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In association with



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Barnardo's

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Information for  
professionals and  
carers who work with  
children and young  
people who are in the  
care of the Wakefield  
Local Authority

In association with  
wakefieldcouncil  
working for you

Information for  
professionals



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY AND  
PARTICIPATION SERVICE

## Introducing our service

Wakefield Children's Advocacy and Participation Service (CAPS) is managed by the UK's leading children's charity, Barnardo's, with funding from Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.

The service began as a pilot in 1999 and has developed and grown into a well established service provider for children and young people who are in the care of the local authority. In addition, we have a professional participation team who work with all children and young people district wide. We offer:

- advocacy to any child or young person aged between 0-19 years
- support and advice through the complaints procedure to include care leavers up to the age of 21
- information on children's rights
- exit interviews
- independent visitors service
- peer mentoring and befriending
- young people's involvement in training and recruitment
- participation and engagement work with children and young people 0-19 (up to the age of 25 with specific needs).



## Aims and objectives

**Our aim** is to offer a quality service to children and young people, both those who are in the care of the local authority and all across the Wakefield district, to enable them to voice their opinions to help change either their individual lives or to the benefit of everyone within their community.

**Our objectives** are to:

- advocate on behalf of 'looked after' children and young people to enable their views and wishes to be heard by those in authority.
- support or represent children and young people in meetings and reviews and to empower them to feel confident to voice their own opinions.
- continually develop our successful Independent Visitor Service to all children and young people who meet the criteria.
- facilitate groups of children and young people to encourage them to meet with elected members, policy makers and other professionals to improve service provision across the district.
- ensure that young people are given a voice in the planning and delivery of services.
- encourage all children and young people throughout the Wakefield district to deliver training to professionals and to take an active role in consultation events.
- promote our service provision to children and young people, local authority professionals, carers and relevant agencies to raise awareness of the network support we can offer.

## Support services for the 'looked after' child

All children and young people need an adult in their lives to take an interest in, support, advise and encourage them. For most children and young people this role is undertaken by a parent or close family member.

However not all children who are in the care of the local authority have an adult who fulfils this role. We therefore work with volunteers to provide a number of services to fulfil this role.

All our volunteers are ordinary people with a variety of life experiences and skills which can be beneficial to a child or young person. They take part in an extensive training programme and undergo rigorous checks before working with a young person as a standard safeguarding measure.

### Independent Visitors service

An independent visitor is an adult volunteer, who is not employed by Wakefield Family Services, and who has the time and commitment to meet regularly with a child or young person who has not had any adult family contact for a year. This statutory service forms part of the safeguarding procedure as identified by the Children Act 1989.

### Befrienders

A befriender is an adult volunteer who has the time and commitment to meet and maintain contact with a child or young person on

a regular basis. Befrienders support, advise and encourage children and young people as well as any other work they identify, e.g. self esteem.

### Peer Mentors

We recruit and train young people who have worked with our service in the past to act as peer mentors to other young people in Local Authority care or educational settings.

### Referral process

A referral can be made for any of our volunteer services by the child or young person, social worker or it may derive from a recommendation of the looked after children review. A referral can be made in writing or by phone – our Volunteer Coordinator is waiting for your call.



### Exit interviews

Children and young people who are changing placement or leaving Local Authority care are asked to complete a questionnaire to enable them to speak frankly about their time within the placement.

The outcomes are collated and the information used to look at improvements that could be made to continually develop services provided.

We recruit volunteers to undertake the exit interviews, many of whom are young adults who have lived in the 'looked after' system and relate well to a child or young person who are still living in care or who are care leavers. Their role is to assist the child or young person to complete the questionnaire, to give them the confidence to voice their opinions and encourage them to put forward any ideas or suggestions they may have to improve services.



## Participation

Throughout the year Wakefield CAPS hold consultation and engagement events and other fun activities for children and young people to participate in. Some of our work is determined by the Involving children and Young People's Group on behalf of Wakefield's Children's Trust and by working together we:

- provide training and support to young people to sit on job interview panels
- support them to facilitate training courses for professionals, for example, our Disability Respect group gives young people with special needs the opportunity to facilitate training aimed at improving participation with young people who have similar needs
- hold consultation events to get their ideas and suggestions to develop services
- supporting and enabling children and young people to make decisions which affect their lives
- support, encourage and facilitate children and young people to meet with senior managers and elected members through groups such as Wakefield Children in Care Council, Disabled Young People's Forum and the Youth Council
- stage the annual Mayor's Award event that recognises the achievement of Wakefield's children and young people and support a group of young people to make decisions on the level of award to be attained
- offer Children's Grants and support a group of young people to look at grant applications and make decisions on who should receive money to support their project.

Being involved in our groups gives the young person the opportunity to make new friends and gives them a sense of achievement as well as building their self esteem.