

# **Young Voices Advocacy**

*Independent advocacy that puts young people's voices at the centre*

## **Executive Summary**

Young Voices is a 12-month pilot project providing independent, rights-based advocacy for young people across North Wales. The service was created to offer a safe, non-judgemental space where young people can express their views, influence decisions and receive support that is genuinely centred on their needs. Over the course of the pilot, Young Voices has supported young people facing complex challenges including school exclusion, deregistration from formal education, neurodiversity, family conflict, mental health difficulties and barriers to accessing education.

Data gathered throughout the year highlights significant levels of unmet need. More than half of the young people we worked with had missed substantial amounts of school, many reported that their needs were not understood or accommodated, and a notable proportion had experienced exclusion, reduced timetables or deregistration. A striking pattern emerged around neurodiversity, with every deregistered young person having a diagnosed or suspected neurodevelopmental condition.

Through independent advocacy, young people were supported to communicate their wishes, participate in meetings, challenge decisions, access assessments, and secure more appropriate educational provision. Case studies within this report demonstrate the transformative impact of being listened to, taken seriously and supported to lead their own journey.

Alongside direct advocacy, Young Voices delivered workshops and presentations to professionals and young people, raising awareness of rights, participation and the importance of listening to children and young people. A ready-to-deliver workshop package is now in place, offering significant potential for wider reach across schools and youth settings.

The pilot has clearly shown that Young Voices fills a critical gap in current provision. As an independent service, free from statutory pressures, it offers something young people repeatedly tell us they cannot find elsewhere: a trusted adult who listens without judgement and stands alongside them.

At present, continuation funding has not yet been secured, and the service is temporarily unable to accept new referrals. Despite this, advocates remain committed to supporting current young people to a positive conclusion. With sustainable investment, Young Voices is ready to expand, strengthen its offer and ensure that no young person is left without someone to amplify their voice.

## **Introduction**

This is TGP Cymru's end of funding report to the Moondance Foundation and we hope it clearly demonstrates the impact of your support and the work achieved through this project. In October 2024, TGP Cymru received a generous donation of £50,000 from the Moondance Foundation. The pilot project launched in April 2025 with a clear purpose. We wanted to offer advocacy to young people who were not eligible for support under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 but who still needed someone to stand beside them and help their voices be heard.

At TGP Cymru, we believe that every child deserves a voice. Over recent years we have seen a growing number of young people who were struggling with low mood, anxiety, family pressures and significant school absence. Many did not meet the threshold for social care or CAMHS support. They were falling between services and were left without the help they needed. Traditional advocacy could not reach them because it is usually reserved for those already within social care. These young people were asking for support but had nowhere to turn.

The Moondance Foundation stepped in and made it possible for us to test a new approach. From the beginning, young people were involved in shaping the service. Their insight guided the design and delivery of the project and even inspired the name, **Young Voices**. The funding allowed us to appoint a Senior Practitioner and a dedicated advocate, with additional support provided by an admin officer, who all worked closely with young people and the adults around them to move their concerns forward.

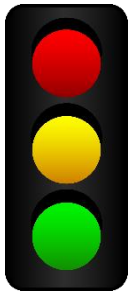
Demand has grown steadily as awareness of the project has increased. We have seen how valuable this service is and how much unmet need exists. We feel we have only begun to uncover the potential of this work and the feedback we have received shows the difference it has already made.

The response to Young Voices has been overwhelmingly positive. Schools, families and partner agencies have welcomed the service and have consistently told us that this support has filled a gap that has existed for far too long. Young people themselves have described feeling listened to, understood and taken seriously, often for the first time. The demand for the service has grown far beyond our initial expectations and this work is both needed and valued. As the pilot comes to an end, we now seek ongoing funding to continue this important work and to build on the strong foundations that the Moondance Foundation has helped us create.

## **What is Advocacy?**

Advocacy is about speaking up for children and young people; empowering children and young people to make sure their rights are respected, and their views, wishes and feelings are always heard; representing the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people to decision-makers; and helping them to navigate the system.

The Advocate's role is, at the request of the child or young person, to support them to express their wish to -



Stop something.

Change something.

Start something.

Young Voices is an independent advocacy service that gives young people someone who is firmly on their side with no agenda other than helping them move their issues forward. Advocacy for children is built on the belief that every young person has the right to be heard, to be taken seriously and to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. It is a rights-based approach that promotes choice, control and participation. Advocates listen without judgement, provide clear information, support young people to understand their options and make sure their views are represented accurately and confidently. The service exists to create a safe space where young people can speak openly and know that their voice will be respected and acted upon.

## **Project Design**

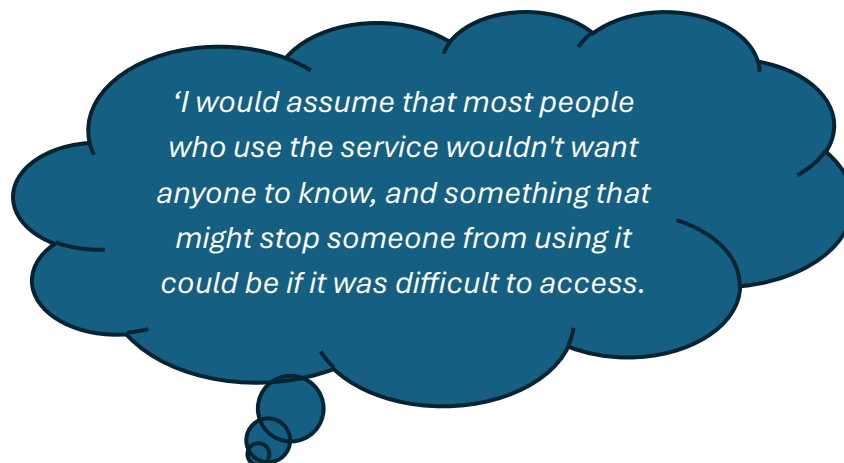
Young Voices is built upon the strong foundations created by statutory advocacy services. The principles of child centred practice and meaningful engagement give us a professional structure that supports real and lasting change. By using structured advocacy plans and a person led approach we place young people at the centre of every decision and ensure that their voice guides the direction of the work.

