



# Voice and Participation Service Annual Report 2023 - 2024

*Prepared by*

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**Voice** and   
**Participation**  
 **Service** 

# HIGHLIGHTS



During the Year 2023 – 2024, the Child and Youth Voice Team expanded to become the Voice and Participation Service.

Workstreams of the new service include: Children and Young People's Voice (Social Care), Family Voice (Social Care), SEND Voice (Health, Education, Social Care), IV Scheme, Community Mentoring, Primary Mentoring, Transitional Mentoring, Appropriate Adults and Referral Order Panel Members.

The team has also been working towards setting up new workstreams that go live in April 2024 these include:

An In-House Advocacy Service, Young Carers in Schools, Young Carers Voice and Young Carers Advocacy

The team was a finalist of the CYPN Social Care Team of The Year Awards which is a massive achievement as we have only been formed for less than 3 years.

The Child and Youth Voice Worker Cameron Draisey Won the Frontline Award for Young People. He was recognised for his ability to use his own experiences to build relationships with children and young people, attain their views and coproduce services.

During the past year the team has been recognised for the impact of the work it has achieved. Feedback from the 2023 ILACS Ofsted report states:

'Children in care and care leavers take part in a regular programme of activities to help increase their confidence and life skills, influencing how services and support are developed and provided. They are involved in creative projects such as a podcast to help other children understand what it is like to be in care as well as in the recruitment of staff.'...

'The views and experiences of children and parents are being listened to by political and children's services leaders and acted upon. A significant and ever-growing number of children, parents and carers are actively involved in an extensive range of meaningful participation activities and forums which have informed strategic plans and led to positive changes in operational practice and service development. These include the creation of a new care leavers' young parent group, a young people's fostering panel consultation group, parents designing the Wiltshire 'family promise' and the creation of the new family advisory board.' (Ofsted, 2023)



# FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES



## Children in Care Council

This section provides an overview of the activities, achievements, and feedback received from the CiCC during the period of April 2023 to March 2024. The Voice and Participation Service aims to support and develop the CiCC by building trust, meaningful relationships, and confidence among participants whilst actively engaging them in improving services and enhancing their overall well-being.

### **Attendance and Recruitment:**

- Over the year, 43 different children in care participated in CiCC sessions, consisting of 25 females and 18 males. Whilst this is a decrease from last year, where we had 48 different members, this is reflective of our increased focus on voice sessions and that we have a group of consistently engaged young people.
- Additionally, 31 new CiCC members were recruited during this year, reflecting the growing interest and engagement among children in care.
- A lot of those who attended in the previous year were older and moved on due to the 8-17 threshold. The addition of 31 is a great achievement reflecting the recruitment of new, younger members.
- The average age of attendees was 15 years old. The age range was 8 years old to 21 years old. With the older cohort who are 18+ not attending the groups but supporting with initiatives such as the Foster Carer Panels and interviews.



## ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENT

-The team organised and facilitated a diverse range of activities in collaboration with council leisure facilities, community partners, and charities.

-Noteworthy activities included climbing, water sports, adventure days, lazerquest, and two residential experiences, PGL in July 2023, two hosted during Autumn Half-term and the February half term with 'Go Beyond' in Cornwall. In addition, a PGL residential in June 2024.

-These experiences aimed to provide opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and fostering positive and meaningful relationships. Once these skills and relationships have been made this gives the participants confidence to take part in voice and co-production initiatives.

"I get to meet people like me and make new friends"

## CICC CONTRIBUTIONS

- CiCC members actively contributed to improving services by participating in young person interview panels for senior leader positions, ASYE Social Workers, and applicant foster carers.
- CiCC Members have had the chance to meet with Senior Management including Directors and Heads of Service, this occurs quarterly at our thematic 'meet your leaders' sessions



## CiCC Committee

The CiCC Committee produces podcasts to amplify children in care's voices. Meetings are held monthly at the Care Leavers Hub, offering a safe space with activities. The Hub facilitates 1 on 1 discussions for young people to share experiences, especially beneficial for those who are young or neurodivergent.

Efforts to boost children in care's confidence have increased their engagement levels, leading to more meaningful contributions. The CiCC Committee has created a more inclusive environment for children, promoting active participation and reflection. Regular podcasts allow children to share their perspectives, educating the community. The committee fosters a sense of community and wellbeing among care-experienced individuals.

# VOICE AMBASSADORS

The Voice and Participation Service involves individuals who have received support from Families and Children's Services in co-production efforts. Sessional Voice Ambassadors, employed or volunteering, provide feedback, training, and support under supervision. Wiltshire Council has Care-experienced Voice Ambassadors, offering employment opportunities and enhancing inclusion. Voice Ambassadors contribute to service improvements, receive meaningful compensation and professional work experience, access training, and participate in the Corporate Parenting Panel, increasing attendance at meetings.



