



Your Plans,
Your Placement,
Your Reviews
& Short Breaks

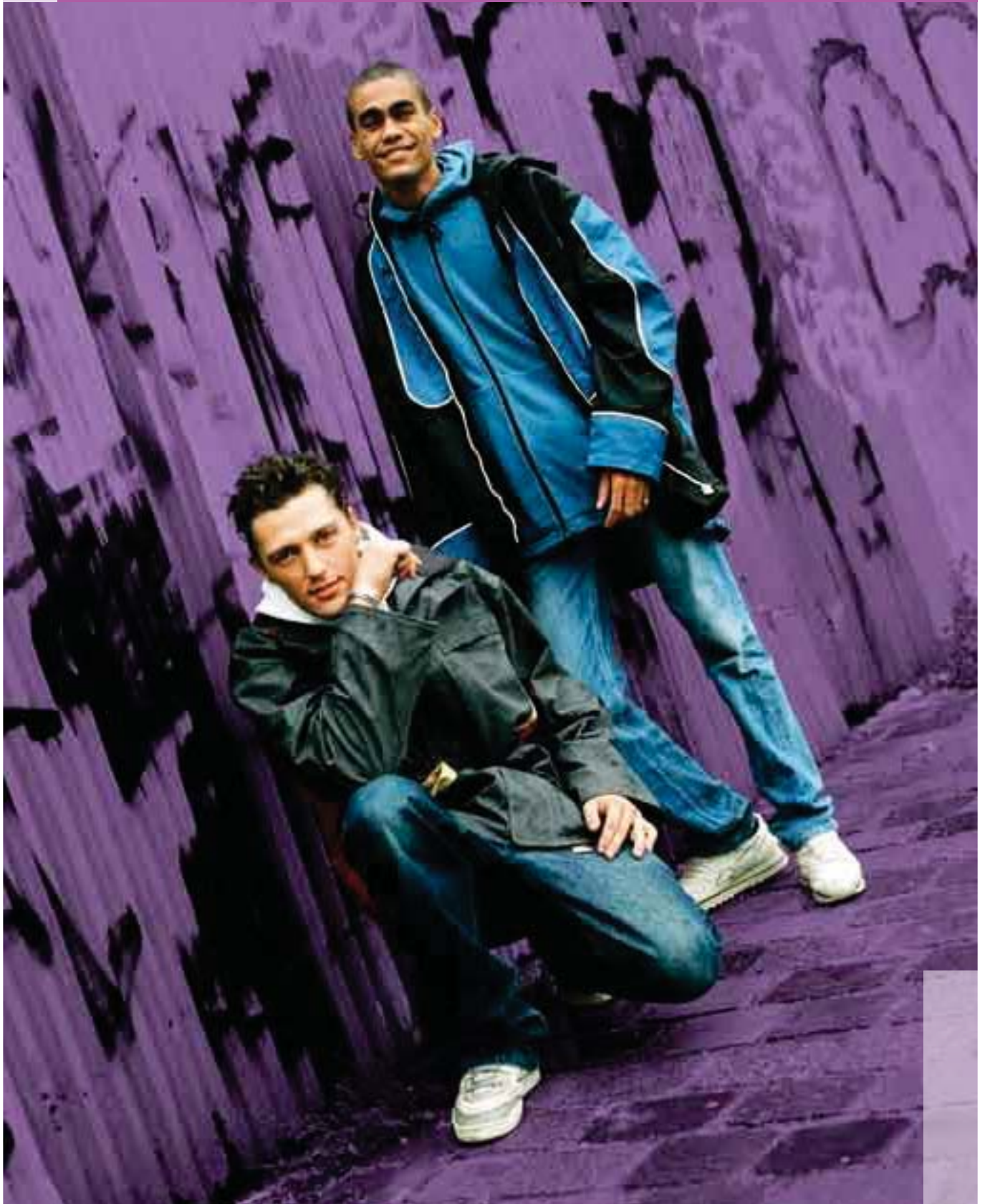
The Young Person's
Guide to the Care Planning,
Placement and Case Review
(England) Regulations 2010

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You are not expected to read this guide from cover to cover. We have put the rules down here with explanations for you. So when you need to you can check what the rules your social worker should be following for you are.



Young Persons' Guide to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010

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What is this guide about?

This guide is about what things the law says councils in England must do for children and young people who are looked after by them, often called being in care. This includes children who live away from home and those who are placed at home with support. It also explains the rules about when children and young people have a short break in care, some of whom have disabilities. It doesn't apply to children who have been placed for adoption.

The guide explains the rules about making placements, planning your care and goes right through to what support you can expect when you leave care. Some of these rules already exist but are in different places. They have been put them together to make sure they are up to date and to make them better.

The local authority (or 'council') has responsibilities for children who are looked after. They are called 'corporate parents'. The Government wants to make sure they do this in a good way so that the children and young people are 'cared about' as well as 'cared for' and that they get the right sort of help to do well in their lives. Just as there are things parents do to bring up their children well, the rules set out what the local authority should do so that looked after children are well cared for.

You are not expected to read this guide from cover to cover. We have put the rules down here with explanations for you; so when you need to you can check that your social worker is doing what they should.

Children and young people were consulted about these by Dr Roger Morgan, the Children's Rights Director for England, and asked what they thought were the most important things that should be included. You will see many of your ideas have been included in these rules.

Some of these rules are already in place but from the 1st April 2011 ALL of these rules must be followed by Local Authorities.



NB: Government information used in writing this guide includes:

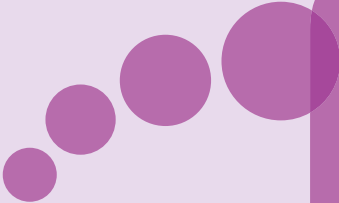
Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010; Putting Care into Practice: Statutory Guidance on Care Planning, Placement and Case Review for Looked After Children; Short Breaks Statutory Guidance; Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children; the Children Act 1989; the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

A summary of the new rules:

A lot has got better for children and young people who are looked after but there is still a lot more to do to make sure children and young people get really good support, care and education. The new rules are trying to sort that out and they include rules about:

- Care plans - including health, education and contact with your family and friends;
- Beginning and ending placements – Such as when you live with a foster carer or in a children's home;
- Making decisions about different types of placement, including how you are involved in these decisions, and which one might be best for you;
- Visits to children by social workers, including how often they should visit you;
- Case reviews - how often they should take place, what's talked about in these meetings and how you can be involved in the decisions that are made about your care;
- What happens when you leave care. What support you should receive to prepare for this.
- What support your parents should have if you leave care to go home;
- Independent Reviewing Officers and Independent Visitors. The rules say who they are and what they should do for you;
- Short breaks away from home – for example for children with disabilities;
- 'Sufficiency' – what the council has to do to make sure there are enough places, of the right kind, to make sure each child can do well whatever their individual needs.
- Your file - what should be in it, who can see it and how it should be stored safely.

