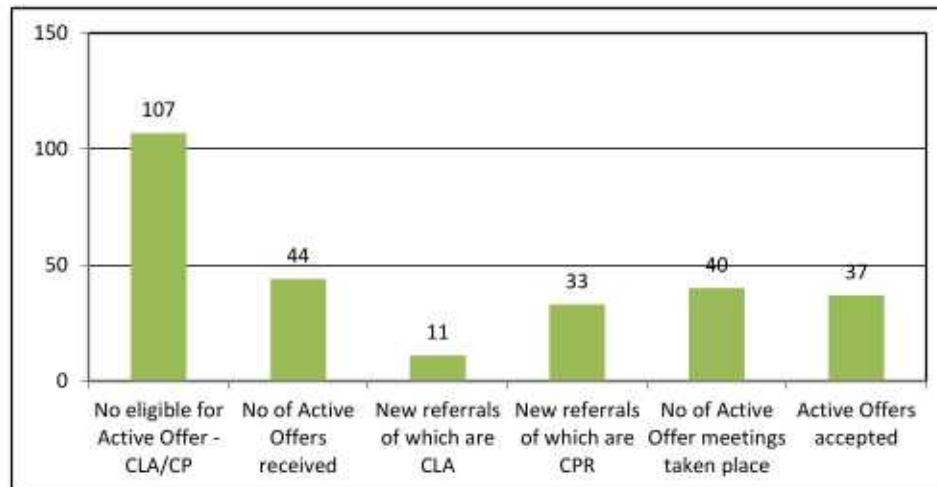
### 1a. Advocacy Cases - Young People - Issue Based Advocacy



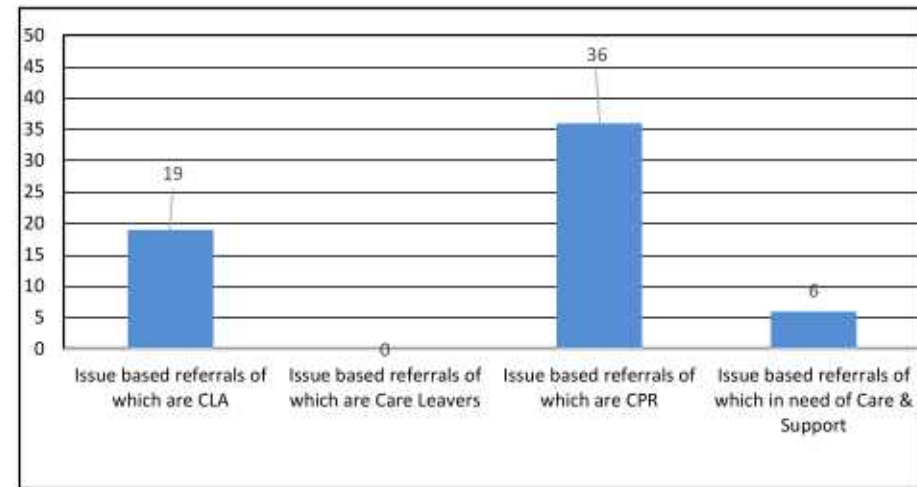
### 1b. Advocacy Cases - Interventions - Issue Based Advocacy



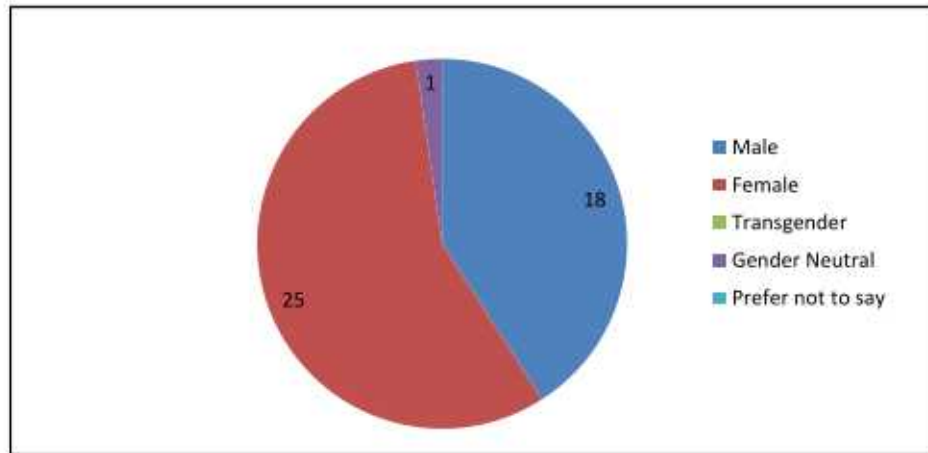
### 2a. Eligibility Criteria: Active Offer