The impact of Voice Ambassadors initiatives:

- Corporate Parenting Panel: Enhances communication with young people in care.
- Dragons Den on CPP Priorities: Scrutinises Strategic Priorities ensuring people with lived experience are telling us how we are doing.
- Voice Ambassadors in ASYE Interviews: Involves lived experience in social worker recruitment.
- Speaking at Conferences: Provides insights and learning to professionals.
- Delivering Training: Empowers Voice Ambassadors to share experiences with the wider workforce.
- Young Persons Fostering Consultation Panel: This empowers both applicant foster carers by providing insights from those they will potentially support and Voice Ambassadors by involving them in decision-making processes.
- Meeting with OFSTED: Provide insights into care experiences during the 2023 ILACS inspection.
- Interviews for senior leader positions: Involves lived experience in recruitment and having a real say in who is employed

*Last Year's*

# MIND OF MY OWN



The Mind of My Own app is a highly effective tool designed to engage service users who are under the care of a Social Worker or Family Key Worker.

The Mind of My Own app offers a secure and supportive platform for young individuals to explore their thoughts, emotions, and personal experiences. Its innovative features and user-friendly interface make it an exceptional tool for promoting mental health, self-awareness, and overall resilience among young people. By actively involving them in their well-being, the app empowers individuals and establishes a valuable connection between them and their social workers, fostering open communication and collaboration.

In the coming year Mind of My Own will be deployed in the new advocacy service to help children and young people to contribute to the meetings more effectively

The 'My Life' statement type is the majority sent, demonstrating that young people feel that it is important to share with their workers the experiences that they are facing in life. Within the 'My Life' Statements in the last year (April 2023 to March 2024)

- 88 young people reported feeling 'Happy' where they live.
- 26 reported that they felt unhappy

When completing 'My Wellbeing' Statements Young People expressed that in order to feel happy they need access to the following:

- An adult I can trust
- Someone who loves me for who I am
- Someone I can talk to
- Somewhere stable to live



# Mind of My Own Data

147 young persons' accounts were created on the app.

A total of 647 statements were exchanged between young individuals and social workers.

Efforts are being made to address the decrease in app usage, including attending team meetings, providing monthly updates, training via Oracle, and developing an e-learning package for staff accessibility.