You will find more details about all these rules later in this guide.



How can I get help to understand some of the words used in these rules?

You may see some words in the new rules that you don't fully understand. These are words you might also hear social workers, staff and foster carers use. You'll find a list of these words and what they mean on page 34 - 35.

Before making any decision about you the Local Authority should find out what your wishes and feelings are and take them into consideration, depending on your age and understanding.



And now for the rules:

What do they say councils must do?

Before making any decision about you the Local Authority should find out what your wishes and feelings are and take them into consideration, depending on your age and understanding.

This is what is meant by wishes and feelings:

WISHES:

What you want to do, want to happen, or want someone to do for you.

FEELINGS:

Just being happy, sad, ok, worried or frightened about something - even if you don't know why and even if you don't understand what is happening.

The rules say that it is very important that you are involved in the decisions that affect your life and future. If you find it difficult to express your wishes and feelings about any decisions being made about you then you can have the help of someone called an advocate if you choose to have one. You can express your views in different ways. For example this may be speaking, in writing or print, in art, or whatever way is easiest for you.

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0731
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What should happen when I come into care?

Your local authority must find out what you need, usually before you start to be looked after, and make sure that what they plan for you will help you to have a healthy, happy life. They must make sure that wherever you live is the right place for you. Finding out about your needs is often called an 'assessment'. As part of this your social worker should always ask you about your wishes and feelings. They may also ask other people who know you - like your doctor, school teacher, health visitor, relatives or family and friends about your needs, depending on what is right for you. They also assess what your parents need to enable them to get services which may help them.

Different sorts of plans:

When you start to be looked after, plans must be made for the important things in your life. **The main one is called your care plan** but there should be other plans as well about specific things. All of these plans should fit together to provide you with a good experience of being looked after that is right for your individual needs. There are more details about what the rules are for these plans later on in this guide. Here is a short explanation of the different types of plans:

Care Plan – This is the main plan. This should say what your needs are, how they will be met, and what the plan is for you. This brings together the other plans, including your health and education plan, to make sure they work together. It should say who you can expect to help you to keep safe and well and how you will be supported to do well, both now and in the future. This is the plan that will be looked at in your case reviews, to see how the plans are going and to check if any changes are needed.

Placement Plan – This is part of your care plan, and should give more practical details about how the people at the place where you live will help to meet your needs and care for you.

Health Plan – This is also part of the care plan, and should say what support you will get to keep you as healthy and well as you can be.

Personal Education Plan (PEP) – is another part of the care plan. This should say what support you will get to help you do well at school or college or in other places of training.

Pathway Plan – When you reach 16 years old, if you are still looked after, you are known as an 'eligible child'. A pathway plan must be written which prepares for your leaving care and says what support you should get.

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Care Plans

- The care plan is your main plan about how different people should support and help you and what should happen in the future for you.

 - Where possible **this should be agreed with you**, your social worker and your parents. If you are over 16 years old, and you agree to being accommodated [see 'useful words' – Page 34], it might be agreed by just you and your social worker.
- Having a care plan written just for you is also to make sure you and your family (where appropriate) know what is happening. It should help you to understand the decisions that affect you. It is to make sure that everyone that cares for you keeps you safe and well.

 - It should say what has been done before you started to be looked after to help you stay with your family or carer.
- Wherever possible this plan should be written down before you move to your new home. At the latest it should be no more than 10 days after you have started living there (unless there is a court order that sets a different timetable). If you were first placed before 1st April 2011, your care plan must be written down as soon as is reasonably possible (if you do not already have one).

 - The new rules say that it's really important that you don't have lots of placement moves in your life. This is to make sure you have a stable and loving family or carers to support you through your childhood and into adulthood. This is sometimes called having 'permanence'. This might be for example planning a return to live with your family or other relatives, long term foster care or adoption.
- Once you have been looked after for more than four months, your care plan must include plans for your long term future and why your placement was chosen for you.

 - It should say how your needs will be met to do with your:
 - Wishes and feelings;
 - Parents or carers views;
 - Health;
 - Education and training, including your personal education plan;
 - Emotional and behavioural development. This is not just about difficulties you may have. It is about making sure you live in a warm, safe and caring placement where your carers should help you to become confident in yourself for the future;
 - Identity, such as your religious beliefs, racial origin and cultural and language background. This is especially important if you are being cared for away from home;
 - Family and other relationships. For example how your social worker will help you to keep in contact with your parents, brothers and sisters, other family members, friends and anyone else that's important to you. It should set out the arrangements that will be made for you to have contact with any brothers or sisters who are also in care but not in the same placement as you;
 - Social presentation. This means for example how you will be given opportunities to develop special interests and helped to learn to get on well with other people. This may help you to make friends both now and in the future. For example when you go out to work or to college or university. This should be discussed with you first to see what areas are important to you;
 - Self care skills. This will depend on your age and is about how you will gradually be given more responsibilities for yourself. For example, this could include learning to look after your own room, learning to cook, buying your own clothes and opening your own bank account.
 - Pathway plan (if you are over 16 years old). This should say how you will be helped to prepare for leaving care when you are ready and what support you should get.

- It should also include:
 - The name of your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). We have written about what this person does later on in this guide;
 - Details of any court orders about you that affect how you are looked after; for example if you should not have contact with someone, like your parent. The local authority will have to say when and why this was decided and how long it will last for. These arrangements can sometimes be changed but your IRO must make sure you get the right advice about this;
 - What the back up plan is if your placement doesn't work out and
 - The people who should be given a copy of your care plan are you, depending on your age and understanding, your parents or carers, the person who is in charge of the fostering service/agency or children's home where you live, the person responsible for the accommodation where you live and your Independent Reviewing Officer.

Health

The local authority must make sure you have the best possible health. The rules say you should have a health plan which must include how you will be provided with medical and dental care; and advice and guidance on health and personal care.

- The local authority is responsible for arranging for you to have a health assessment.
 - You have a right to refuse to have this assessment, as long as you understand enough to make this decision.
- The person doing this should be properly qualified and registered to do this work. It would usually be a doctor or a nurse. The purpose of having this assessment is to make sure nothing has been missed out in the past that might affect your health badly and to make sure that you are on the right path to a healthy future.
 - The assessment has to be done:
 - Before you are placed by the local authority (unless you have already had one within the last 3 months). If this is not reasonably possible then it must be done before your first review
 - Following the first health assessment the next one will be at least once every 6 months before your 5th birthday or
 - at least once every 12 months after your 5th birthday
 - If appropriate, and where possible, your parents must be given the opportunity to be involved with your health assessment.
 - They have to write a report after this assessment and it must include:
 - How well you are now as well as what your health has been like in the past;
 - Any medical checks such as for your hearing, or with the dentist or optician;
 - Any injections you've had to prevent diseases. For example this may be to prevent you getting measles;
 - Any other help you've had to promote your health and personal care such as exercise and any changes that are planned for your health care.
- A copy of this report must be given to you, depending on your age and understanding, your parents and carers where appropriate and your named Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Education

The local Authority must make sure you get the best education that meets your needs. They must make sure that every child they look after does as well as possible in their education. This includes care leavers, children who are placed outside of their local area and those children and young people who are in custody or on secure accommodation orders.