From the very beginning, the design of the service has been shaped by the young people it exists to support. Their insight has been essential to the development, delivery and evaluation of the project. To understand what mattered most to them we launched the project with a wide-reaching survey that explored their priorities and the barriers that might prevent them from taking part. The name Young Voices came directly from a naming competition and reflects the spirit of the service. We

received 32 responses and the main themes were clear. Young people wanted support with mental health and wellbeing, family relationships and school-based issues. They also told us that privacy and confidentiality were major concerns. They wanted a service that was simple to access, and they highlighted social media as an important way to reach them.

We listened and acted. We created an easy-to-use contact form for young people and a separate referral form for professionals. We established a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and X and developed a dedicated page on the TGP Cymru website. We produced a clear and accessible poster which has been shared electronically with every secondary school in North Wales and distributed in physical form across a wide range of community settings.

As the project has grown we have continued to adapt our approach in response to what young people tell us. Their feedback has shaped the language we use, the way we communicate, the tools we offer and the environments in which we meet them. This ongoing dialogue has ensured that Young Voices remains relevant, accessible and firmly rooted in the lived experiences of the young people it serves.



### **Headline Statistics**

42 young people received direct advocacy support during the 12-month pilot.

55% had missed significant periods of education before referral.

100% of deregistered young people had diagnosed or suspected neurodiversity.

1 in 3 young people supported had experienced exclusion or reduced timetables.

4 safeguarding referrals were made as a result of advocacy involvement.

Over 20 multi-agency meetings attended with or on behalf of young people.

Dozens of professionals and young people reached through workshops and presentations.

Rising number of self-referrals, showing growing trust and awareness among young people.

# YOUNG VOICES!



## DO YOU...

- Want someone to listen to you and your point of view?
- Want to know your rights?
- Need help speaking out and getting your voice heard?

## ARE YOU....

- Aged 11-18 years old?
- NOT receiving any help from social services or CAMHS?
- Living in North Wales?

## WHAT DO WE DO? WELL, WE CAN...

- Inform you of your rights
- Listen to you
- Help get access to the services you need
- Speak up for you to schools
- Give you support and help you speak up at meetings

YOUNG VOICES



CONTACT US



## THIS SERVICE IS CONFIDENTIAL AND INDEPENDENT

**You don't have to see anyone if you don't want to you can just text:**

Scan QR code or ring/text/WhatsApp: 07496 674 745 • [youngvoices@tgpcymru.org.uk](mailto:youngvoices@tgpcymru.org.uk)

Young Voices is a confidential service, we will only share information about you if you've asked us to or we have to by law or we think you or someone else might get badly hurt. We are not a 24hr service and will get back to you when we can.

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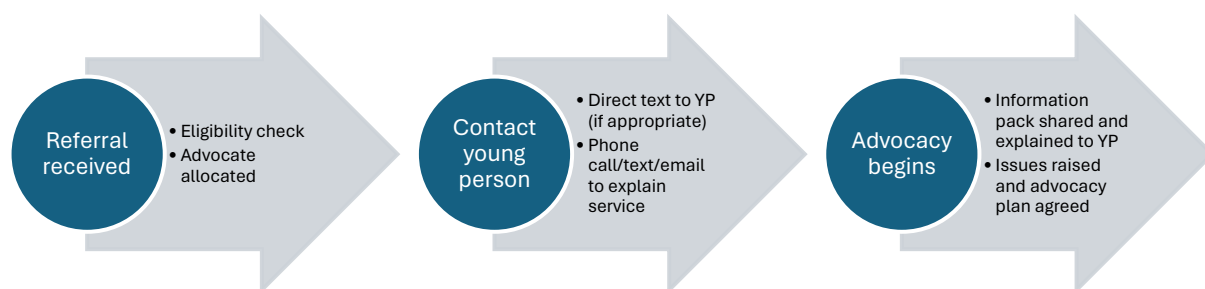
**[tgpcymru.org.uk](http://tgpcymru.org.uk)**

## **Eligibility**

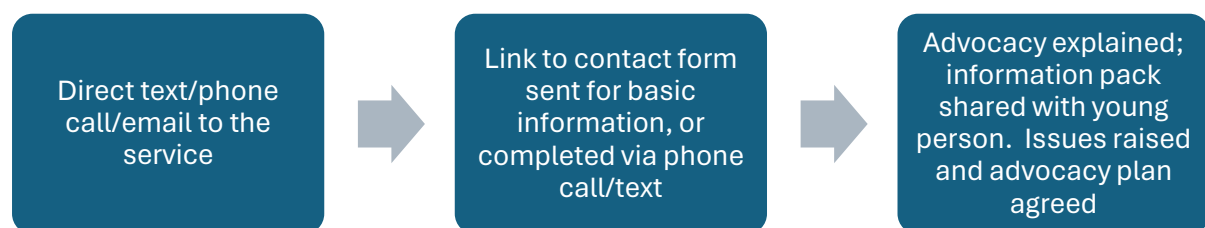
The criterion for accessing the Young Voices Advocacy service was intentionally broad throughout this pilot project so that we could identify where the greatest needs were emerging. As the service has developed it has been shaped directly by the young people we have supported. Any young person living in the six counties of North Wales can access the service provided they are not currently receiving support from social services. At the outset we also stated that young people should not be receiving support from CAMHS. However, it has become clear that long waiting lists and the limited remit of CAMHS mean that this requirement can prevent young people from receiving advocacy at a time when they would genuinely benefit from it. Many young people are waiting for assessments or are experiencing issues that fall outside the scope of clinical services. For these reasons we recognise that this criterion may act as an unnecessary barrier and that flexible access is essential if we are to reach those who need this support most.

