

# Children & Young People

## Independent Visitors

### Procedure

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the process for accessing an Independent Visitor to enable them to contribute to the welfare of the child and promote the child's developmental, social, emotional, educational, religious and cultural needs.

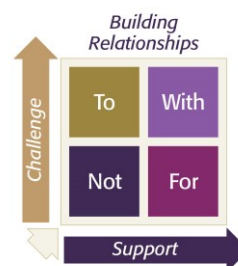
Approved by – Children & Young People Management Team (24.05.18)

Published – June 2018

Review Date – June 2020

**RESTORATIVE PRACTICE**

All contact and work received by families from the City of Wolverhampton Council within the City will be based around restorative practice principles. This is to ensure we improve the life outcomes for all children, young people and families we work with. In Wolverhampton we intend to use restorative principles and behaviours with colleagues as well as children and families, to help develop positive working relationships.



<b>REVIEW LOG</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Approved by</b>
May 2018	1.0	New Procedure	Children & Young People Management Team (24.05.18)
This system of recording review dates is designed to ensure staff at all times use the correct version of the up to date Policy. This system is used on all Wolverhampton City Council – Children and Young People Policies and Procedures.			

<b>CONSULTATION</b>
<p>The following people have been consulted on this policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Head of Looked After Children/Specialist Support</b></li> <li>- <b>Senior Social Work Manager (LAC)</b></li> <li>- <b>Children &amp; Young People Management Team</b></li> </ul>

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## **1.0 ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT VISITOR**

The role of Independent Visitor was created in the United Kingdom under the 1989 Children Act to befriend children and young people in care.

Independent visitor services should follow the Department for Education's guidance found in Volume 2 of the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations which states: "The appointment should be considered as part of the development of the care plan for the child or as part of a review of the child's case. Any decision not to appoint an independent visitor should be kept under review to make sure that the opportunity to appoint such a person is considered if the child's circumstances change. The child's wishes and feelings should be ascertained and the responsible authority may not appoint an independent visitor if the child objects and the authority are satisfied that the child has sufficient understanding to make an informed decision."

All children and young person who are in the care of the Local Authority, regardless of whether they are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or are subject to an Interim Care Order or a Full Care Order, has the right to the support of the Independent Visitor.

The appointment of an independent visitor takes place when it is in the child's interests to do so and must be determined according to the child's needs.

The views of the Independent Visitor should be sought before each LAC Review. Independent Visitors should be invited to LAC Reviews if the child or young person wants this.

The role of the Independent Visitor is either part of the services mentor scheme or is a volunteer role.

## **2.0 PURPOSE**

Under Section 3.266, the Independent Visitor's role is to contribute to the welfare of the child and promote the child's developmental, social, emotional, educational, religious and cultural needs. A visitor may encourage the child to exercise their rights and to take part in decisions that will affect them. As far as possible, the Independent Visitor aims to complement the activities of carers and support the child's care plan.

Under Section 3.267-8, the Independent Visitor visits, advises and befriends the child according to their needs and wishes. The Independent Visitor is expected to be child-focused, but is not a substitute for either a parent or a carer.

## **3.0 WHERE DO THE INDEPENDENT VISITORS SIT WITHIN THE SERVICE?**

Independent Visitors sit within the Specialist Support Services under the Vulnerable Young People's Team.

Some Independent Visitors will be volunteers. The recruitment and training of volunteers will be coordinated by the Volunteer Coordinator.

## **4.0 SUPERVISION OF INDEPENDENT VISITORS**

Supervision will be provided to independent visitors following the first visit, the first 6 weeks and thereafter on a 6 monthly basis.

Should the Independent Visitor require additional support they can make contact with Vulnerable Young Person's Coordinator or LAC mentors.

## **5.0 REFERRAL PROCESS**

All referrals must be completed by the allocated social worker and sent to the [IndependentVisitorReferral@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:IndependentVisitorReferral@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Please see Referral Form (appendix A)

## **6.0 ALLOCATION**

The Senior Social Work Manager for Looked After Children and the Vulnerable Young Person Risk Co-ordinator will meet on a monthly basis to consider referrals to the Independent Visitors.

All attempts will be made to match children and young people to Independent Visitors based on their needs and interests.

Once the child or young person is allocated an Independent Visitor, the allocated social worker will be informed and an observation put on Carefirst.

There may be a waiting list for the service due to it being volunteer led.

## **7.0 INTERVENTION AND MATCHES**

### **7.1 Criteria and Intervention**

Section 23ZB of the Children's Act 1989 sets out the criteria for the allocation of an Independent Visitor; "(1) A local authority looking after a child must appoint an independent person to be the child's visitor if – (a) the child falls within a description prescribed in regulations made by the appropriate national authority; or (b) in any other case, it appears to them that it would be in the child's interests to do so.

This means that an Independent Visitor should be appointed to a Looked After Child where it appears to be in the best interests of the child to make such an appointment.

A local authority should assess whether it would be appropriate to appoint an independent visitor for Looked After Children if either of the following is satisfied:

- It appears that communication between the child and parent has been infrequent;
- The child has not been visited (or has not lived with) a parent or any person who is not the child's parent but who has parental responsibility for the child, during the preceding 12 months.

The following will be considered when deciding if it is the child's interests to consider appointing an independent visitor:

- Whether the child is placed at a distance from home;

- Whether the child is unable to go out independently or experiences difficulties in communication and building positive relationships;
- Whether the child is likely to engage in behaviour which puts them at risk as a result of peer pressure or forming inappropriate relationships with older people;
- Whether a child placed in a residential setting would benefit from a more individualised setting; and
- Whether it would make a contribution to promoting the child's health and education

## **7.2 Regularity of Intervention**

The main purpose of the visits and contacts will be to:

- Befriend the child;
- Give advice and assistance as appropriate with the aim of promoting the child's development and social, emotional, educational, religious and cultural needs;
- Encourage the child to exercise their rights and participate in decisions which will affect them;
- Support the care plan for the child;
- Complement the activities of the carers.