- The rules say to help improve your education; school and care staff should be trained in how to support you in your education. There should now be someone called a 'designated teacher' at each school. They are there to provide extra help for any child who is looked after if they need this.
 - Local authorities must make sure you have the right help to do well in your education. This should be set out in your 'Personal Education Plan' (PEP).
- Your PEP should be made before you go into care or within 14 days if you go into an emergency placement, ready for your first review meeting. [It's the same timing as the care plan].
 - You and other people, like your parents or carers and teachers, should be involved in deciding what goes in to this plan. It should say how you are going to be supported and who's going to help you to do the very best you can in your education.

Your PEP must include the following information:

- Details of all the schools and colleges you've been to; when and how often you went there; what your behaviour was like there; what your achievements were; and any special educational needs you have. If you left a school. It will also say what the reasons were for you leaving.
 - The education or training place where you are now.
- Details of any special help given to help you do well. For example this might be one to one tuition where you need help to catch up with school work you've missed or are finding difficult. It may also be that you have one to one tuition because you are particularly good at something and can do even better.
 - Even if you are not in a school, for example if you have been excluded, you are still entitled to have good education.
- The help you will get if you have to change schools for any reason. For example this might set out how the school will help you settle in and get to know your new teachers and friends.
 - It must include the support you need for out of school activities and leisure interests. For example this might include some after school clubs or hobbies you have chosen.
- When any changes to your education or training are needed, it should say what will be done to make sure this goes as smoothly as possible.
 - What the person who is responsible for caring for you will do to help you do well in your education and leisure interests.

Other duties that the local authority has include:

- Using permanent exclusion from school only as a last resort. If this happens you should be provided with other good education no later than the sixth day after you've been excluded, but preferably earlier.
 - Social workers and independent reviewing officers should do everything possible to make sure that any changes in your placements have as little disruption to your education as possible. If you are looked after, and have to move home, and are in school years 10 and 11 (the fourth Key Stage) it is even more important that your education is not disrupted. This is because you will usually be studying for GCSEs or other qualifications. The local authority has to show that they have looked at every way possible to keep you in your existing school. They have to write down what they've done in your PEP. Someone chosen to make a decision like this has to-
 - Ask you what your wishes and feelings are about this decision and take these into consideration.
 - Be sure your new school or college will help you to do well in your education.
 - Ask the most appropriate person at your school about this decision. It might for example be the school's designated teacher for looked after children and young people.
 - Ask your IRO for their views about this.

You should get every help possible to achieve your longer term plans. This might be to go to college, university, an apprenticeship or work. Your plan should say who is going to help you and what support you will get in every part of this plan.



Placements

Placement Plans

While your care plan will say what your overall plan is, your placement plan will give lots more details about how you will be cared for. In your placement plan it will say how the people caring for you will help to meet your needs. It should give your carer all the information they need to care for you and help you to do well in the future. You must be asked about your wishes and feelings and these should be given proper consideration. Your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be told about your placement plan. If possible your placement plan should be written before you start your placement. If that's not possible it has to be done within 5 days of you going to live there.

It should include:

- How you will be cared for each day. How you will be kept safe and well by the people caring for you. This will include making sure your carer knows things like what food or leisure activities you like and dislike.
 - The arrangements made for you to have contact with the people that are important to you. For example this could be with your parents, brothers or sisters. This includes any of your brothers and sisters that are also in care but that you are not able to live with.
- If a court has said there must be some rules about any of the people you have contact with then this has to be written down. For example this may say how often you see someone, or that you cannot have contact with someone as it would not be safe for you.
 - The names of everyone who should be told if your contact arrangements change.
- The arrangements made for your health, including the sorts of checks included in your care plan.
 - The name and address of your doctor and dentist.
- Arrangements for consent where needed for any medical or dental treatment..
 - Name and address for your place of education or training. For example your school or college. The name of the designated teacher for looked after pupils at that school.
- If you have a statement of special educational needs, the name and address of the local authority that is responsible for this.
 - How often your social worker will visit you and how you will be able to get advice and support between these visits. See page 21-22 of this guide for the rules about these visits.
- If you have an independent visitor how often they will visit you. See page 28 about what an independent visitor is and what they do.
 - The name and contact details of your social worker; Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO); your independent visitor (if any); and your personal adviser (if any). See page 26 about what an IRO is and what they do.
- If you have to leave your placement for any reason your local authority has to tell you, your parents or carers, anyone that is allowed contact with you, your doctor, your school or other place of training and your IRO. They should tell them about your move no longer than 10 days after you have left.
 - The law now says that your local authority should not move you from your placement unless it has been agreed at your review. There are some exceptions when they can move you:
 - In a real emergency
 - If you are living with your parents, other family or friends and they haven't been approved yet to look after you. See page 34 where it says what a 'connected person' is.

If you are in care on a care order and go back to live with your parents, your placement plan should have some more information as well.

This includes:

- What help and support your parents will get to help them care for you.
 - The need for your parents to tell your social worker if there are any big changes in your life. This might be things like any plans to move house; any big accidents or if any new people come to live in the same house as you.
- The need to make sure that any information about you or your family is kept confidential. It should not be shared with anyone else without the agreement of your social worker.
 - If you go to stay with someone else, other than your parents, even if it's for a short time, then it will say when the social worker needs to give permission for this.
- What sorts of situations may mean your placement with your parents has to end. It should say how you would be cared for if this happens.

If you are placed with a foster carer or in a children's home your placement plan will also include:

- The type of placement you live at, the address and the name of the person who will be responsible for you.
 - Your personal history, religious beliefs, cultural and language background, and racial origin.
- If you are not on a care order but being looked after with the agreement of your parents on a voluntary basis your plan will say who is responsible for what part of your care. Your parents or carers may keep some responsibilities but the carers in your placement may look after other parts of your care. For example it might say who will take you shopping for clothes, take you to the dentist or attend parents' evenings at school.
 - How long you will be at the placement for and what the arrangements are for you to return home if that is the plan.
- If you are aged 16 or over and you have agreed to being provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis.
 - What the arrangements are for getting approval for you to take part in school trips or to stay overnight away from the placement.
- Details of any financial support for you during the placement. For example this may include things like who pays for your clothes, hobbies, school outings, toiletries and personal allowance.