## **Referral process**

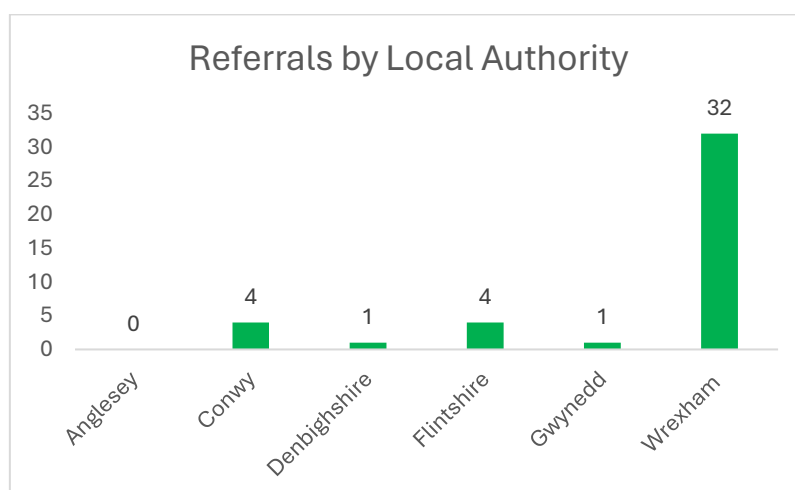
### **Referrals from professionals**



### **Direct contact from young people/parents & carers**

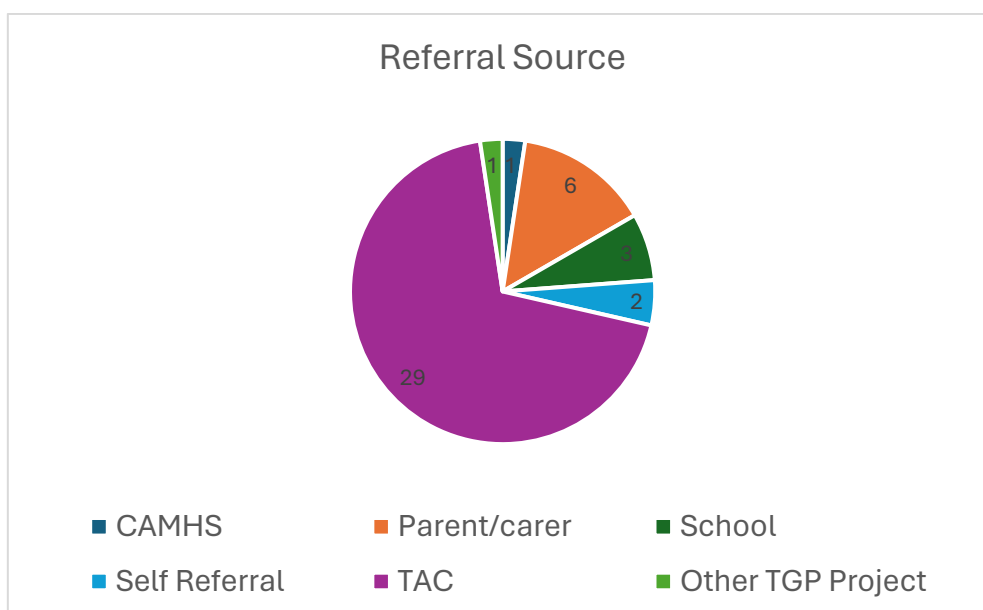


## Who has accessed Young Voices?



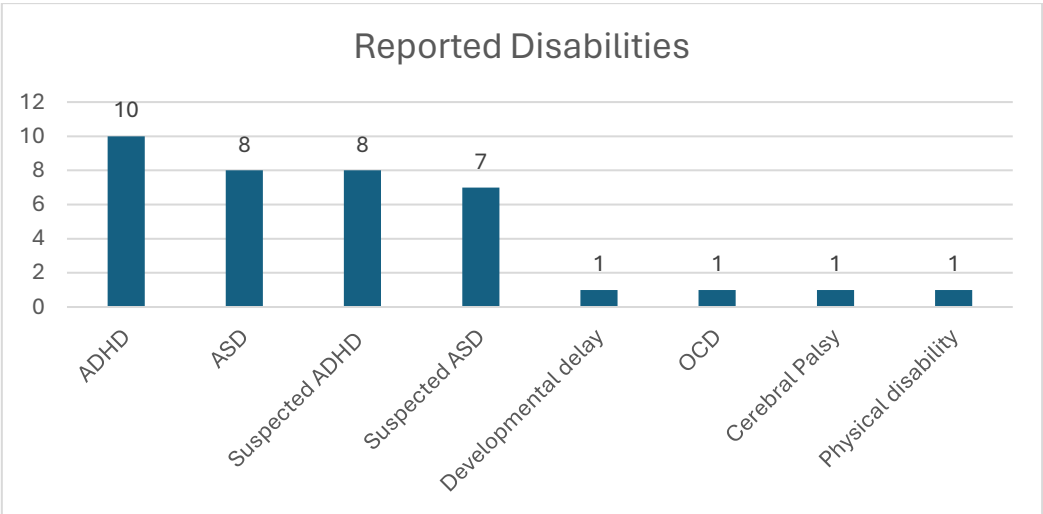
During the last year we have provided advocacy support to 42 young people on 122 separate issues. The highest number of referrals came from the Wrexham area, with 32 young people accessing the service, while no referrals were received from Anglesey during this period. Much of the early uptake in Wrexham is due to the strong partnership developed with the Wrexham Together Achieving Change team. Working closely with this team has helped Young Voices establish its unique role alongside other services and has shown how well advocacy can complement existing support.

Referrals are now increasing in both Flintshire and Conwy as awareness of the service continues to grow. What we have consistently seen is that once a professional or organisation makes a successful referral, this almost always leads to further referrals. This suggests that confidence in the service builds quickly and that Young Voices is becoming recognised as a reliable and effective source of support for young people who need to be heard.



Whilst many of our initial referrals came through the TAC team in Wrexham, we are now seeing a growing number of referrals from parents and carers as the service becomes better known. Interestingly, parents and carers tell us they were signposted to Young Voices by a wide range of organisations including SNAP Cymru, The Info Shop (Wrexham), CAMHS and the Local Authorities. We have received only 2 self-referrals so far, and this is an area we would like to see grow as the service continues to develop.

