

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.