If you live away in another area

- Unless you are going to live with a connected person (you can see what a 'connected person' means in the word list on page 34) or a foster carer approved by your local authority, only a senior person can approve the decision to live outside your home area, for example if you come from Leicester but go to live in Lincolnshire.
 - Before approving this decision, they have to make sure that the following have been considered:
 - This is the best possible placement for you and can meet all the needs that are set out in your care plan;
 - They have asked you what your wishes and feeling are and take these into consideration;
 - They ask what your family think about this, wherever this is appropriate;
 - They tell the children's social care services in the area you go to live in and
 - That they ask your IRO for their views.

- You will usually go to visit this placement before a final decision is made, with your social worker and parents (where appropriate). This is to make sure that you know as much as possible about the placement before you tell the social worker what your wishes and feelings are about the placement.
 - If this placement is made in an emergency then they still have to be sure it is the best possible placement for you and ask you about your wishes and feelings. They can have up to 5 days to ask your family what their views are, to tell the children's social care services in the area where you will be living and to tell your IRO.

Who has to be told about where I am living?

- Before you go to live in your new placement your social worker has to write to the following people to tell them about this:
 - You, depending on your age and understanding
 - **Your parents or carers**
 - **If you are already in care any person who is allowed to have contact with you, including people a court has decided can have contact with you.**
 - **Any person that was caring for you just before you went to your new placement.**
 - The Health Authority where you come from and the one where you will be living, if this is different.
 - Your doctor and the doctor you will be registered with at your new placement, if this is different.
 - Your school or the person providing your education
 - Your IRO

The only time your social worker wouldn't tell the people we have listed in **bold** letters is if it would put you at risk of significant harm.

What should happen when my placement ends?

- Your placement will only usually end if it has been agreed at your review. If your placement ends your social worker must make sure you have another place to live that meets your needs..
 - They must tell your IRO.
- Unless it would put you at risk of significant harm, your social worker must as far as possible write to the following people to let them know they plan to end your placement:
 - The people above who they told where you were living, including you.
 - The person providing the placement where you have been living.
 - If your placement is outside of your local authority, the area authority you have been living in.
- If it not possible to let them know before you move then your social worker has to let these people know in writing within 10 days after your placement ends.

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While your care plan will say what your overall plan is, your placement plan will give lots more details about how you will be cared for. In your placement plan it will say how the people caring for you will help to meet your needs. It should give your carer all the information they need to care for you and help you to do well in the future.



Different types of placement

Whenever making a placement for you the most important duty the local authority has is to make sure that you are safe and well.

Wherever it is in your best interests the local authority has to consider placing you with your parents, or a person who has parental responsibility for you. If this is not possible then they have to consider your relatives or a friend who may be approved just for you as a local authority foster carer. They have to ask you about your wishes and feelings about this and take these into account.

When making your placement the local authority also has to make sure that if it is in your best interests you can:

- Live near your home;
 - Carry on your education without it being disrupted;
- Live with you brothers or sisters if they are already in a placement.

If you have a disability the local authority also has to make sure the place where you are going to live is suitable for your particular needs. This would include making sure the building is right for you and there is the right equipment to help you.

With Parents:

What has to happen if I'm on a Care Order but it's decided I might be able to go to live with my parents?

- The decision for you to live with your parents must be reviewed by a senior person chosen by the Director of Children's Services. They must ask your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for their views about this decision
- Before this decision is made the social worker has to have a placement plan for you and do a lot of checking to make sure that it's ok for you to live there. This is called an 'Assessment'. The sorts of things they would check would be:
 - How well your parents could care for you;
 - Whether your parents will be able to meet your physical needs. This would be things like making sure you have enough food and clothes, keeping you warm, making sure you had good medical and dental care when you needed it;
 - How well they could keep you safe from people that may want to harm you;
 - That your parents will be able to help you to feel good about yourself by showing you love and care. That they can meet any needs you have to do with any religious beliefs, your racial, cultural and language background, and/or any disability you may have;
 - That they could help and support you to learn and do well in school;
 - That your parents could help teach you how to get on well with the family and with other people;
 - Whether the house is ok for you to live in;
 - Any other relationships your parents may have, especially those people that are likely to see you a lot if you go to live with your parents;
 - Your parents' family history. This means looking at things like what their life was like for them when they were children, and how their parents or carers brought them up. It will include looking at how they got on with their brothers and sisters if they had any;
 - Details of any other relatives, like grandparents for example, and what their relationship is with you and your parents;
 - Checking whether your parents are safe to care for you;
 - Whether your parents go out to work and what money they have coming in to the home to pay for things you need and

- What it's like in the area where your parents house is. What sorts of things would be available for you to join in that may help both you and your parents. This might include for example after school clubs, shops, a drop in centre or a leisure centre.
 - In some uncommon cases the social worker may decide you can live at home with your parents before checking ALL of these things out. If they agree for you to live with them before the assessment is completed it must only be if they think this is best for you. For example it might be if your foster placement broke down unexpectedly.
- Your social worker must still have to ask your parents for as much of this information as possible, including the things that might affect your safety. If possible they should meet with all those that are under 18 to get a better understanding of who lives in the house and what their relationships are like, as this could affect you and your care.
 - The social worker then has to check all the rest of the things within 10 days of you living there and make a decision at your review whether you can continue to live there.
- You would not be able to live with your parents if the court had made a rule saying you could not have contact with them or if they said it would not be safe for you to live there.

What support should my parents be given if I'm living with them?

- The local authority has to provide support so that your parents can keep you safe and well. They have to write down what support and help they are going to give both you and your parents in your care plan.

The social worker will have to think at your reviews about whether you still need to have a care order made by the courts. It might be that if your needs are being met well at home by your parents, with support from the local authority, then a court could be asked to remove the care order.

With Foster Carers:

What should happen if it's decided I will live with foster carers?

- Before placing you with foster carers the local authority has to be sure that this is the best way for you to be cared for and that the family chosen for you is the right one.
 - Wherever possible finding and choosing the right family should be planned ahead. It should be one that can meet the needs that are set out in your care plan. Quick or immediate placements should be avoided wherever possible.
- Before you go to live with a local authority foster carer your social worker will make sure that:
 - The foster carers have been approved. This means that they have had lots of checks made on them by specially trained social workers and that they have been trained themselves on how to be a good foster carer.
 - That the foster carer has been approved to look after children of your age and can meet your needs.

But what happens if I need a foster placement really quickly?

- If your social worker has to place you in an emergency and there has been no time to plan this, the rules say you can only stay there for up to 6 working days. This would still have to be with an approved foster carer, even if they have been approved to look after children of a different age to you. For example you might be 12 years old and they have only been approved to look after children who are under 10.
 - If this happens, but it is best for you to stay longer, they could apply for their approval to be changed so that you can stay.
- If the agreement isn't going to be changed so you can stay longer, your social worker has to end your emergency placement when the 6 working days is up.