Independent Visitors should aim to visit the children and young people matched to them on a monthly basis, with one visits per month being desirable.

## **7.3 Remit for completing activities with children and young people**

Expenses will be paid to Independent Visitors at the following rates;

- 45 pence per mile fuel allowance. Receipts will be needed to claim this
- £20 for activities per month per child matched to the Independent Visitor

## **7.4 Review of the Match**

All new matches will be reviewed following the initial meeting between the child/young person and the independent visitor. The match will again be reviewed when the match has been in place for 6 months. Following this, matches will be reviewed every 6 months. Independent Visitors will be invited to the Match Reviews,

Reviews will be led by the Vulnerable Young Person Risk Co-ordinator and supported by the Senior Social Work Manager for Looked After Children.

## **7.5 End of the Match**

All matches between an Independent Visitor and a child/young person will formally cease following the young person's 25th birthday.

Matches that continue following the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday will be supported and reviewed in the same way as prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday with the addition of advice around boundaries and expectations in preparation for the young person moving in to adulthood.

If the Independent Visitor is not adhering to the boundaries and expectations set out within the policy and by management, the Local Authority has the right to formally end the match. This will be confirmed by a conversation with the child/young person and the Independent Visitor and a letter to both.

Matches can cease if the child/young person is clear that they no longer wish to work with the Independent Visitor. In this instance the child/young person must be supported to explore their reasons for this by their social worker to ensure it is in the child/young person's best interests.

## **8.0 CASE RECORDING**

Independent Visitors must complete a Visit Record Form (appendix A) after each visit to the young person and provide this to the allocated social worker and save a copy for their records. The social worker must in turn save the Visit Record form on to the Document Hub.

All Visit Record Form's must be anonymised, using the child or young person's initials to identify them.

Please see Visit Form Record in the appendices.

Appendix A – Referral Form

**City of Wolverhampton Council  
INDEPENDENT VISITOR REFERRAL FORM**

Was the decision to refer a recommendation of the young person's statutory review / care plan?		Yes	No
Has the young person consented to this referral?		Yes	No
Name of young person being referred:			
Placement Address:			
Date of birth:	Gender:	Ethnicity:	First language:
Is this young person:	Living in a residential care unit?		
	Living with a Foster Carer?		
	Other? please explain		
In placement since:			
Name of Social Worker:			
Name of Social Work Unit Manager			
Address:			
Contact telephone numbers:			
Email address:			
Carer / Key Worker contact details:			



**Any other professionals involved:**

**Long-term placement plan** (particularly in relation to out-of-borough placements):

**Family and social relationships, including contact:**

**Education** (main contact details):

**Please give details of any needs, issues or areas where the young person requires support** (including disabilities, SEN, etc):

**Are you aware of any hobbies and interest the young person has?**

Additional information attached / enclosed?  
(please include young person's name on each sheet)

Yes

No

**Risk Assessment (this will assist us in deciding if an IV is appropriate for the young person)**

Is it safe to visit the young person at their home / unit?	Yes	No
Has the young person exhibited any violent behaviour?	Yes	No
Has the young person been involved in assaults on others?	Yes	No
Does the young person display inappropriate sexualised behaviour?	Yes	No
Are there any known triggers to the behaviour?	Yes	No
Is there a history of self-harm?	Yes	No
Is there a history of drug or alcohol abuse?	Yes	No
Is it safe for the IV to transport the young person out alone?	Yes	No
Is it safe for the IV to take the young person out alone?	Yes	No
Is the young person aware of issues regarding personal safety?	Yes	No
Is there a history of allegations made by the young person against staff?	Yes	No
Does the young person have any medical conditions or requirement of medication?	Yes	No
Is there a history of running away or absconding whilst on activities?	Yes	No
Does the young person exhibit any indicators that they are distressed, annoyed or upset, or if they are about to engage in potentially inappropriate behaviour?	Yes	No
Does the young person have a physical or learning disability?	Yes	No
<b>Please use this space to elaborate on any of the questions asked above, including any other information you deem relevant for this service:</b>		
Additional information attached / enclosed? (please include young person's name on each sheet)	Yes	No

## Young person's medical details

<b>Medical condition:</b>	
<b>Medication:</b>	
<b>Allergy / food allergy:</b>	
<b>Please give details of any other relevant medical information:</b>	

## Consent for photograph / video use

On occasion we may want to take photos or videos of the young person and their IV for publicity and case studies purposes

Who should we approach to gain consent for the above?	
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## Health and Safety consent

In the normal course of their meetings, young people and their IVs might do various activities, such as walks in the park, swimming, bowling, going for a meal, etc

Are you willing for the young person to participate in these types of activities?	Yes	No
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If 'No', please state which activity:	
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We would expect IVs to obtain specific agreement for anything deemed to be high risk, such as rock climbing, contact sports, paint-balling, go-karting, etc

## Data Protection Act declaration

Information given on this form will be stored and processed in accordance with The Children's Society's Data Protection Policy and the Data Protection Act 1998. Information will be securely kept on a computerised or paper record, and may be shared with key partners and agencies if deemed necessary. Please be aware that young people have the right to see the information held about them if requested.

Referrer signature:	Date:
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## Appendix B – Independent Visitor Form Record

### Independent Visitor Form Record

Child's name	
Independent Visitors name	
Date of Visit	

Detail of the Visit including location, any activities undertaken and costs

Detail of any concerns

Child/Young Person's views, wishes and feelings

Date of next visit	
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