At the time of reporting, we have a further 3 young people on our waiting list, as we are unable to accept additional referrals until continuation funding has been secured. This demonstrates both the demand for the service and the urgency of sustaining it so that young people are not left without support.

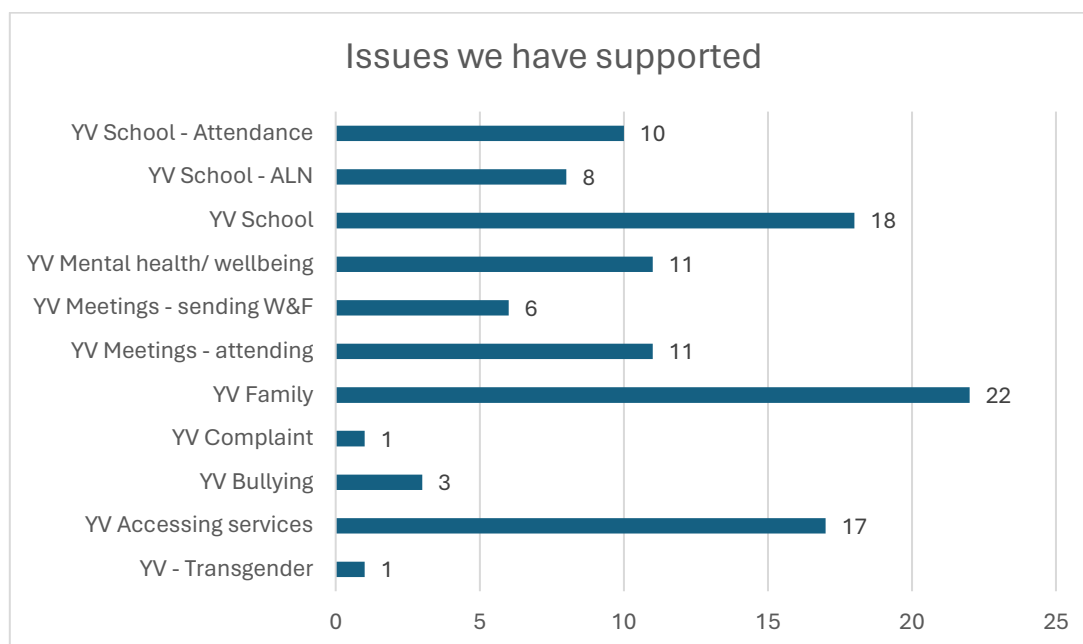


We have seen a striking pattern within our caseloads, with a significant proportion of young people either diagnosed as neurodiverse or suspected of being neurodiverse. Many are currently on waiting lists for assessment or are in the early stages of gathering evidence to join those lists. This reflects the wider picture across North Wales, where long waits for assessment and limited support pathways leave young people and families navigating complex challenges without adequate guidance.

In total, 27 of the 42 young people we supported fall into this group. This means that 64 percent of our caseload may be neurodiverse. This is a substantial proportion and highlights a clear area of unmet need. These young people often experience difficulties with communication, emotional regulation, school attendance and navigating systems that are not designed with neurodiversity in mind. Advocacy has played a crucial role in helping them express their views, understand their rights and feel heard in environments that can otherwise feel overwhelming or inaccessible.

The high number of neurodiverse young people accessing Young Voices suggests that independent advocacy is not only beneficial but essential for this group. It also reinforces the importance of

maintaining flexible access criterion so that young people who are waiting for clinical support, or whose needs fall outside the remit of clinical services, are not left without a voice.

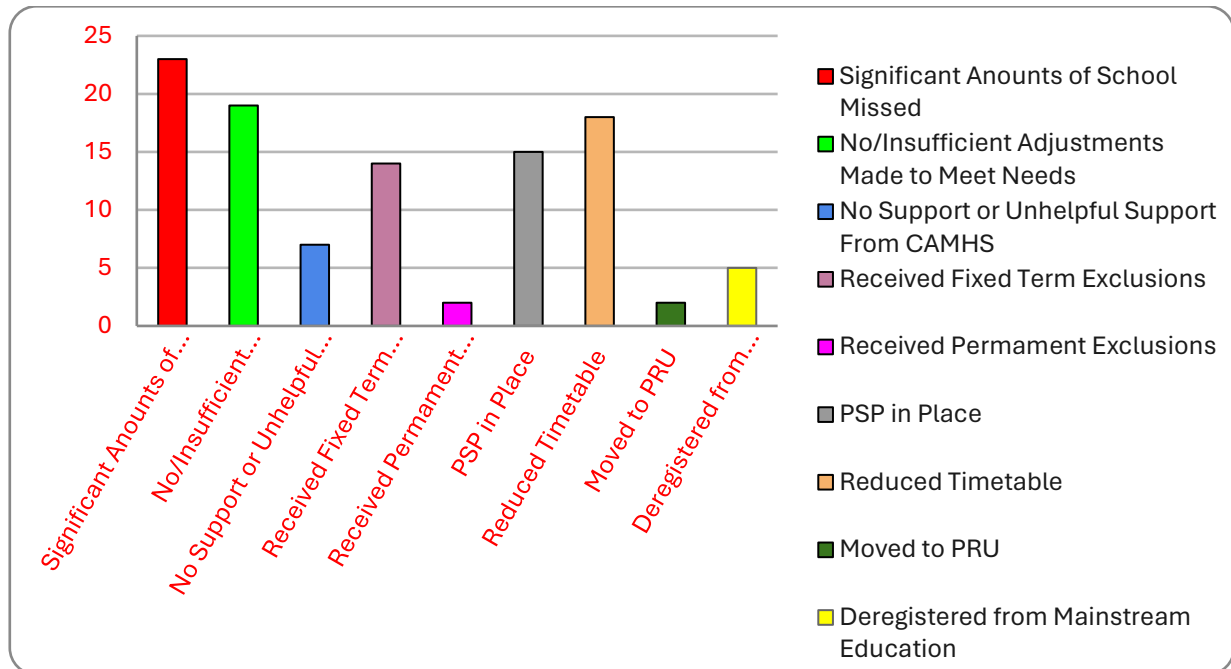


The highest number of issues raised by young people relate to family. When we break this down it covers a wide range of experiences. We have supported young people living through acrimonious parental separation, those struggling with communication difficulties with parents, and those facing challenges involving siblings such as bullying or caring responsibilities. We have also worked with young people affected by parental incarceration and family bereavement. Our involvement has included working alongside Cafcass and the family courts, and supporting young people whose situations have escalated to child protection. During this reporting period we submitted 4 safeguarding referrals and referred a further 2 young people for Care and Support from social services.