What are the rules about me staying with someone else that I know, like a relative or a friend, but they aren't an approved foster parent?

- Your social worker may be satisfied that the most appropriate placement for you is with a 'connected person'. This means a relative or friend or someone who knows you well such as a childminder, teacher or youth worker. Your social worker may approve that person as a local authority foster carer, so that you can stay with them. The Local Authority will then have 16 weeks to see whether this friend or relative can become a foster carer for you. If they do this they have to check first that this person is safe for you to live with and how well they could care for you. They would check the same things as they would if they were going to assess your parents. This includes the social worker visiting the home to check whether it's the right place for you.
 - If they were satisfied that this person could meet your needs that are set out in your care plan they would start assessing them to be fully approved foster parents. If they hadn't got all the information they needed, within 16 weeks, they can let you live there for another 8 weeks on top of the first 16 weeks. The decision to let you live there for the extra 8 weeks can only be made by a senior person chosen by the Director of Children's Services.
- Your social worker would also look at what support they need to give the relative or friend who is looking after you to help them give you the best possible care.
 - If this person wasn't approved after this time as your foster carer they could ask for this decision to be reviewed. If they did this the local authority could let you stay there until they know the result of this review.
- Before deciding whether to extend your placement your social worker must ask you what your wishes and feelings are about this. They have to consider whether it is still the most appropriate placement for you. They should also ask your parents or others with parental responsibility for their views about the placement before a decision is made.
 - Your social worker has to ask a fostering panel what their views are about extending your placement. This is a group of trained people who make decisions about whether or not to approve foster placements for children and young people.
- Your social worker has to tell your IRO about you staying longer with this person.
 - If after all this the person is not approved as a foster carer, the local authority must find another place for you to live.

Residential Care

- Residential care (like a children's home) is another choice of placement. Some older children.
 - There are lots of different types of residential care placements. As well as children's homes, there are different sorts of residential schools. Your social worker must find out what services are provided in the residential care home and how you will be cared for. Your needs, wishes and feelings must be taken into account when deciding what the best choice of placement is for you.
- Before you move to a children's home your social worker must give all the information about you to the person who manages the home so that they and the staff can care for you and meet your needs.
 - Emergency placements should be rare but if this has to happen then the social worker should give the manager of the home and their staff as much information as possible. They must always give them the important information to make sure you can be cared for safely. For example, medical information, or any risks to you and others that they know about.

Placements in 'other arrangements'

- Sometimes after an assessment it might be agreed that your needs could be best met in another sort of placement which is different from foster or residential care. For example these might include:
 - Placements in a family or someone's house, where the adults responsible for your care are not approved as foster carers (such as supported lodgings);
 - Foyers and other kinds of supported living hostels;
 - Placements in independent accommodation with help from housing support workers who make regular visits to help you to develop the skills needed to manage in your own tenancy in future. This is sometimes called 'floating support';
 - These sorts of placements may not be registered and inspected by Ofsted like children's homes and foster care. In these situations it will be especially important that your social worker makes sure the placement can meet your needs and it is the best placement for you. For example, being placed in "supported lodgings" may offer you more opportunities to prepare for a move to more independent accommodation when you become an adult. In this case, the local authority will have to make sure that the support the accommodation provides will help you to develop the skills necessary to cope with greater independence in your future.
- Before you go to live there your social worker must arrange for you to visit the accommodation and find out what your views are about it.
 - Before you go to live there your worker should also check:
 - What facilities there are
 - The general state of repair
 - How safe it is
 - Where it is
 - Other support
 - The Tenancy
 - Finance and Affordability
 - Whether you will be able to afford living at this place on the income you are expecting to receive. For example by the time you move in money to pay for your rent, service charges, gas, electric and water bills and any other costs to do with the tenancy should be sorted out.
 - Other costs such as transport to your college or work place should have been taken into account.
 - If you are able to remain in the property after you reach the age of 18 your social worker should have thought about how much money you will have, even when the local authority no longer has to support you financially. This may mean helping you with talking to the local housing benefits department to see what allowances are likely to be available to you to help pay the rent.
 - You must be given enough information, support and advice so that you can understand what you are expected to pay for. You must be told what to do if your financial situation changes. For example if the amount of money coming in changes or if your accommodation costs increase. All this should be written down in your pathway plan.
 - In any of these types of placements the decision is the same as for any other placement setting. That is, it must be the place that can meet your needs as set out in your care plan.
 - Your social worker should tell your IRO about the decision. This would in any case have to be discussed and agreed at your review. The people at your review must be satisfied that you have been properly prepared and will be able to manage in the new accommodation.

- You should still have a placement plan like in any other placement. This should be done with the person who will have the most day-to-day contact with you. For example this may be the person managing the supported accommodators or the hostel manager. Where you have other support services or services delivered by a housing agency, then both the main housing support worker and the manager of the housing scheme should be involved in agreeing the placement plan with you and your social worker.

 - To make sure that you are well supported the placement plan must say who is responsible for doing what such as the placement provider, your social worker, your IRO and other staff who may contribute to your plan. The plan must include:
 - How the provider and the local authority will keep you safe and in what sorts of ways;
 - How often your social worker will visit you;
 - How the provider and your social worker will communicate with each other;
 - The provider's duty to tell your social worker of any major change in your life; and
 - The arrangements for giving notice if they plan to end your placement and if this is likely to happen, who will sort out a review of your care and pathway plans.

Placements outside England and Wales

- Sometimes a placement outside of England or Wales may be best for you. For example you may have a relative or other person who lives in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.

- At other times it may be that your foster carer moves to one of these places and there are good reasons for you to stay with them. If this happens then your local authority has to keep to the same rules as if you were moving out of their area. They have to take into account the views of you and your parents, the effect it might have on any contact arrangements you have with your family and friends and what the main care plan is for you.

 - If you are in voluntary care then the local authority can help arrange for you to live outside of England and Wales but this would have to be with the agreement of everyone who has parental responsibility for you.
- If you are in care on a care order this permission has to be given by the court. The court would have to make sure it was in your best interests and that you, and anyone with parental responsibility for you, agreed to this placement.

 - Your wishes and feelings and the views of your parents will be especially important when a decision to live outside England and Wales is made.

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Whenever making a placement for you the most important duty the local authority has is to make sure that you are safe and well.

Visits by my social worker

- Your social worker's visits should help you to develop a good relationship with them so that you can feel confident telling them what it's like for you living in that placement, both the good and bad experiences. This will help them to decide if you or your carers need any extra help and support.

