

The Voice of the Child in Practice

RISE Team – Specialist CSE Nurse

A 16 year old girl from the south of the county had a missing episode. When she was found by the Proactive team in RISE, her presentation was concerning with regards her mental health – she was hearing voices and was very emotionally unstable. Her home life had raised no real concerns – she lived with her mother and step-father, a younger sister also lived with the family and they were settled. This child's father had died when she was younger. On discussion with her, a crime had been recorded of online images being sent to her when she was 14 years old. No further action was taken as the report was that the online contact had been blocked. It occurred that the perpetrator did not stop contacting this child – he was only 18 years old himself. The young person had been groomed and exploited online for 2 years and it was only discovered when she went missing. The Sergeant of the Proactive team spoke with myself because of the mental health concerns. The young person was accepted by RISE and work began with her engagement worker, whom she engaged well with and completed CSE work. As the CSE Nurse, I escalated the case to CAMHS because of her mental health and possible PTSD from the trauma she experienced from the CSE. This young person gave a statement and also stood in court to present this (even though she did not need to as the perpetrator had pleaded guilty). The perpetrator was convicted and is now serving a 4 year custodial sentence. I met the young person to provide health advice around her sexual health and general health and to discuss her goals for the future – this young person felt very supported by the multi-agency professionals involved with her and when asked what she wanted to do as a career, she told me that she would like to be a social worker or support worker for children and young people who are sexually exploited. She was discharged from the RISE team because her risks of CSE were low and she was attending a health and social care course at college.

Advocacy Service – Advocate

I met with a young person who wanted support from the advocacy service as she was in Care and was worried her placement was breaking down. During this meeting she shared that she did not feel able to speak about her feelings and wishes with the Guardian, with regards to the Final Hearing, she told me “My guardian has come to talk to me about this but he had another lady with him and I didn't want to say all this in front of her – they never even wrote down what I said I said can you write it down or you might forget and they said they had a good memory. I worry about what I say that's why I don't say anything to my social worker or anyone because once mum found out what I said – my mum will hear this if she goes to the court and she will use it against me when we speak on the telephone or visits – I worry about J, T and L - I just want them to stay together – I will always support them they know that – they never talk about things though”.

With her permission I shared her views and wishes to all the professionals concerned to ensure they were all aware and decisions could be made acting upon them.

Advocacy Service – Advocate

A referral was received for a young person who lacked confidence and did not feel able to articulate their views and wishes in meetings and when speaking with professionals. He was on Police Bail and unable to return home. I met with him on a couple of occasions to gain his views and then supported him during professionals meetings so that his voice was heard and acted upon. I then had an email from his carer the next day. “When I went for a walk with CB yesterday evening, he was beaming regarding being able to talk up for himself. He explained just having you there gave him the confidence to be able to voice his opinion. Having someone there (in my opinion) who isn't part of the decision making process is essential when YP experience the difficulties CB shared with you. All too often individuals and agencies are only mentioned when things go wrong or expectations are not met, I am glad to say this is not the case. You have done a great job and your agency has reinforced, that every child really does matter! The change in your agencies' approach regarding having a more time scaled task focused approach has certainly worked with my YP”.