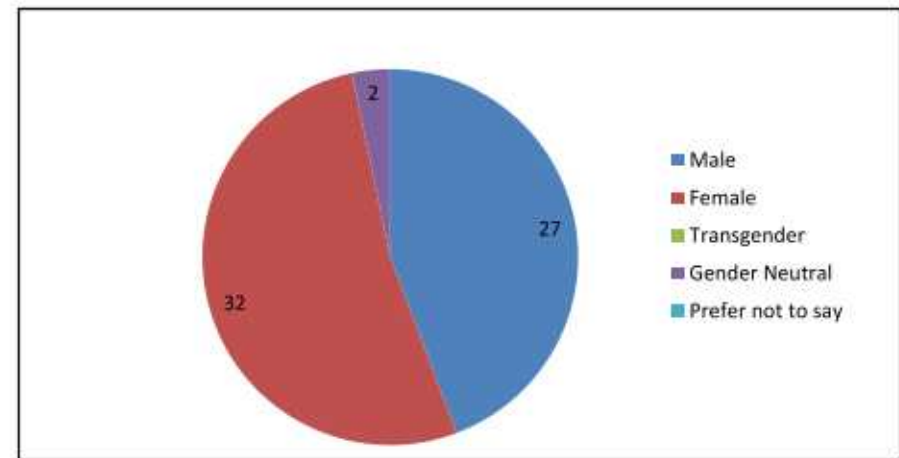
### 2b. Eligibility Criteria: Issue Based