 - You should have a visit from your social worker within the first week of your placement. After this you should have a visit at least every 6 weeks for the first year.
- After you've lived for one year in your placement how often you are visited depends on how long you will be staying there:
 - If the permanence plan is for you to stay until you are 18 your social worker must visit you at least every three months.
 - If the plan is for you to leave before you are 18 your social worker must visit you at least every six weeks;
- If you are placed at home before your parents' or carer's assessment has been done, or with someone who has been approved only as your temporary foster parent, you will have a visit every week until your first review to make sure you are safe and well. After this they must visit you no less than every six weeks.

- If the court has made an 'interim care order' for you then your social worker must visit you at least once a week until your first review. After this they must visit you at least every four weeks.

 - If the court has made a 'care order' for you then your social worker must visit you within one week of the care order being made. After this they must visit you at least every six weeks.
- As well as these visits you, and the people caring for you, can ask your social worker to visit at other times too. The rules say they should visit you if this is a 'reasonable' request.

 - If you live in a children's home and the following things happen then your social worker must visit you within one week:
 - You have a serious illness or a serious accident,
 - If you have committed a serious offence,
 - If you have made a serious complaint about the home or about someone working there.
 - If you have been involved in a serious incident which has resulted in the police being called to the home,
 - If you have run away from the home,
 - If there has been any concern about your safety and protection.
- When your social worker visits you they must speak with you on your own in private unless you don't want to or if there is a good reason why this is not appropriate. If you need help to communicate then your social worker must get specialist help to make sure you have the opportunity to tell them about your wishes and feelings.

 - In between these visits your social worker should make sure you have the right sort of help, support and advice you need. This means it has to be right for your age and understanding. They also have to make sure that they consider your religious beliefs, racial, cultural and language background and any disability that you may have.

- Your social worker has to write about these visits in your case record. This will include your wishes and feelings about the place. The record will have the main issues and any concerns that were raised. Information from the visit will be shared appropriately with the people who need to know. Depending on your age and understanding your social worker should talk to you first about what information should be shared and who with.
 - If they found out on one of their visits that you were not safe or not being cared for properly they must tell your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who would arrange a case review to talk about what needed to be done to change this.

Case Reviews

- Your reviews are meetings to decide on your care plan, and to make any changes to it. They are normally chaired by your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).
 - Your own Local Authority has to write down the rules about how they carry out reviews. They have to give you, your parents or any other person caring for you, a copy of these.
- You will normally be invited to be at your review meeting, depending on your age and understanding. There may be exceptional times when the local authority is allowed to say you can't go to your review meeting. If they say this then they must have a very good reason which they must tell you.
 - Depending on your age and understanding you should be asked about the people who are to be invited to your review. The people who come to your review would usually be you, your social worker, your IRO and your parents or carers who are providing you with day to day care. Your IRO will sometimes ask others to come if s/he thinks it's important but could ask them to send him/her a report instead before the meeting. This could be someone like your teacher for example.
- Sometimes it may not be appropriate for parents to attend review, or whole of review, if it is felt that this would not be in your interests.
 - You, your parents and/or carers should be always asked about the time and place of your review to make sure it is easy for you to go to it. It should be in a place where you can feel relaxed and confident to join in. You shouldn't have to miss school or important health appointments to go to it.
- If you or your parents/carers have any communication difficulties, or your first language is not English, then the person arranging your review should make sure you have the right help with this. This is to make sure you can understand what is being said and that you can get your views across.
 - If you would like an Advocate to help you put your wishes and feelings across at the meeting then you have a right for this to be arranged for you. Adults sometimes call this your right to 'representation'.
- Your social worker must not make any major changes to your care plan unless it has been agreed at your review.
 - You must have a review within 20 days of when you start to be looked after. The second review must be not more than 3 months later. After that, reviews must be at least every 6 months.
- You could have a review earlier than these times if you, your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) or your social worker asks for one.

- You should always have a review **before you stop being looked after**. This is to make sure everything you need to keep you safe and well in the future is properly planned for.
- If your Independent Reviewing Officer thinks they have not been given the information they should have by the time of the review they can ask the review date to be changed, but this mustn't be later than another 20 days.
 - If there are any disagreements between anyone at the review then the IRO will try to sort these out by talking with those people. If things still can't be sorted out and you are still not satisfied then the IRO should explain your right to make a complaint and to have an advocate to help you to make this if you want one. The IRO must make sure you know and understand your rights.
- If things can't be sorted out and your IRO is not satisfied that your care plan is being followed and thinks that your welfare is not being promoted they can make a referral to CAF/CASS. You can see who CAF/CASS are and what they do in the word list at the back of this guide. They will have to think about what is best for you before making this decision. What things will be talked about in my review?

What things will be talked about in my review?

- **Your wishes and feelings, and your IRO's views**, about anything to do with your care and particularly about any changes to your care plan.
- **Any changes** since your last review, including any changes to your care plan.
 - Whether or not the things that needed doing, and were agreed at your **last review**, have been done.
- Whether there is any need to change your **legal status**. For example you and/or your social worker may want to consider applying for a care order or to have your care order removed.
 - Whether there is a long term plan for your care - this is sometimes called a 'plan for **permanence**'.
- Whether it would be good for you to have an **independent visitor** (An Independent Visitor is explained in the word list on page 35).
 - How your **contact** is going with the people that are important to you, like your family, and whether you need any more support to make sure this happens.
- If **where you are living** is still the right place for you.
 - If there are **any changes needed** to how you are cared for at the place where you live. The way you can expect to be cared for is written down in your placement plan.
- How often **your social worker** should visit you.
 - Your **education and training**. What support you need to make sure you can do the best you possibly can. The person chairing your review will ask for the views of the most appropriate teacher at your school. This might be for example the 'designated teacher' at your school. This person is responsible for making sure all children and young people that are in care, and who go to that school, have all the support they need to do their best.
- The things you get involved in outside of school or college, things like **hobbies and activities**. This is to make sure you have opportunities to enjoy yourself as well as learn new things.
 - **Your health**. This might include things like the dentist, your optician, healthy eating or any needs you have because of a disability.

- If you also have a child protection plan to **keep you safe**, this will be talked about as well to make sure you are still kept safe.

 - If you have **any particular needs**. This could be things like your religious beliefs, racial and cultural needs or things you need to keep you safe or because of a disability. They will check if these needs are being met and if not decide what should change to make sure they are.

- Whether you have the right sort of **advice and support** you need and whether this has been explained properly to you.

 - If there is anything that needs doing to help **prepare you for the time when you stop being looked after**.

What happens after my review?

- Your local authority must write a report about the review. This report is usually done by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This must include who was at your review; what was said; the decisions that were agreed; who has to do what and when they have to do it by. This report will be placed on your case record.

 - If your care plan is changed at all at the review your social worker should give you, your parents/carers and your IRO a copy of this.

- Your IRO will check that your local authority does all the things agreed at your review. If these aren't done, or if there are major changes that might affect the decisions made at your review, they will let your social worker's senior managers know so it can be sorted out.