**147**

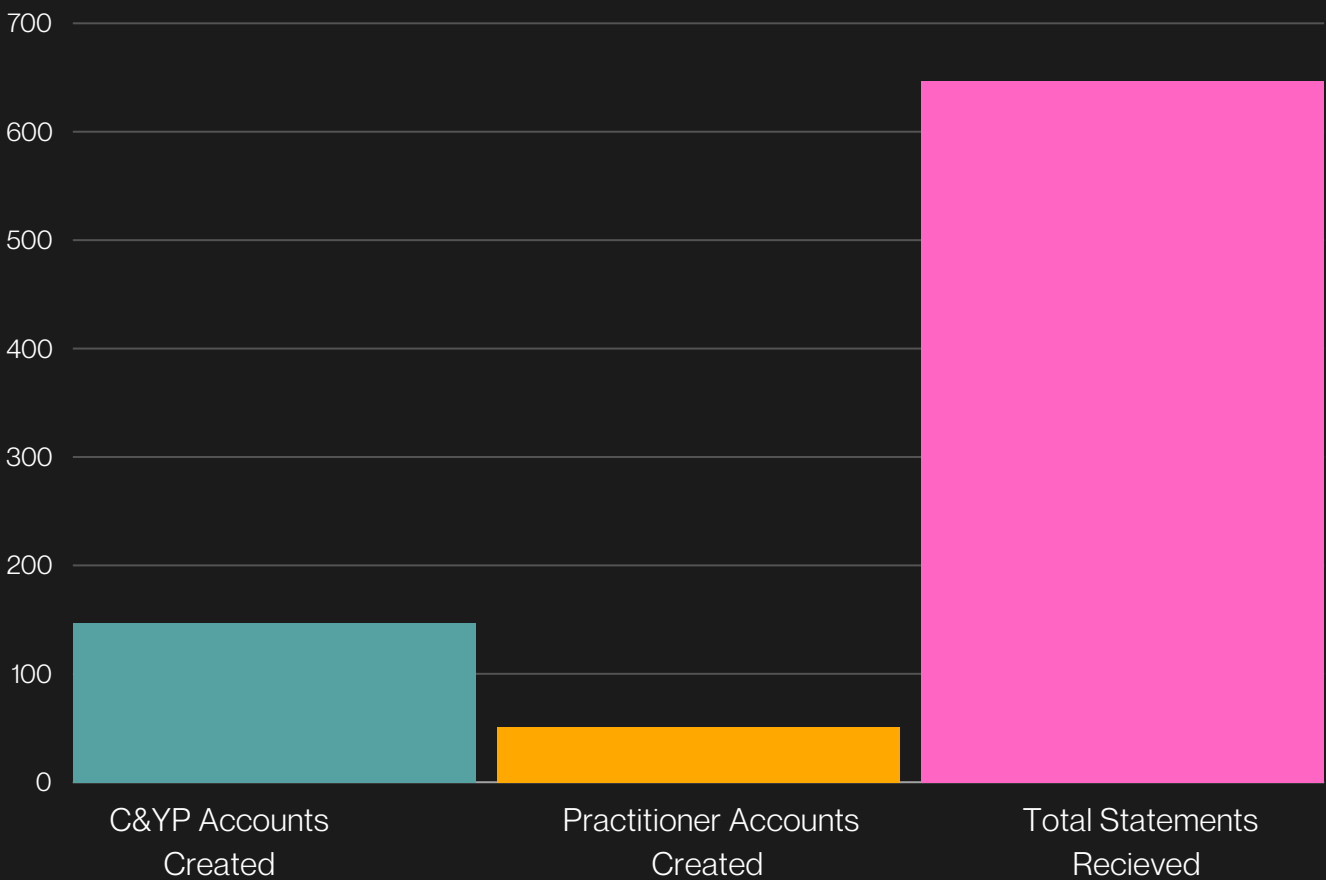
C&YP Accounts  
Created

**51**

Practitioner Accounts  
Created

**647**

Total Statements  
Received



# BRIGHT SPOTS SURVEY



The Bright Spots survey initiative procured by Wiltshire Council and developed by Coram Voice and the University of Oxford aims to capture the voices of children in care and care leavers. The project seeks to understand their needs and experiences, informing policies for better support. The surveys underwent coproduction with service users, and the data will be used to enhance well-being and support systems. The project includes stakeholder engagement, data collection, analysis, and integrating survey results into actionable strategies. The survey reports will be used to improve services based on feedback and will be presented at the Corporate Parenting Panel. The surveys aim to assess subjective well-being and identify areas for improvement, with benchmarking against national averages.

Age Group	Total number of YP	No. of recorded responses	Number of declined responses	Response rate
4 - 7	36	13	1	36%
8 - 11	40	27	1	68%
11 - 17	301	92	0	31%
18 - 24	316	102	1	32%
Totals	693	234	3	38%

# WILTSHIRE YOUTH COUNCIL



The Wiltshire Youth Council (WYC) is an elected group of pupils from Wiltshire Secondary Schools dedicated to amplifying the voices of young people in Wiltshire and ensuring their perspectives influence local decision-making. It engages in various activities to promote youth involvement in community life.

# Wiltshire Youth Council Elections

the latest round of elections for the Wiltshire Youth Council took place from Monday, January 29th to Friday, February 2nd, 2024. These elections aimed to ensure that the voices of young people across Wiltshire are heard and represented in local decision-making. Special Advisors ensure representation of underrepresented groups such as young carers, children in care, LGBTQ+ youth, and military families.

## Key Details:

- **Participants:** Young people from across the county, elected from 10 different schools and community seats.
- **Outcome:** 29 young people were elected as Wiltshire Youth Councillors.
- **Responsibilities:** The elected councillors will meet with Wiltshire Council leaders, work with area boards, review services, and represent their peers' views. They commit to attending monthly meetings and engaging in various youth council activities.
- **Special Roles:** Elections also included positions for Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) and the Head Secretary.

## Healthy School Auditors

- **Purpose:** Conduct health and wellbeing audits at schools to assess their efforts in promoting these aspects among students.
- **Activities:** School tours, pupil focus groups, and head teacher interviews.
- **Feedback:** Provided to schools on their health and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Awards:** Presented during school assemblies to schools excelling in health and wellbeing efforts.
- **Future Plans:** More audits scheduled for June 2024.



## Mental Health First Aid

The Mental Health First Aid initiative equips Wiltshire Youth Councillors with skills to support peers' mental health. Training includes identifying signs, providing initial support, and guiding peers to professional help. Councillors establish peer support groups and share insights on mental health issues to enhance awareness and support among young people in Wiltshire.

# Health Hygiene Product Campaign

The Hygiene Product Campaign by Wiltshire Youth Council aims to address hygiene product access issues among students. It focuses on raising awareness, providing various hygiene products, organising donation events, and collaborating with charity Re-Fresh.

## Members of Youth Parliament

A Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) is a young representative elected to the UK Youth Parliament to advocate for the interests and views of young people in their constituency. Here are key aspects of the role:

### Role and Responsibilities

- **Engage:** Actively involve young people through Youth Council and MYP activities, and participate in local, regional, and national campaigns.
- **Promote:** Highlight the work of the UK Youth Parliament and Wiltshire Youth Council, report back on activities, and communicate through appropriate channels, including social media.
- **Represent:** Speak on behalf of young people in their area, take their views to Youth Parliament sittings, and participate in votes on national policy issues.
- **Skills Development:** Enhance skills such as communication, public speaking, organization, negotiation, debating, teamwork, and leadership.



### Activities and Commitments

- **Meetings and Events:** Regularly meet with other youth councillors, participate in UK Youth Parliament meetings and events, and engage in consultations.
- **Campaigns:** Work on campaigns that address issues important to young people, such as the 'Food for Learning Bill' focusing on free school meals.
- **Training and Support:** Receive training in various areas to support their role, including debating and youth advocacy.

### Election and Term

- **Eligibility:** Any young person elected to the Wiltshire Youth Council can stand to be an MYP.
- **Term:** MYPs serve a one-year term, representing different regions such as North, East, and West Wiltshire.

By participating in the Youth Parliament, MYPs play a crucial role in ensuring that the voices of young people are heard at local and national levels, contributing to policies and initiatives that impact their peers.

# FAMILY VOICE



The primary objective of the family voice work is to bolster the engagement and participation of families in the design and development of services provided by Wiltshire Council. By directly involving families, we aim to integrate their voices into our quality assurance framework, reinforcing our commitment to delivering services that align with their needs and preferences.

## Community Care Live Workshop

During the session, the key aspects of participation, co-production, and relationship-based intensive work in family and children's services were focused on. Attendees gained valuable insights from the experiences and initiatives of Wiltshire Council's Family Voice, Dad's Matters Too, and the Born into Care Project.