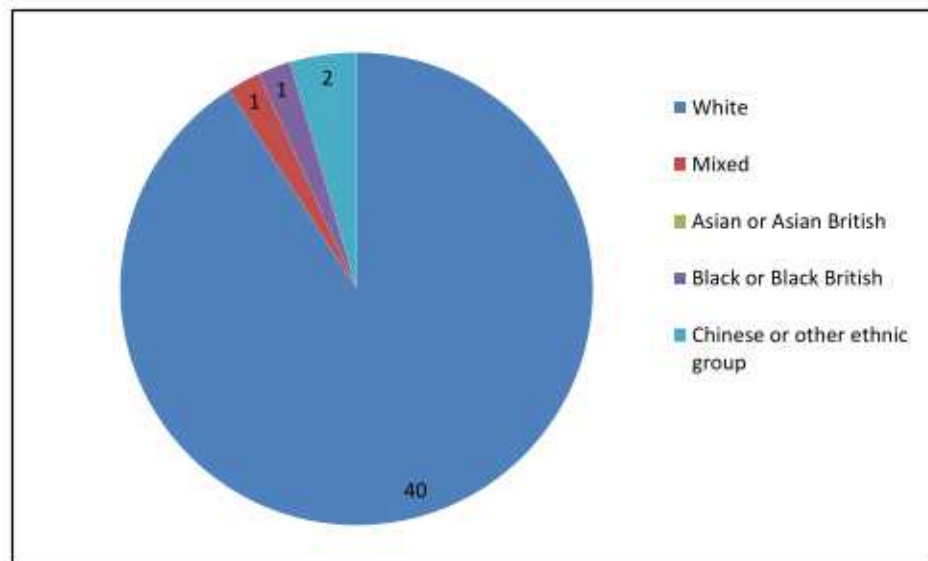
3a. Demographics: Gender - Active Offer



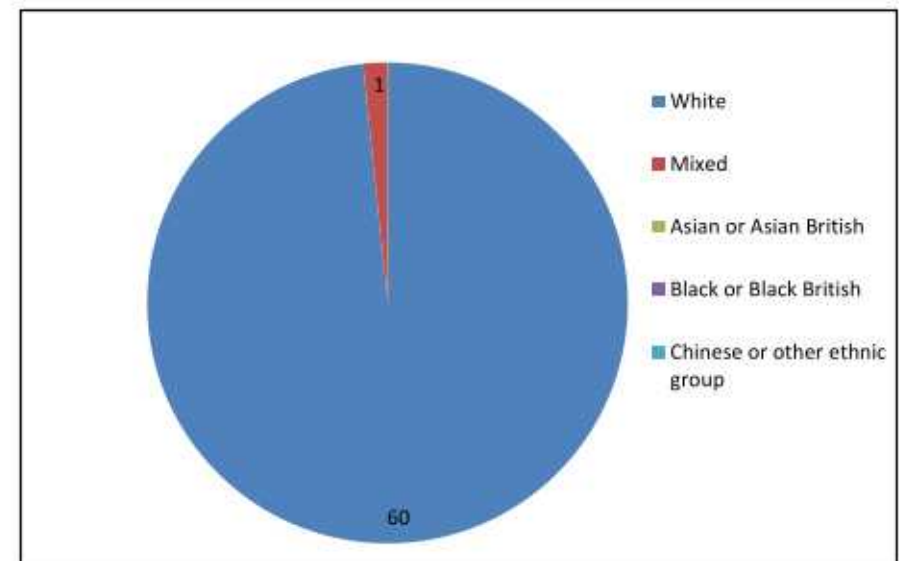
3b. Demographics: Gender - Issue Based



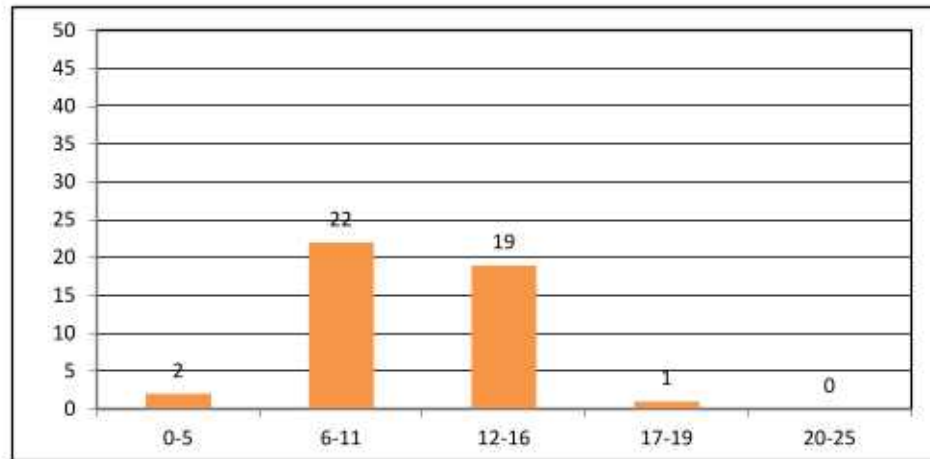
3c. Demographics: Ethnicity - Active Offer



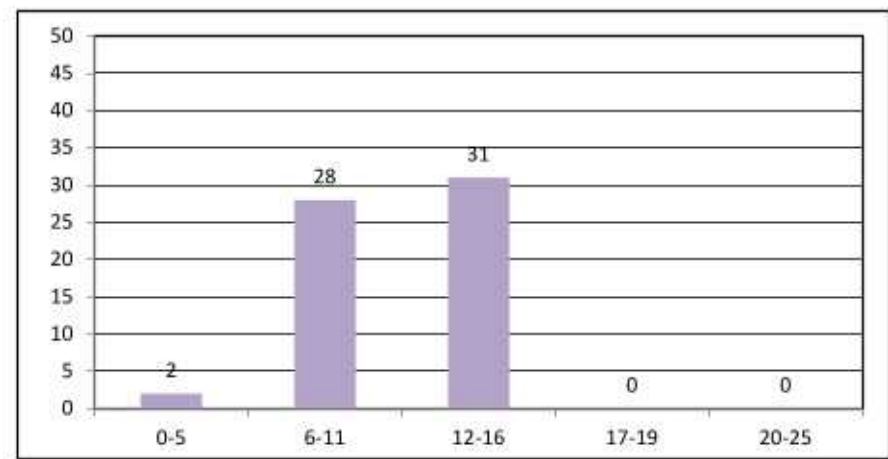
3d. Demographics: Ethnicity - Issue Based