Although family issues represent the largest category of concerns, the majority of our time has been spent supporting young people with education related difficulties. While the data shows that 10 young people approached us specifically about attendance, the number reporting significant absence from school is far higher. In total, 23 young people told us they had missed more than a month of school, representing 55% of our caseload. This level of absence often reflects deeper emotional, social or systemic challenges, and advocacy has played a crucial role in helping young people communicate their needs and re-engage with education in a way that feels safe and manageable.

## Trends

When we delve deeper into the full set of **42** cases, distinct patterns start to appear that highlight the challenges young people are bringing to the service.



Over the past year we have gathered a clear picture of the challenges young people are facing within education. From the young people who have accessed our service we have found the following.

- 55% missed significant amounts of school
- 45% felt their school did not make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs
- 43% were placed on a reduced timetable
- 36% had a PSP in place
- 33% received a fixed term exclusion and a further 5% experienced permanent exclusion
- 12% had been deregistered from mainstream education
- 5% were moved to a PRU

For such a small service these figures represent a substantial number of young people who are struggling to remain engaged in education. Many of those reporting attendance anxiety linked their difficulties to the impact of COVID-19 and the transition from primary to secondary school. These experiences often sit alongside wider emotional and social pressures, leaving young people feeling overwhelmed and unheard.

Of the five young people who had been deregistered from education, every single one either had a neurodiversity diagnosis or reported suspected neurodiversity. Two of these young people told us they felt they had been “off rolled” and forgotten by services. Their experiences highlight the vulnerability of neurodiverse young people within the education system, and the essential role advocacy can play in ensuring they are not left without support.

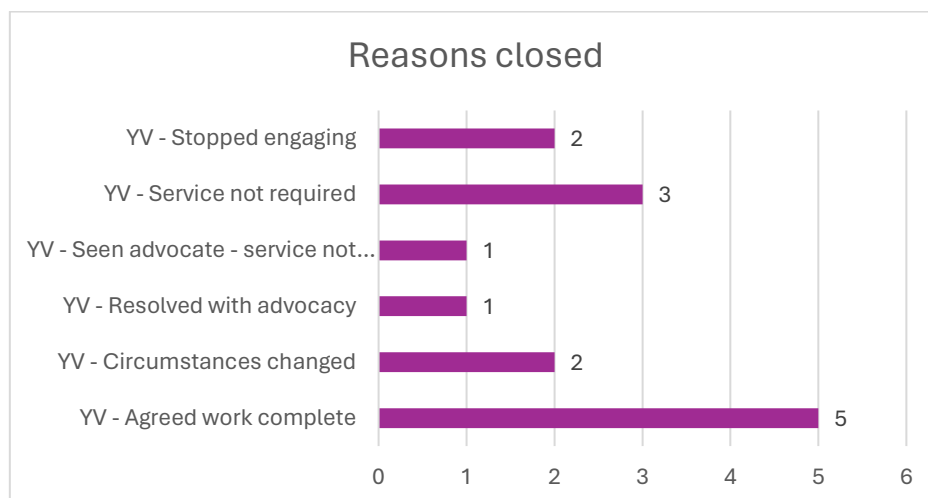
We have supported young people with education related issues in a wide variety of ways. This has included communicating their views, wishes and feelings to schools and the local authority, attending and representing them at meetings, and escalating concerns where appropriate. We have submitted formal requests for IDP determinations and reviews and supported young people to explore alternative school provisions or move schools when necessary. We have helped young people both deregister and re-register with mainstream education, depending on what they felt was right for them.

We have also worked closely with the Communication Passport team at TGP Cymru on two cases to help young people express their needs and communication preferences more effectively. During this period, we submitted one formal school complaint. Where we identified a pattern of concern relating to the ALN department of one school, this was raised directly with the headteacher who is now reviewing the underlying issues.

Above all, our role has been to provide a safe space where young people feel listened to, respected and supported. For many, this has been the first time they have felt able to speak openly about their experiences in education and to have their voice taken seriously.