Through presentations and interactive discussions, participants understood the importance of involving people with lived experience in decision-making processes and the positive outcomes that could be achieved through relationship-based approaches.

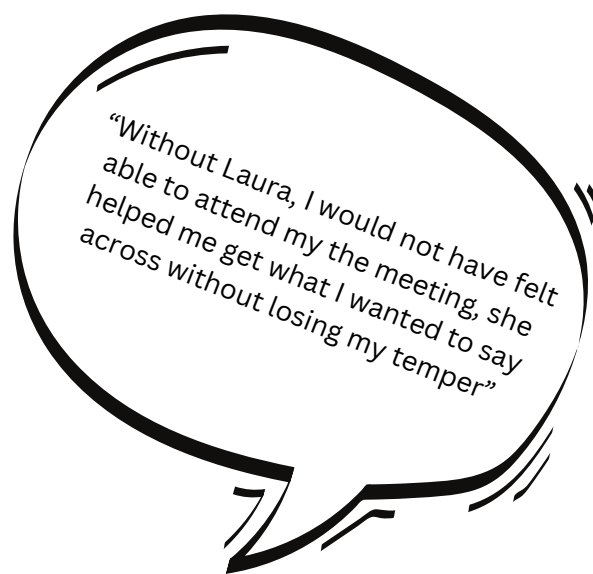
The session was recorded and later released as a podcast episode, fostering active engagement and deeper understanding of the topics discussed. Additionally, a question and answer session allowed attendees to seek clarification, exchange experiences, and gain practical insights from speakers and fellow participants.

# Family Advisory Board

- The Family Advisory Board has been convened on a monthly basis since November 2023.
- Comprising five former service users referred from Child Protection Chairs, the FAB discusses specific themes each month, featuring invited guest speakers.
- Past meeting themes have included interactions with the Director of Children and Families Services, mental health impacts during assessments, leadership introductions, voluntary accommodation orders, and reviewing the use of the Pledge.
- The FAB is exploring collaborative opportunities with other agencies, including podcast participation and training initiatives like FearFree Working.
- Guest speakers are invited to FAB meetings to explore best practices and, when necessary, hold the local authority accountable.
- Efforts are underway to involve parents with lived experiences as experts, enabling them to contribute alternative ideas and solutions effectively.

# Child Protection Parental Advocacy

- The Family Voice Worker has been supporting families as an Advocate. This approach helps the team to work alongside the family and hear the views of parents in real time, exploring issues to see if they are indeed systemic failures, enabling us to have a more rounded perspective of the situation as we are witnessing how parents are worked with.
- A referral form has been integrated into Liquid Logic to track progress before and after involvement.
- Action trackers are utilised with parents to capture their voices and understand their rights.
- Since January 2024, six families have been referred for parental advocacy, resulting in diverse outcomes, including complaints and transitions to Child in Need status.
- Progress has been achieved in enabling service users to voice their concerns effectively in CP meetings through impact statements.



# Next Steps

1. Develop a comprehensive training package for social care staff, emphasising compassionate and knowledgeable service provision.
2. Enhance accessibility and readability of reports and documents, considering parental feedback.
3. Establish protocols for data security and redress mechanisms to address concerns raised by parents.
4. Explore the feasibility of implementing an Early Intervention Support Service tailored to meet the specific needs of families.
5. Foster collaboration with other agencies to expand support networks and improve service delivery.

# SEND VOICE



The Voice and Participation Service has recruited a SEND Voice and Participation (V&P) Lead. Their role is to ensure that there is a joint up approach between Wiltshire Council and Partners to attaining the views of Children and Young People with Send and involving those people in coproduction activities.

## Healthy School Audit - Silverwood

Pupils and staff at Silverwood School have achieved top marks for efforts to create a healthy school environment.

The school for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities received Wiltshire's Healthy Schools accreditation after making some changes that have had a positive impact.

Healthy Schools is a Wiltshire Council programme designed to effectively address the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Schools in Wiltshire are gaining awards for encouraging healthy lifestyles and wellbeing. Members of the Voice and Participation Service and the SEND Voice Ambassadors held focus groups and gave feedback to the school leadership about what students had told them.



# Wiltshire Local Offer Website

The SEND V&P Lead collaborated with the Local Offer Officer from Wiltshire Council to analyse data on the Local Offer, resulting in positive feedback on its improvement and user-friendly website. A working group is creating videos for the Local Offer site, focusing on themes like employment and community inclusion based on user feedback and stakeholder input. The videos will feature parents, carers, young people, service providers, and information specialists.



## SENDIAP Strategy

The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy sets out the long-term plan of how Wiltshire Council will act on agreed priorities so children, young people and families with SEND or in alternative provision have the very best provision in Wiltshire.

The strategy will be influenced by feedback from Children and young people, SEND families, professional partners and staff. It will be a blueprint for the next five years setting out how we will approach and achieve the highest standards here in Wiltshire.

Engagement with key partners is a crucial part of shaping this key document to both gather views and to have a say in finalising the strategy.

The strategy is being worked on against a backdrop of challenge. This includes promotion of SEND Transformation Programme messages, the increase in the number of EHCPs in Wiltshire and the pressures on school places and assessments.