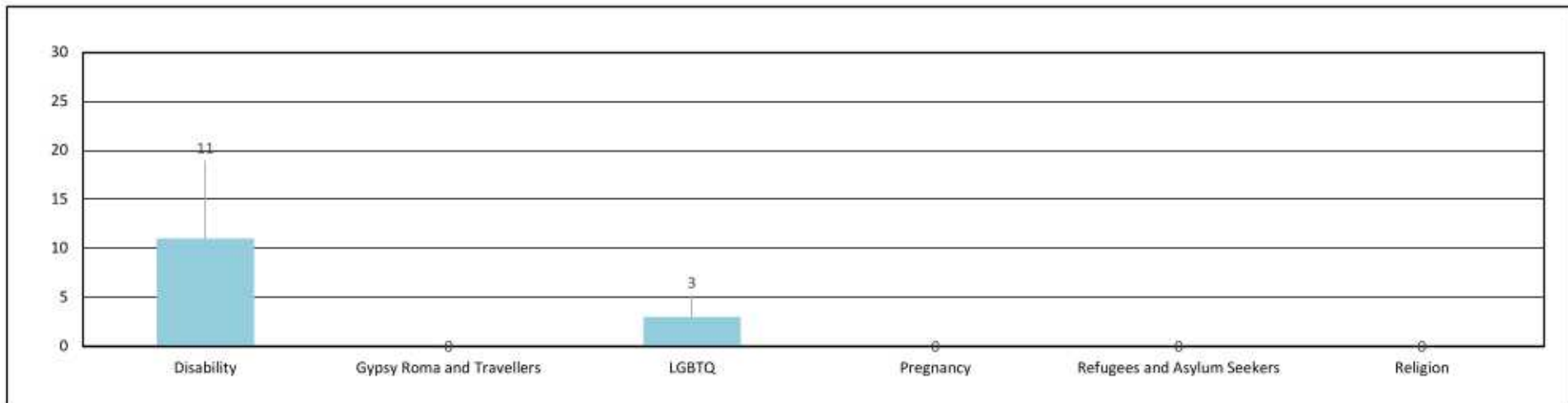
### 3e. Demographics: Age - Active Offer