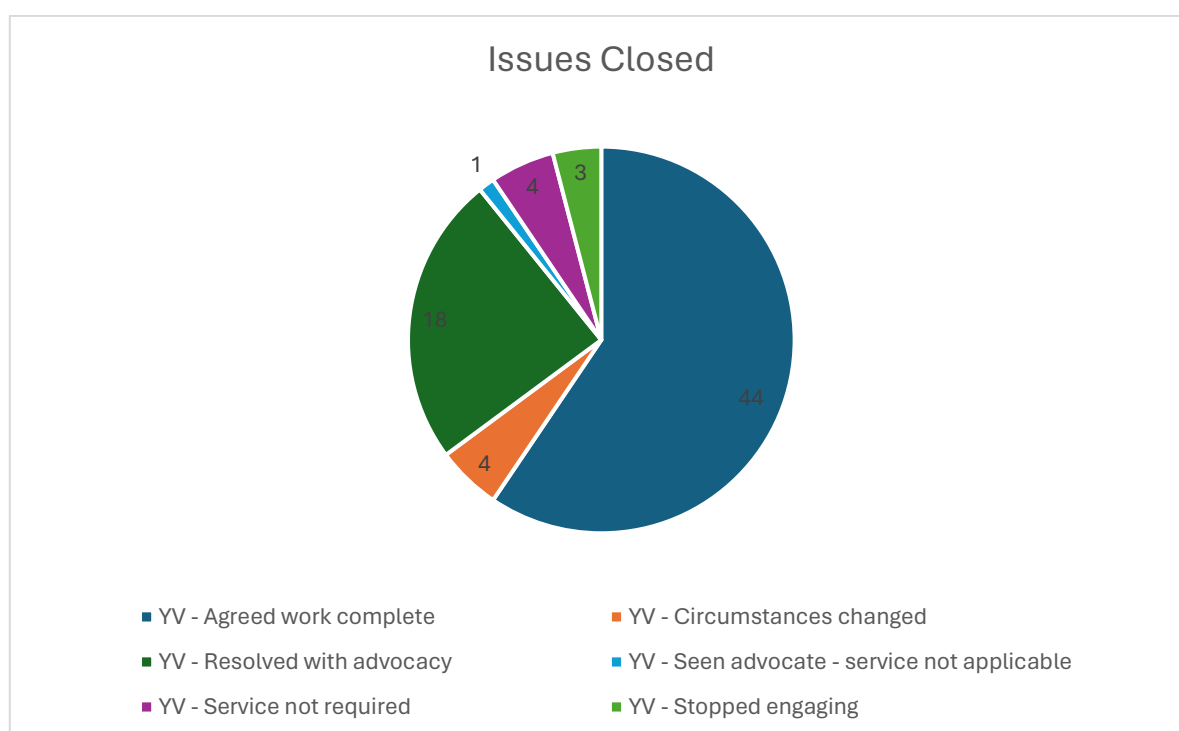
## **Closure**

We have closed **13** cases over the past year, and these are the reasons we have recorded them closing:



Our main reason for closing cases is that the young person and the advocate agree that the work on their issues is complete or that the matter has been resolved with the support of advocacy. As expected, there have also been a small number of young people who have stopped engaging, decided the service was not needed at this time or whose circumstances have changed.

Because we record our work against each individual issue a young person raises, case closure does not always mean the end of our involvement. It is common for one issue to conclude while we continue to support the young person with other concerns. This flexible approach ensures that young people receive support for as long as it is needed and that their voice remains central throughout.



This chart shows the reasons individual issues have been closed and provides a more accurate reflection of our overall work with young people. Because many young people raise several issues during their time with us, a single case may remain open while individual pieces of work are completed and closed at different points. This approach gives a clearer picture of the progress made on each concern and demonstrates the breadth of support offered, even when a young person continues to work with us on other matters.

### **Partnership Working**

Throughout the pilot, Young Voices has worked closely with a wide range of partners including schools, local authority teams, CAMHS, SNAP Cymru, the Communication Passport team, Cafcass and family courts. These partnerships have been essential in ensuring young people's views were

heard within complex systems and multi-agency processes. By acting as a bridge between young people and professionals, the service helped improve communication, reduce misunderstandings and ensure that decisions were more closely aligned with the young person's wishes and needs. This collaborative approach strengthened outcomes and demonstrated the value of advocacy within wider support networks.

## **Case Studies**

The following case studies illustrate the real experiences of the young people who have accessed Young Voices over the past year. Each example highlights the challenges they faced, the barriers they encountered and the difference that independent advocacy has made to their ability to be heard and to influence decisions about their lives. While all identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality, the themes and journeys described are true reflections of the issues brought to the service. Together, these case studies demonstrate the breadth of our work and the importance of providing a safe, trusted space where young people can speak openly and receive support that is centred on their rights, their needs and their voice.

### **Bethan**

Bethan is a 15-year-old young person from Wrexham. At initial contact, Bethan and her mum explained that she wanted to return to education after being deregistered two years earlier. Mum had been advised that home education was the only way to avoid fines when Bethan could no longer cope with school. She received no information about the responsibilities involved and did not feel able to provide education herself. By the time of referral, Bethan had become extremely anxious and rarely left the house. She told her advocate she had no friends, no interests beyond reading and felt she had missed most of her secondary education.

Bethan is selectively mute, so early sessions involved mum speaking on her behalf until trust developed. The advocate also built rapport through the family cat, who "did not like people", which helped Bethan feel safe enough to communicate directly. Bethan had no formal diagnosis, though mum had long suspected autism. She described sensory sensitivities, a very restricted diet, stimming, noise intolerance, skin picking and overwhelming anxiety in mainstream school. She had been unable to attend primary school consistently after lockdown, and when she transitioned to secondary school no adjustments were made. She was severely bullied, attendance dropped and the only support offered was a reduced timetable. This led to attendance officers and police welfare checks. At the same time, Bethan's grandmother, who lived with them and was severely agoraphobic, died by suicide two weeks after deregistration. Mum had tried to explain the situation to school and attendance officers, but deregistration was presented as the only option.

Bethan told her advocate she wanted an education and felt she had been failed. The advocate referred her to SNAP Cymru for additional support and sought advice from CAMHS, who explained that waiting lists for assessment were currently five to six years. A request for an IDP determination was submitted to the local authority, and a referral was made to the Communication Passport team. An educational psychologist was allocated to begin gathering evidence, and CAMHS later informed

the family they were exploring a private diagnostic route. Bethan met with the Communication Passport team and a personalised document was created to help her express her needs. She has also now been allocated a TAC worker.

At Bethan's request, the advocate submitted a formal complaint to her former school, as the family felt she had been "off rolled" from education. The new headteacher is engaging with the advocate to explore how best to meet with Bethan given her anxiety and selective mutism and has escalated the complaint to the local authority.

### *Outcome*

This case remains open. The key outcome so far is that Bethan is now visible to services after being effectively lost to the system. With an IDP determination underway, CAMHS involvement progressing and multi-agency support beginning to form around her, there is renewed hope that a suitable educational pathway can be identified. The complaint to her previous school also has the potential to influence wider practice and prevent other young people becoming so isolated from education and society.

### **Colin**

Colin was referred to Young Voices by his grandmother, who is also his special guardian, following multiple fixed term exclusions and growing concerns about his educational placement. At the time of referral, Colin had recently received a five-day exclusion, with several others in the weeks before. During advocacy support he received a further fifteen-day exclusion.