### The teams role in the strategy:

- Encourage participation in the SEND and AP consultation.
- Share ongoing updates on the finalising of the strategy.
- Hold SHARE meetings to ensure partners are exploring key themes in a joint up way with service users.
- Close the feedback loop with service users and partners acting on the plan by having “you said we did” communication approach.

### Key Points:

- Desired outcomes include putting children and young people (CYP) at the center of planning, understanding the importance of families as partners, and incorporating feedback into strategies.
- Consultations with children and families cover themes like the child and family's voice, right support at the right time, quality planning, preparation for adulthood, communication, and support for parents/carers.
- Professionals gathered to analyse feedback, establish vision, principles, priorities, and outcomes, with representation from social care, education, health, and WPCC.
- Activities during the event included presentations, group discussions, and planning for implementation based on current data and analytics.
- Collaboration focused on setting priorities, measuring progress, defining outcomes, and creating the SEND&AP Vision section for the strategy document.

# SHARE

The first SHARE (Socialise, Hear, Achieve, Reduce, Explore) event took place on the 7th of May with 11 professionals attending from various services including: Commissioning, Local Offer, SEND Services, Wiltshire CIL and Pathway to adulthood.

## Purpose of SHARE:

Purpose of the group is to SHARE work plans, projects, and engagement data. The group will cover a different theme each meeting. These themes will stem from the SEND strategy and be aligned with the SEND and AP board. Once a Theme is set, the group will co-produce a range of questions to use during their consultation period. These findings will then be recorded and forwarded to SEND Voice and Participation Lead who will collate them and disseminate them once the 3-month period is up. Each meeting will allow time to discuss how the data used to produce actions, which will be included in the report that is sent out.

The next meeting will be to decide our first theme and how we intend to conduct consultation work with young people and families around this theme.

## Post 16 Deep Dive

To help improve Wiltshire's offer for children transitioning to adulthood the SEND Voice and Participation Lead has been conducting focus groups in schools and the community. The findings will be released in June 2024, the themes being explored are:

- Community Inclusion
- Independent Living
- Employment
- Health

### Springfield Academy

## Community Inclusion

**Do you go to any after school clubs or sessions on in the community?**

- I go to church
- I used to go swimming but I missed a couple of sessions and was told I'm not allowed back, having more flexibility in memberships would be helpful so don't miss because I have had a bad day
- I go to the gym because it helps me deal with my struggles with how I look.
- I would like to join the gym but it is too expensive.
- I would like to do something in mechanics to see if I want to do it as a job.

**is there anything that stops you going into the community?**

- Getting around is difficult as my parents cannot always take me to places
- I worry how people will view me when I am out as I struggle with my body image
- There is a lot of crime and I don't want to be around that
- People don't always understand my needs and treat me differently.

**What do you think would help you access the community?**

- More police patrols to stop gangs
- Better roads
- Less drugs and nicer, more understanding people.
- Having a bus pass so I can get around by myself
- Clubs being more affordable or even free
- Affordable gym passes.
- More local events so I can make friends who live closer to me.
- More sports clubs like sparring

Community

Having more local friends  
↳ more events to meet people

More support to help my body confidence

Church youth group

I'd like to go to the gym but it's too expensive

I'd like a club to do mechanics stuff.

Swimming is more flexibility & memories.

I would love a bus pass so I can go to more clubs.

More sports clubs like sparring.

Affordable or free.

Less drugs, nice people, better roads.



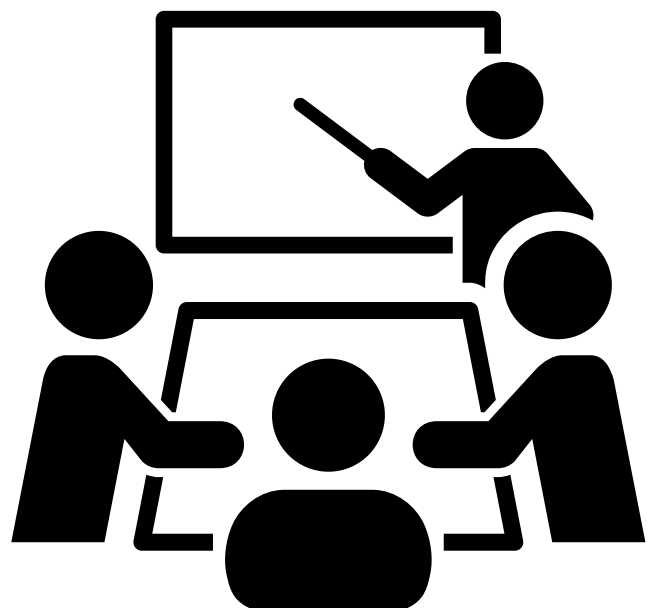
## SEND Youth Forum

Following the consultation work, the team will be sending out an invite for young people to join a SEND Youth Forum. This group will have young people representatives from the multiple schools and community organisations which have already been visited by the SEND Lead Voice Worker.

Those organisations will support the participants to get involved in voice and coproduction initiatives organised by the Voice and Participation Service in line with the SHARE Events themes.

## Creation and Delivery of Training

The SEND Lead Voice Worker will be working closely with the SEND Youth Forum and our SEND Voice Ambassadors to produce a training programme focused on how settings and services can positively gain participation and voice from their SEND young people. These training sessions will be held alongside the young people who have helped shape them, with ongoing follow-ups to assess the impact and outcomes.



# FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S VOLUNTEERING



It has been a busy year for the volunteer team. In October 2023, the Youth Justice Service (YJS) volunteers were merged with the Independent Visitors volunteers, into the new Families and Children Volunteer Team. It has been a time of change in merging two teams with aligning training and processes. All credit to the staff and volunteers for how well they have adapted to the changes.

## Volunteer Recruitment

Over the past year, we have recruited 44 new volunteers across the roles. Some of these volunteers are undertaking more than one role. This resulted in us having 26 new Independent Visitors, 10 Appropriate Adults, 10 Panel Members, 3 Primary Mentors and 6 Community Mentors.

We have spent a lot of time aligning our recruitment processes, this has resulted in the production of a volunteer registration pack that includes information about all of our roles along with a registration form for people to return. The team are now having monthly marketing meetings with Comms, to look at ways we can maximise reaching out to as many people as possible to become volunteers with us.

*"My children are grown up now and I have more free time and I wanted to use some of it volunteering with young people and giving something back to the community."*

# Volunteer Training

The new revamped training consists of everyone completing a day's induction and half a day's safeguarding (plus some online training for Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation). This is followed by role specific training. The Mentors and Independent Visitors have a further days training. The Appropriate Adults training consists of half a day, a custody tour and shadowing experienced volunteers. The Panel Members have a day's training and are buddied up with existing panel members.

*"I was a child in care myself. As someone with lived experience of foster care, I am able to relate to the children and able to understand their perspectives."*

## Appropriate Adults



An appropriate adult is a person who supports and safeguards children during police procedures. They ensure the individual understands their rights and the process, providing emotional support and facilitating communication with the authorities. During the 12-month period, the Youth Justice Service received 105 AA call outs of which 98 were attended by our volunteer AAs. It has been a challenging time for the AA Scheme as Melksham Custody Suite closed for a revamp in February 2023 and is not planned to reopen until May 2024. This has resulted in the children being taken to Swindon Custody Suite following their arrest. A big thank you to all of the AAs who have kept the rota going by travelling to Swindon. Understandably, for some AAs it was too far for them to go and we look forward to welcoming them back to the role when Melksham reopens.

Our first ever AA completed the National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN) qualification. Congratulations to Di Menzies, this is a fantastic achievement and we hope to see more AAs complete the qualification in the future.



# Independent Visitors Scheme

An independent visitor (IV) is a volunteer who provides consistent support, friendship, and mentorship to a young person in care, often one who has little or no contact with their own family. This role is designed to offer the young person a stable, positive relationship with an adult who is not part of the professional network surrounding their care. Here are some key aspects of an independent visitor's role:

1. **Consistency and Stability:** IVs provide a reliable presence in the young person's life, meeting regularly, usually once a month, to build a trusting relationship.
2. **Mentorship and Guidance:** They offer advice, encouragement, and support, helping the young person develop confidence and life skills.
3. **Activities and Outings:** IVs and the young people they visit often engage in enjoyable activities together, such as going to the cinema, sports events, or simply spending time together in a relaxed setting.
4. **Listening:** IVs listen to the young person's concerns and aspirations.
5. **Non-Professional Relationship:** Unlike social workers or care staff, IVs are volunteers, which allows them to build a more informal and personal relationship with the young person.
6. **Legal Right:** In the UK, under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to appoint an independent visitor for any young person in care who would benefit from having one, particularly if they have infrequent contact with their family or no family at all.

The goal of an independent visitor is to provide the young person with a sense of normalcy, support their emotional well-being, and help them feel valued and cared for outside the formal care system.

- In May 2023, a celebration event was held at County Hall to mark a significant milestone for the IV Scheme: reaching 70 children in care being matched to an Independent Visitor.
- By 31st March 2024, the IV Scheme achieved 80 matches. Changes within the team, particularly in how training and matches are conducted, have enabled us to train and match more volunteers. Over the past year, we have trained 28 IVs, of whom 1 is on hold and 3 were discontinued following the training.
- We have a number of children who are in out-of-county placements, some of whom have moved placements since being matched with their IV. Wherever possible, we have tried to maintain their IV visits, even if they occur quarterly instead of monthly. We have also managed to sustain reduced visits when there has been a change in circumstances, such as when the IV has moved away.
- For referrals regarding children living out of county, we contract with an IV Scheme in their area. Currently, we have one out-of-county match, with another in the pipeline.



## **30 NEW REFERRALS RECEIVED**

This is an improvement from 2022 - 2024 where 28 referrals were received



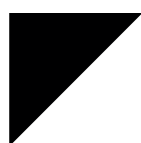
## **24 NEW MATCHES**

The scheme has managed to match more children in care with IV's compared to last year when there were 20 matches



## **13 CLOSED MATCHES**

There has been a slight increase in matches closed up from 10. This is mainly due to young people ceasing the relationship, however there are a lot more matches being formed than ending



## **A TOTAL OF 80 MATCHES**

This is up from 63 in April 2023 which is an amazing growth.