### 3f. Demographics: Age - Issue Based

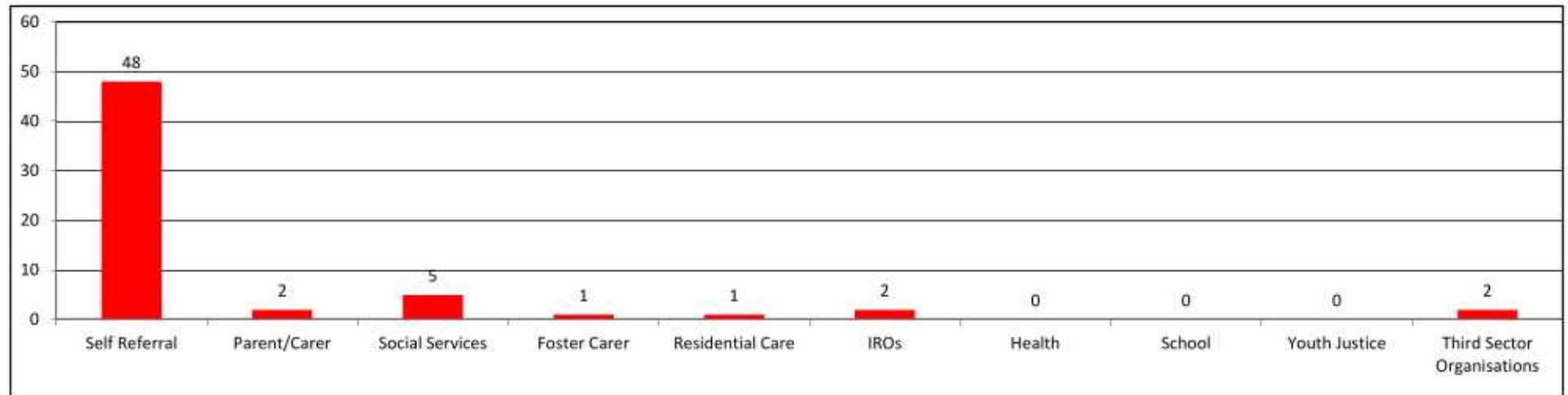


### 4. Protected Characteristics

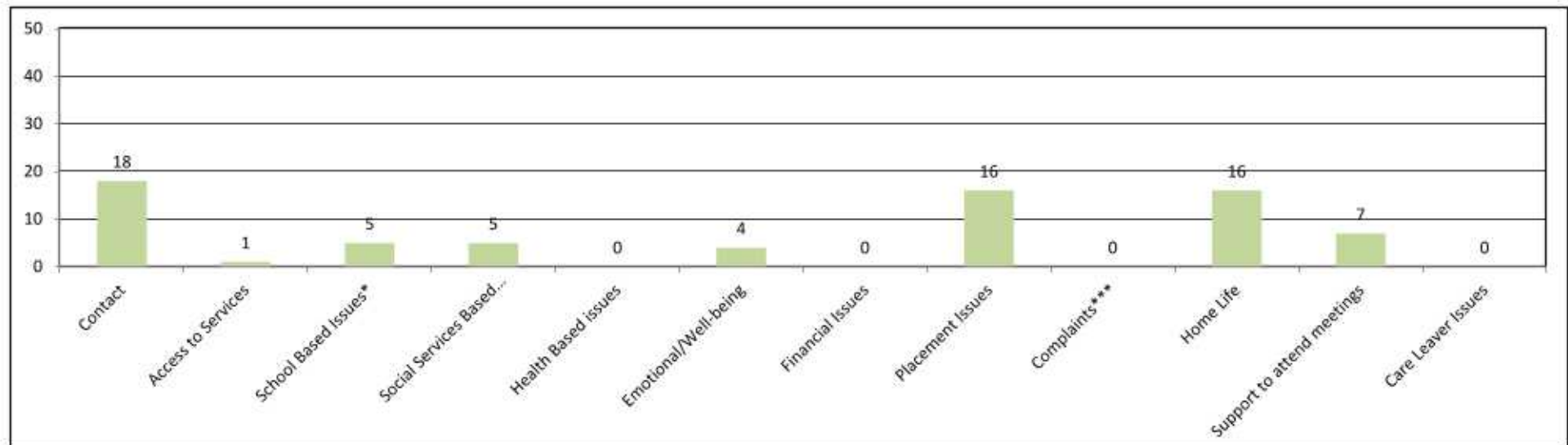




### 5. Referral Source per young person - Issue Based only



### 6. Issues Presented

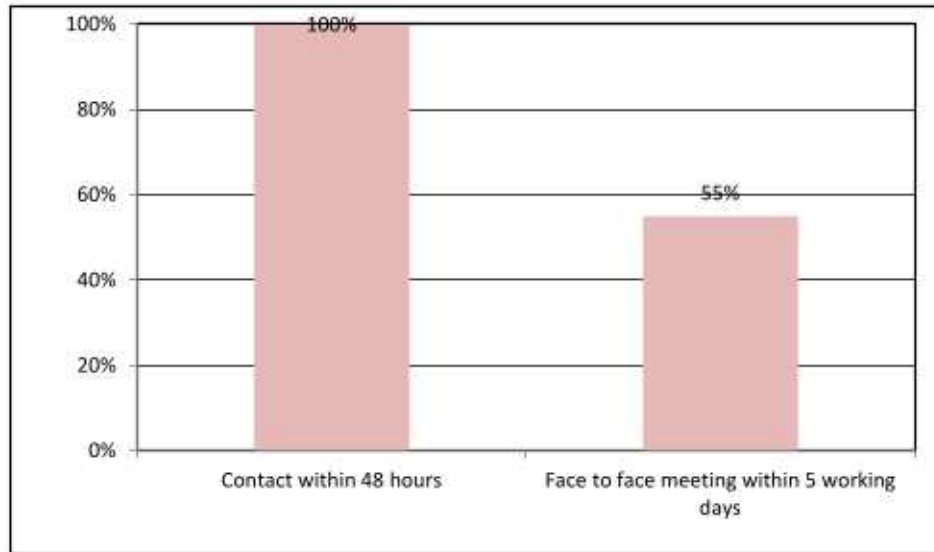


\* School based issues including: SEN/ALN, exclusions, bullying, transport.