You should not be made to feel that you have to leave care before you are ready. Before any move takes place your IRO should check with you and everyone at your review how ready you are for this move and how well you've been prepared.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)

- An IRO is somebody from the local authority who usually chairs your reviews and makes sure these are done properly, who must keep on checking how the local authority is looking after you to make sure it is doing what it should be doing for you, and who must make sure the local authority takes proper notice of your wishes and feelings when it makes decisions and plans for you.

 - You may already have an IRO and know what they do. The new rules have changed their role so that they now have more powers. This is so they can make sure the plans for your care are clear and that you have all the support you need to enjoy your life and achieve a good future. You will have seen some of the things they now do in the part of this document that explains about your case reviews. Here are some more things about the IRO:
- Although they work for the local authority, IROs are 'independent' which means that they can challenge the local authority if they think the local authority are not doing their best for you.

 - You should be given the name of your IRO shortly after you start to be looked after. You should have the same IRO for all the time you are looked after (unless they move jobs). Sometimes children and young people have a lot of changes in their social workers, so having the same IRO who understands your care plans should help. They are responsible for asking you about your care plan at each review and at any time that there is a major change in your life.
- Your IRO must make sure that your voice is heard and that you are offered stable care that is just right for your needs, so that you can do well in life.

 - Your IRO chairs your reviews and checks that the Local Authority is doing everything they should do to care for you like any good parent would. You can see all the rules about what should happen in reviews on page [22-24]
- Your social worker must tell your IRO in between reviews of any important changes in your life. This could include for example big changes in your contact arrangements, whether you have a new social worker or if any decisions made at your review haven't been carried out.

 - Your IRO has to explain to you what your legal rights are and make sure you have the right support if you choose to take up any of these. For example having an appropriate adult to help you get legal advice if you need it and an advocate if you choose to make a formal complaint. They have to check whether you understand these as well because it can often be difficult to understand.

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What does the Local Authority have to do to help me prepare for when I stop being looked after?

- You should always have a review before you stop being looked after. This is to make sure everything you need to keep you safe and well in the future is properly planned for.
 - If you are not on a care order but are in care by agreement of you and/or your parents sometimes you may leave care for a number of different reasons. For example you might return to your parents because they request this. If you are not on a care order, when you return to your birth parents you will no longer be a looked after child (in care). However, your plan must include details of the advice, assistance and support that your local authority will give you when they are not providing you with accommodation any more.
- Your right to support as a “care leaver” will depend on when and how long you were in care. There is more information about this in the explanation of words at the end of this guide. The special words you need to look at are: Eligible; Relevant; and Former Relevant.
 - If you are on a care order and your return home is planned, or likely to happen, the support you can expect should be written into your care plan. This is to make sure everything you need is in place to meet your needs and make your return home successful.

What happens if I am 16 or over?

- If you are aged 16 or 17 and you have been looked after by the local authority for at least 13 weeks in total which began after your 14th birthday and ended after your 16th birthday, then you are an ‘eligible child’ and will be entitled to support as a care leaver. Your social worker or IRO can confirm this.
 - The local authority must assess your needs within 3 months of your 16th birthday (or within 3 months of you becoming an eligible child, if that happened later).
- If you are an eligible child the local authority must also prepare a pathway plan for you as soon as possible after they have carried out the assessment of your needs. The pathway plan says what needs to be done to help you prepare for your future. All looked after children who are ‘eligible children’ must be provided with a pathway plan. It will not matter if perhaps you are an asylum seeker or in custody.
 - Your social worker should make sure they know your needs so that your pathway plan is right for you. This could include understanding the help you will need to learn about cooking, finding work, further education, accommodation, health, help with managing your money, contact with your family and friends and getting on with other people.
- You must be asked about your views, wishes and feelings about your plan. Other people will be asked their views as well. This could include people like your parents or carers, your independent reviewing officer, the person providing you with education or training and your personal adviser (if this is someone different from your social worker).
 - You will also have a ‘personal adviser’. This might be your social worker or perhaps someone from the leaving care team. Their job is to provide you with advice and support, to take part in reviews of your case, to keep in touch with the local authority about your pathway plan, keep in touch with you, check you are alright and help you in getting what you need. To do this they must make sure your pathway plan is followed, reviewed and kept up to date.
- You should not be made to feel that you have to stop being looked after before you are ready. Before any move takes place your IRO should check with you and everyone at your review how ready you are for this move and how well you’ve been prepared.

What is an 'Independent Visitor' and what do they do?

- This is someone who is there to visit, advise and befriend you. A lot of what they do will depend on your needs and what your wishes are. They are there to support and help you. This might be in things like helping you to get your views across when decisions are made that affect you; supporting your care plan or just taking you for a day out.
 - An independent visitor is someone who the local authority appoints to visit you while you are looked after. In order to be independent they can't be someone who helps to run the local authority, or works in the children's services part of the local authority, or who lives with someone who does.
- Although they are not employed by your local authority they do have to have checks done, such as a police check, known as a CRB check, and have two personal references, to make sure they are safe people to work with children and young people.
 - Your Local Authority must appoint an Independent Visitor for you where it is in your interests. This would be for example if you don't have much contact with anyone else outside your placement, like your family or where you have not been visited (or lived with) a parent, or anyone else with parental responsibility, during the past 12 months. They might also think about you having one if you were placed a long way away from home and where it might be difficult for you to see your friends very often. Other reasons for appointing an Independent Visitor would include if you were not able to go out independently; if it was difficult for you to build good relationships; if you were in a residential setting and would get a lot out of having an independent visitor; and if it would help to promote your education and health.
- It should be decided at your care plan or review meeting whether it would be good for you to have one.
 - When choosing an independent visitor you should be asked about your wishes and feelings. You should be asked about whether you want an independent visitor or not and what sort of person they should be like. You have a choice to say you don't want one to be appointed if you are of an age and understanding to do so.
- If you do choose to have one you should have a chance to meet them first so you can decide whether you wish them to be appointed or not. If not, the local authority should consider along with you whether there is someone else more appropriate for you.
 - Once you have chosen an independent visitor and it has all been agreed they will only be told essential information about you that is important that they know so they can support you. You should be involved in deciding what information they can be told about. They do not have the right to look at your files.
- If the independent visitor saw that you were in a difficult situation, for example where you needed to make a formal complaint about your care, then they would be expected to tell your social worker or help you find a trained advocate.
 - They won't usually keep any records about their visits to you but might write down things that are important so they don't forget. This might be things like your birthday!
- You should be asked at your reviews about whether you want to carry on having an independent visitor or not.
 - Sometimes when you leave care you may wish to keep in touch with your independent visitor.



A new law says that every council must give short breaks to people who are caring for a disabled child. This means that the council's children's services must arrange services so that children can be cared for by another person every now and then.