Through person centred advocacy sessions, Colin shared openly how his current placement within an onsite inclusion provision at a mainstream school was failing to meet his needs as a neurodivergent young person with autism and ADHD. He described feeling unsafe in school and said he had lost trust in staff because agreed strategies to support him when overwhelmed were used inconsistently or not at all. He explained that staff communication often escalated situations, leaving him distressed, misunderstood and unable to regulate his emotions.

Colin also raised concerns about the removal of support that had previously helped him. He no longer had access to a designated safe space and sensory room, despite having been involved in its design, which caused him significant upset. He had also been on a part time timetable for a prolonged period, attending only mornings with no alternative provision. This meant he was limited to English and maths, missing out on the topic-based learning he found motivating and enjoyable.

Colin felt strongly that his right to a meaningful, full-time education was being denied. He spoke honestly about the impact on his mental health and the pressure it placed on his grandparents, particularly his grandmother who was managing ill health. He expressed a clear wish for a new educational placement and for the Local Authority to take responsibility for his Individual Development Plan (IDP).

The advocate worked closely with Colin using a holistic, rights-based approach to capture his wishes and feelings accurately. Together they reviewed his IDP and identified areas where provision

was not being delivered. Colin was supported to understand his rights and to prepare for meetings so that his voice could be expressed clearly and confidently.

Colin's views were formally presented in meetings with the Local Authority and education professionals. The advocate ensured that Colin remained central to discussions, enabling him to be actively involved rather than spoken about. His wishes were consistently referenced during decision making.

Following the Local Authority meeting, Colin was offered a six-week placement at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) assessment centre to build a clearer understanding of his needs and identify a suitable long-term placement. The review at the end of this period was extremely positive, and Colin was able to remain in the setting as it better met his needs. He reported feeling much happier, more settled and that his wellbeing had significantly improved.

### *Outcome*

As a direct result of advocacy, Colin secured an educational placement that can meet his needs as a neurodiverse young person and provide the full time, meaningful education he had clearly expressed he wanted. This represents a significant improvement in stability, inclusion and access to appropriate support.

The Local Authority also resumed responsibility for Colin's IDP and committed to an early review, ensuring that the concerns he raised were formally addressed and that future provision would be shaped by his strengths, needs and aspirations. An application has now been made for Colin to move to the next feeder setting so he can continue his education in Years 10 and 11.

Colin reports being much happier in his new setting, with noticeable improvements in his mental health and overall wellbeing.

### **Aled**

Aled is a 13-year-old young person from Conwy who was referred to Young Voices by his youth worker after concerns were raised about his emotional wellbeing and his increasing withdrawal from activities he previously enjoyed. At the time of referral, Aled was living between two homes following a difficult parental separation and was struggling to manage the expectations and communication from both sides of his family.

During early advocacy sessions, Aled shared that he felt "stuck in the middle" of ongoing conflict between his parents. He described feeling pressured to take sides and said that decisions about contact arrangements were often made without asking what he wanted. Aled explained that he found it hard to express his feelings at home because he worried about upsetting either parent. This left him feeling anxious, unheard and responsible for keeping the peace.

Aled also disclosed that he was finding school increasingly overwhelming. He had begun avoiding lessons, particularly on days when he moved between households, and felt that teachers did not understand the impact of the situation on his concentration and behaviour. He reported stomach aches, difficulty sleeping and a growing sense of dread about attending school. Despite this, no formal support had been put in place.

The advocate worked with Aled to explore his views, wishes and feelings in a safe, neutral space. Through creative tools and person-centred conversations, Aled was able to articulate what he wanted from his contact arrangements, what felt manageable and what was causing him distress.

He also identified small but important adjustments that would help him feel more settled in school, such as having a consistent point of contact and a quiet space to go when overwhelmed.

With Aled's consent, the advocate shared his views with both parents and facilitated a meeting where Aled's voice could be central without him feeling pressured to speak directly. This helped both parents understand the emotional impact of the conflict and led to clearer, more predictable arrangements that reflected Aled's wishes. The advocate also attended a school meeting with Aled and ensured his needs were clearly communicated. As a result, the school agreed to put in place a named staff member for support, a safe space pass and regular check ins.

### *Outcome*

As a direct result of advocacy, Aled's contact arrangements were revised to reflect what he felt was best for him, reducing the pressure and anxiety he had been carrying. Both parents reported that communication had improved and that they better understood Aled's perspective.

In school, the adjustments put in place helped Aled feel more secure and supported. His attendance improved, and he reported feeling less overwhelmed and more able to focus. Most importantly, Aled said he felt "listened to for the first time" and more confident expressing his needs.

This case highlights the essential role of independent advocacy in situations where young people feel caught between adults' decisions. By providing a safe space, amplifying Aled's voice and ensuring his rights were central to planning, advocacy helped restore stability, reduce conflict and support his emotional wellbeing.

### **Unmet Needs**

The pilot also highlighted significant unmet needs among the young people referred to the service. Many were struggling with barriers in education, unrecognised or unsupported neurodiversity, family conflict or emotional distress, yet had limited access to appropriate support. A growing number of young people were self-referring, signalling both trust in the service and a gap in existing provision. The volume and complexity of need clearly exceeded the capacity of the pilot, underscoring the importance of sustained advocacy provision to ensure no young person is left without someone to listen, support and champion their rights.

## **Feedback**

### **Feedback from Young People**

Feedback from young people is at the heart of how we grow and improve our service. Their honesty helps us understand what works, what needs to change and how we can better support those who come to us. Here are some of the things young people have told us.



### **Feedback from Professionals**

#### *Conwy School Professional*

"I am writing to express my strongest support for the TGP Cymru Young Voices programme, based on the significant positive impact we have observed within our school community.

Since partnering with the programme, we have seen a marked improvement in the wellbeing and confidence of the pupils involved. The advocate's ability to build rapport and create a safe, non-judgmental environment has been transformative.

Key areas of impact include:

- Emotional Literacy: Pupils who previously struggled to articulate their feelings are now able to open up and discuss complex issues they are facing.