# IV Scheme Feedback



*I really like my IV as when I moved, I didn't have many friends but they made it feel like I had someone to talk to.  
(Voice Ambassador)*

*"The IV coming to visit has been invaluable to the young person over the last year as she has been really struggling with her personal and family relationships. Having an IV as a person just for her has incredible. She really gets on with her IV and has always had a great time when they have gone out together and they seem to share similar interests." (Foster Carer)*



# Referral Order Panel Members

Referral order panel members are volunteers who participate in the Youth Offender Panels established as part of the referral order system in the UK. This system is designed for young offenders, typically those between the ages of 10 and 17, who have committed a first-time, low-level offense and have pleaded guilty. The goal of the referral order is to help the young person take responsibility for their actions, make amends to the victim, and integrate back into the community in a positive way.

At the start of the year, our team encountered significant challenges due to a shortage of panel members. This led to existing members traveling beyond their local areas to cover panels across the county, and we appreciate their dedication. By enhancing our recruitment process and updating panel training, we have successfully increased the number of panel members. Our rolling recruitment program is ongoing to further expand our team.

The Referral Order Steering Group has been very active. Panel members in the group have revamped the panel handbook, which has been positively received and now serves as a comprehensive reference guide for new members on panel operations. These members have also taken charge of organising panel support meetings, gathering valuable feedback from members on their expectations for these gatherings. Additionally, we have introduced a WhatsApp group for additional support and implemented a buddy system for new members.



**54 INITIAL  
PANELS**



**13 FINAL  
PANELS**



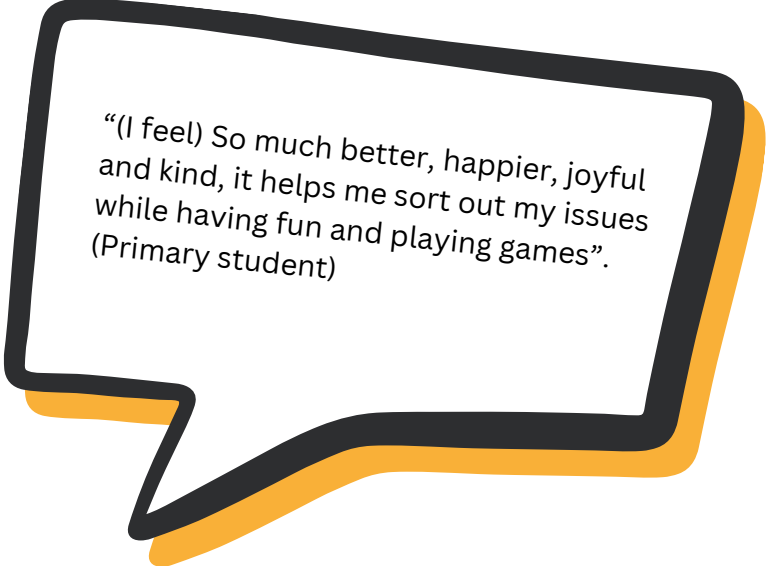
**48 REVIEW  
PANELS**



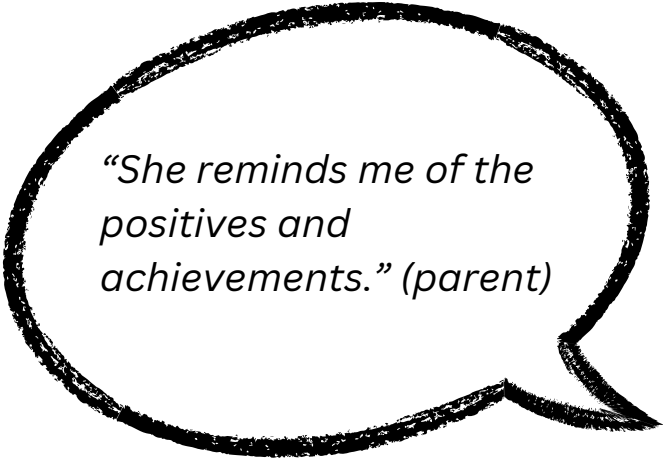
**115 TOTAL  
PANELS**

# Primary Mentoring


The Wiltshire Primary Mentoring Scheme was set up in 2016 as part of the CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) Transformation Plan. The aim of the scheme is to improve the resilience and emotional wellbeing of children by providing a preventative early response to potential/emerging social, emotional, and mental health difficulties by helping them to build resilience, improve their wellbeing and achieve their goals and aspirations. Primary Mentoring was carried out in 11 schools across Wiltshire by 13 mentors. 53 children were supported over a total of 736 sessions.



*“(I feel) So much better, happier, joyful and kind, it helps me sort out my issues while having fun and playing games”.*  
(Primary student)



*“She reminds me of the positives and achievements.” (parent)*



*“We don’t have any family near us, we don’t talk to our family about this.” (Parent)*

# Parent Mentoring

The funding for the parent mentoring program has been discontinued. This program aimed to assist parents of exploited or at-risk children. The mentors offered a non-judgmental approach, aided parents in finding solutions to manage difficult situations with their children, and offered them a break from their home environment. Throughout the year, we provided weekly support to seven parents who were paired with mentors. During the year we supported 7 parents once a week who were matched with mentors.