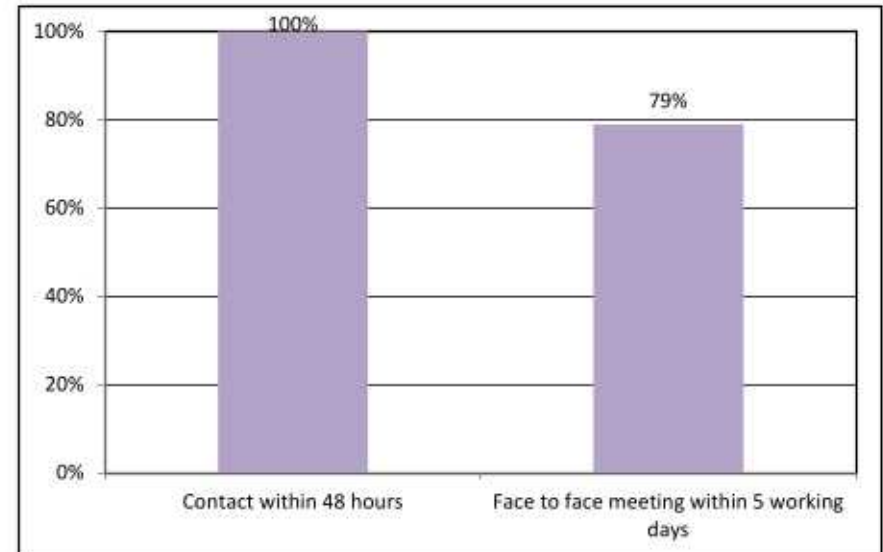
\*\* Social Services based issues including: relationship with worker, care plan, service provided.

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

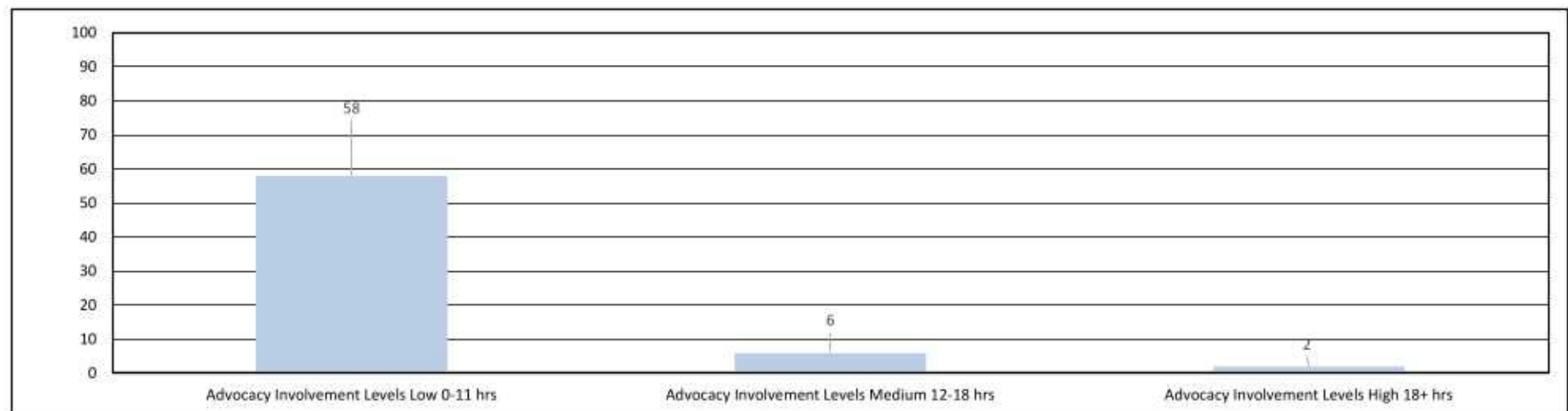
### 7. Service Performance - Active Offer