- Engagement: There is a visible increase in the pupils' willingness to participate in school life, knowing they have a dedicated space to be heard.
- Pupil Feedback: The children have explicitly expressed how much they value and appreciate the support provided, noting that they feel "listened to" for perhaps the first time.

The Young Voices programme fills a crucial gap in advocacy and emotional support. It provides our most vulnerable learners with the tools they need to navigate their challenges and ensures their voices are at the heart of the decisions affecting their lives.

We wholeheartedly endorse TGP Cymru and hope to see this essential service continue to grow and support more young people across Wales.

### *SNAP Cymru*

"I've had some lovely feedback from a family that you helped recently. They said that your advocacy work had been invaluable and really made a difference in ensuring that their young person's voice was heard. They said how no one listened to her for so long, and that the young person was really struggling to engage in other services, but with your help she felt confident to share her views (with you), and that having that professional voice to speak on her behalf made everyone take her views seriously (as they should!). It sounds like you were able to build a rapport with her, when other services had struggled, and it really made a difference."

### *Wrexham Team around the Child Professional*

"I am a TAC Officer within Children's Social Care, Wrexham County Council. As a TAC Officer, I have referred many young people to the Young Voices advocacy service and am happy to provide this letter of support, highlighting the invaluable work that the service provides. Advocacy for young people is key, however over the years that I have worked within the Council, I have seen difficulties with funding, waiting lists and the direct impact that this has on the young people.

Young Voices provide a very clear timeframe for supporting young people and have always ensured that this is adhered to. As a referrer I feel that I am kept up to date with the work that is being completed and I have had brilliant feedback from parents, of the timely approach taken by all advocates. The paperwork, referrals, and guidance that underpin the service is crucial to ensuring a successful experience for the young people and this is something that I believe is seamless within the service.

Through submitting many referrals, I have built up a good working relationship with all of the advocates and believe that the support that they give is professional, thorough, clear and effective. The advocates have great knowledge and are proactive in obtaining information and supporting the young people. All the referrals that I have submitted have been allocated swiftly and because of this, it is my preferred service if there is an urgent need.

The voice of the young people and the positive difference advocacy make is clear. I had one teenager state that “I was talking to (advocate) for an hour and didn’t realise, time goes so fast when I talk to her”. This was from a teenager who has ASD and finds communication hard. For young people such as this, it means that his wishes and feelings are captured and brought to the TAC meetings in a way that never would have been captured without advocacy.

From my experience of advocacy, the young person has felt listened to. We know that we can’t always get the outcome that the young person wants or always change things, as was the case with this young person, however for the first time, he realised that he had a voice and opinion and that he could voice this. For him, this was the beginning of him realising that he could advocate for what he wanted.

Advocacy is paramount for children and young people, especially when meetings are happening about them. They need to be able to voice their own worries, ideas and thoughts. Many of the young people on my caseload choose not to attend the TAC meetings. With an advocate, they are more likely to consider attending or know that the advocate is able to attend on their behalf and represent their voices.

## **Looking Ahead**

Following a highly successful 12-month pilot, Young Voices is ready to grow and reach even more young people across North Wales. Alongside the direct advocacy provided, the service has delivered presentations and workshops to both professionals and young people, helping to raise awareness of rights, voice and participation. With a fully developed workshop package ready to be rolled out across secondary schools and other youth settings, the potential for wider impact is significant.

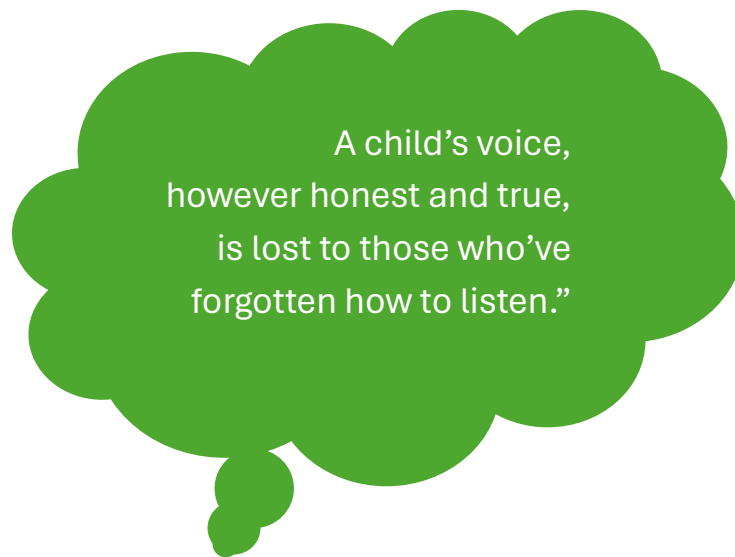
The pilot highlighted a clear need for independent, rights-based advocacy. Young people consistently reported feeling unheard within education and statutory systems, especially those with neurodiverse needs or complex home lives. We learned that when young people are given a safe, independent space to express themselves, communication improves, decisions become more child-centred and outcomes strengthen. The pilot reinforced that advocacy is not optional — it is essential for ensuring young people’s voices genuinely shape the support they receive.

This pilot has demonstrated that Young Voices offers something genuinely unique: a safe, independent space free from judgement, pressure or hidden agendas. Because we sit outside statutory services and education, young people have been able to speak openly, lead their own support and feel truly heard—often for the first time. Many of the young people who came to us had previously felt marginalised or overlooked, yet through advocacy they were able to influence decisions, rebuild confidence and move forward in ways that reflected their needs and aspirations.

At present, Young Voices is in the challenging position of having no continuation funding secured. As a result, we are temporarily unable to accept new referrals—just as direct referrals from young

people themselves were beginning to grow. Despite this, our advocates remain focused on supporting the young people already engaged with the service to reach a positive and meaningful end point.

We remain optimistic about the future. Expanding access to advocacy is central to TGP Cymru's strategic vision, and this pilot has shown that Young Voices is a proven, effective and ready-to-deliver model. With the right investment, the service can continue to amplify young people's voices, strengthen their rights and ensure that no young person is left without someone in their corner.



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