# Transitional Safeguarding Mentoring

*"I really like mentoring and it really helps. I can tell A literally anything and everything and she won't judge me. I don't have this with my own parents. When I see A, it is the best thing that happened to me that day! My mentor is honestly the kindest person I have met, always really easy to talk to, she genuinely cares and whenever I faced difficulty she was always there to guide me. Truly a lovely human being and I will miss her!"*

The Transitional Safeguarding Mentoring Scheme was set up as part of the wider FACT Transitional Pilot to sit alongside existing services to provide informal, relationship-based support to individuals aged 16-25 years. The aim was to match young people who were known to:

- be engaged in, or vulnerable to criminal and/or sexual exploitation
- be involved in County Lines
- be displaying chaotic risk-taking behaviours
- not be expected to meet the threshold for adult services


The scheme came to an end on 31/03/2024. Over the last year, we matched 6 young people

## Community Mentoring


Community mentors support children aged 10-17 years who are involved or who are at risk of offending behaviour and/or exploitation. The mentors meet with the mentee in the community, once a week for about an hour. The mentors support the mentees to work towards goals, be a listening ear, working through issues, develop their life skills, increase their confidence, self-esteem, and motivation. They achieve this through various activities which could be from going for something to eat to doing something active or getting creative. The mentoring agenda is led by the mentees. Towards the end of the period we revamped our Community Mentoring Scheme including our referral criteria. We now only take referrals from the Youth Justice Service and the Emerald Team. This has enabled us to become more targeted with the mentoring scheme. We have introduced consultation sessions for referrers to be able to discuss potential children to refer. We have also aligned our matching process with the IV Scheme ensuring consistency across the two volunteer roles. Over the past year 12 children have been supported through community mentoring.

*"My mentor helps with talking and trusting me, She was nice, helped me get out of the house."*


# Family and Children's Volunteering Next Steps



Setting up a Volunteer Leaders Group to Support with Planning and Peer Support



Increasing the Number of Volunteers by Facilitating a Recruitment Campaign



Recruit a Voice and Participation Support Worker to help Children in Custody at an Earlier Point and to Lead on Youth Justice Voice Work



Assist in the Recruitment and Training of Volunteer Advocates

# VOICE & PARTICIPATION SERVICE FUTURE WORK 2024 - 2025

## Young Carers

In the upcoming year, the Voice and Participation Service in Wiltshire is poised to implement three roles aimed at elevating outcomes for young carers.

### **Young Carers Voice Worker**

The Young Carers Voice Worker is anticipated to be a linchpin in empowering young carers actively involving them in the development of youth-led services. This includes the establishment of the Young Carers Council, driving innovative changes, producing comprehensive reports based on invaluable feedback, and implementing action plans derived from the insights of young carers. Moreover, efforts will be directed towards promoting youth-friendly consultation materials, and disseminating positive stories through strategic social media campaigns, thereby establishing a robust platform for impactful youth-led services.

### **Young Carers Schools Worker**

Looking ahead, the role of the Young Carers School Worker is projected to play a pivotal part in supporting schools to attain the Young Carers in Schools Award, with a specific emphasis on secondary school provision. Responsibilities will encompass collaborative efforts with school staff to identify young carers, provision of training sessions for staff, and facilitation of workshops for students. The focus will also extend to the development of personalised support plans, advocacy for young carer-friendly policies, organisation of activities promoting wellbeing, and vigilant monitoring of the impact of support initiatives.

### **Young Carers Advocate**

We are recruiting a Young Carers Advocacy Worker to champion the rights and needs of young carers on an individual basis. Responsibilities will include guiding young carers through complex systems, advocating for seamless access to services, and empowering them through educational sessions. The role will also involve effective communication with professionals in schools, healthcare, and social services, along with the mediation of conflicts and the recruitment and training of volunteer advocates. Rigorous supervision and guidance for volunteers, coupled with coordinated oversight of their efforts, are envisioned to ensure alignment with organisational goals and ethical standards. The upcoming year holds the promise of a comprehensive and impactful approach towards positively influencing the lives of young carers in Wiltshire, as reflected through the strategic implementation of these innovative roles within the Voice and Participation Service

# In House Advocacy Service

We are in the process of establishing an in-house Advocacy Service set to launch in July 2024. The goal is to shift from an external provider to an in-house model to better meet the needs of the people we support and enhance service quality. Advocates currently under contract will transition to us under a TUPE arrangement. Additionally, we will recruit Volunteer Advocates whom we will train to foster enduring relationships with those they support, similar to the IV scheme, promoting trust and open communication. This method aims to identify common issues, encourage sharing experiences, and gathering insights from a broad group of service users. We will also offer training to pastoral workers in schools who have a trusting relationship with the children they work with and wish to support them as an advocate.

To help set up the Young Carers and Advocacy initiatives we have recruited an Advocacy and Young Carers Manager who will ensure that the schemes are set up to a high standard.

## With Thanks

I want to express my gratitude for the dedication, passion, and determination shown by the team members of the Voice and Participation Service.

This past year has been marked by significant growth and change, during which the team has provided wholehearted support, often going above and beyond their duties to achieve positive outcomes for those supported by Wiltshire Council.

I also want to extend my appreciation to all the individuals who have participated in voicing their thoughts, generously giving their time to enhance services for many. Their courage and inspiration in sharing personal experiences aim to bring about positive changes within the system.

Recognition should also be given to decision-makers who attentively consider and act upon the feedback they receive. Lastly, a special acknowledgment goes to the workers who undertake the challenging task of safeguarding the vulnerable while striving to maintain a relationship-based approach in their work.