### Service Performance - Issue Based



### 8. Level of Advocacy Intervention at point of Issue Closure



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

<p><b>Outcome 1</b></p>	<p><b>Children and young people find good quality independent advocacy easily available and accessible.</b></p>	<p>Across the two service areas, 67% of young people had contact with their advocate within five working days of referral, an increase of 6% when compared with quarter one.</p> <p>Advocates continue to support young people placed out of county, both virtually and in person if requested. Nine young people living outside of RCT were referred for IBA in this period. They lived in Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Powys, Swansea and Cardiff.</p> <p>As soon as a new advocacy referral is received, our administrator posts a comprehensive advocacy pack to the child or young person. The pack includes lots of information about advocacy, our service and other support services available in Cwm Taf. The advocate is then able to follow up on this during their initial meeting and use the pack as a resource to introduce some of the key concepts such as advocacy and Children's Rights, directly with the child or young person. The young person is then able to keep the pack and have access to this information, even if they choose not to continue with advocacy support.</p> <p>As detailed above, the review of our RVA service will restart when the team is at full capacity. This will ensure young people living in community homes in CTM have access to good quality and effective visiting advocacy services, supported by community home staff.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 2</b></p>	<p><b>Children and young people have their privacy and confidences respected and their wellbeing safeguarded and protected.</b></p>	<p>Direct work with young people continues to take place during face-to-face visits, although occasionally advocates will contact young people over the phone. This sometimes happens following a request from a young person, or it might be offered if a visit cannot be arranged before a specific meeting. The advocate will always offer a follow up face-to-face visit in this situation.</p> <p>We ask the referrer to tell us where the young person would like to meet the advocate at the point of referral, and the advocate will always attempt to visit the young person at a place they have specified. This is usually in their home or at school, and advocates report many young people find it easier to share how they feel about their home life while at school, where privacy and confidentiality is often easier to maintain.</p> <p>We continue to offer virtual contact to those few young people who prefer to engage over the phone or via a video call. Advocates report some older young people prefer to engage via phone and email, especially if they have work or education commitments.</p>

<p><b>Outcome 3</b></p>	<p><b>Children and young people are valued for their diversity, treated with respect and all forms of discrimination against them are challenged.</b></p>	<p>During this quarter, of the 61 young people accessing IBA, five have additional learning needs, three have ADHD, two have ADHD and Tourette's and one has ASD and ALN.</p> <p>When young people have additional learning needs, advocates always take advice from their social worker and others who know them best in order to communicate as effectively as possible.</p> <p>One young person was receiving ongoing Non-Instructed-Advocacy (NIA) at the beginning of quarter two.</p> <p>Three young people identifying as LGBTQ were referred for issue-based advocacy in this quarter.</p> <p>Three unaccompanied asylum seeking young people were referred for AO in quarter two. Our Asylum Rights Project (ARP) are currently taking the lead on these cases and the young people will be supported, via translation services to access the service in the language of their choice.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 4</b></p>	<p><b>Children and young people are empowered to take the lead in relation to advocacy services and their rights, wishes and feelings and championed.</b></p>	<p>Young people consistently tell us they feel empowered to speak up for themselves following advocacy intervention and advocates always encourage young people to speak for themselves when they feel able to do so.</p> <p>As highlighted in the feedback section above, when young people have a positive experience following an advocacy intervention, they often feel encouraged to continue to share their feelings, and challenge decisions they are unhappy about, with or without the support of their advocate.</p> <p>In this period, one young person was supported by her advocate to access independent legal advice in relation to sibling contact.</p> <p>Another young person stated on their feedback form, that following advocacy intervention they</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"can now go to my CLAR."</i></p>
<p><b>Outcome 5</b></p>	<p><b>Children and young people participate in the design, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of advocacy services.</b></p>	<p>The CTM Advocacy Service Participation Lead will continue to be responsible for keeping up to date with participation and consultation opportunities within Cwm Taf Morgannwg.</p> <p>All young people receiving advocacy support will continue to be offered the opportunity to feedback to TGP Cymru to allow us to monitor the services provided and make improvements where needed. We will continue to make changes to our feedback process to ensure young people experience no barriers in expressing their views about the service they have received.</p> <p>As detailed above, we hope to restart a piece of consultation work with young people living in local authority community homes to capture their thoughts about visiting advocacy. Following this consultation, we will, in partnership with managers of the homes make any necessary changes to ensure all young people are able to access an effective visiting advocacy service.</p>