Short Breaks

- Government guidance has been written about looking after children, including disabled children, for 'short breaks'. Short breaks give children fun and interesting things to do as well as give their parents or usual carers a short rest from caring.

 - A new law says that every council must give short breaks to people who are caring for a disabled child. This means that the council's children's services must arrange services so that children can be cared for by another person every now and then. This is to help parents or usual carers who might be struggling, or to help them to give better care because they can have regular time off from caring. Short breaks could include day, evening, overnight or weekend activities, and could take place in the home of the approved carer or in a residential or community setting.
- When the break means staying away from home there are two ways a council's children's services can arrange short breaks. The child could become a 'looked after child' for the time they are on their break. The council arranging the short breaks must then follow many of the rules we have talked about in this Guide. For example, they must write a Care Plan, have an Independent Reviewing Officer, visit the child regularly and have reviews.

 - Or after thinking things through with you and your family the council may think the best thing for you is not to become what is called a 'looked after' child. There still has to be a plan setting out just how the short break will work and how it will help. If the council arranges short breaks like this, it does not have to follow all the rules about having care plans and the other rules in this Guide. You would just be getting short breaks to help you as a family support service.
- The council has to make it clear whether or not the child is being 'looked after by the council' for their short break. Even if a child is being 'looked after by the council' during their short break, their parents can still take them back home at any time.

 - For a child to become a 'looked after' child on a short break the break should last for over 24 hours. And if the council helps the family by sending somebody to sit with a child in their own home, that does not make the child 'looked after by the council'. If the child stays for the night with a short break carer, the carer should usually be one of the council's foster carers. They shouldn't just be childminders.
- Council children's services should send someone to visit each child who is getting short breaks, to check that all is going well with their breaks. There are rules about how often these visits should be:
 - If you are 'looked after' and have your short breaks in the same place and they are for no longer than 17 days at one time and you have a total of no more than 75 days in one year they must visit you within the first 3 months of the first placement day, and at least once every 6 months after that.
 - If you are 'looked after' and have your breaks in different placements or you have more than 75 days of short breaks in one year then the rules are the same for you as all other 'looked after children' which you can see on page 21 of this guide. How often you should have your reviews are the same as all other 'looked after children' as well and you can see these rules on pages 22-23 of this guide.
 - The visitor must be a qualified social worker and they should have the right skills and experience to communicate well with you.

continued overleaf

- If you are not 'looked after' but are having short breaks as a 'child in need' then there are no hard and fast rules about how often you should be visited by your social worker. The guidance says it would be good for them to carry out a review every 6 months or more often if needed. There are no rules saying you have to have an Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Whenever a child goes for a short break, it is important that the people caring for them there are told things they need to know about the child. For example, they should be told about how the child communicates and what medicines they need and their likes and dislikes.

Sufficiency

- There are plans to bring in a new duty for local authorities from April 2011. Under this "sufficiency duty" local authorities must make sure that, as far as they can, they have enough placements of different kinds to meet the needs of the children they look after.
 - Every local authority will need to have a range of different sorts of placement to meet children's needs. It will also have to make sure there are enough other services to support the children it looks after, and enough accommodation of different sorts to meet the needs of care leavers. It will also need enough placements for children to go to in emergencies.
- Council children's services should try to place children in the council's own area if they can. They should only place you out of the area if there is a very good reason for doing this. If you are already placed a long way away this doesn't mean you have to be moved back if you are doing well there.
 - If a decision has been made for a child to be adopted the council children's services should try to place that child with an adoptive family within the next 12 months.



What are the rules about my records?

- Your local authority must have a case record for you. This must include:
 - Any assessment records (including health and education);
 - Your care plan, including any changes that have been made to it;
 - Health care reports;
 - Your personal education plan (PEP) and any reports on your educational progress;
 - Your social worker's visits reports;
 - Your reviews and any information that was collected for your reviews;
 - Any court reports;
 - Any court order about you. This may be for example a care order or contact order;
 - Contact arrangements and
 - Any agreements with the people caring for you. This may be for example another local authority or a fostering agency.
- You can put things in this file as well if you want to. This could be things that are important to you like photographs and school certificates. If you do decide to put them in you must be careful to make sure you keep either the originals or copies of these.

 - This record will be important to you, especially if you have lived away from your birth family. It will give you information about why important decisions in your life were made. It may be helpful in the future to trace relatives who you might have lost contact with, such as brothers and sisters.

- These records usually have to be kept until your 75th birthday. They have to be kept safe and secure so only the people with the right to see them can look at them. That includes you.

 - It is your right to see the things that people write, or keep on the computer, about you.

- Your records should only be seen by those who need to know so that they can give you better care and support.

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Some useful words explained

Many of these words are found in the new rules. Social workers, teachers, staff and foster carers may often use these words as well. You might not have heard all of these so here's a list that may help with what they mean.

Accommodated – Where a child is being cared for by the Local Authority with the agreement of the parents, or where a young person is aged 16 or over and agrees to be cared for by the Local Authority.

Advocate – Someone who is independent who can visit you to help you get your views across, for example if you want to make a complaint.

Area Authority – means the local authority for the area you live in or are to be placed, if it is different from the responsible authority. For example you may come from Nottinghamshire but be placed in Lincolnshire.

CAFCASS – This stands for 'Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service'. They look after the interests of children whose situation is put before a family court. They work with children and their families, and then advise the courts on what they consider to be in the best interests of individual children. They can also take action if your IRO tells them your council is not doing what it should for you.

Care Plan – (for all looked after children) means the plan for your future care. It is used to decide how a child should be looked after, for how long and what type of placement will best meet his or her needs.

Case Records – A written record which must include your care plan and all other plans for your care, such as health, education, visits from your social worker and any court orders.

Case Reviews – Meetings to see how well your care plan is working and to see if any changes need to be made to it.

Child in Need – (Section 17 of The Children Act 1989) means children who are not likely to have a reasonable standard of health or development without the help and provision of services by a local authority. That without this help their health or development is likely to get worse. This also means children who are disabled.

Connected Person – means a relative, friend or other person connected with you. For example this may be someone like a teacher, childminder or youth worker that you already know.

Contact – Time spent communicating with or meeting a child. This could be with parents, family and friends. For example face to face visits, through email, letters, telephone calls or sending of photographs.

Designated Teacher – A teacher appointed by the school to support and promote the education of any child in the school who is looked after by the local authority.

Eligible Child – (Section 20 of The Children Act 1989) Young people aged 16-17 who have been 'looked after' for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and ends after s/he reaches the age of 16.

Former Relevant Children – (Section 23 of the Children Act 1989) Young people aged 18-21 who had previously been either an eligible or relevant child. If at the age of 21 the young person is still being helped by the responsible authority with education or training, s/he remains a former relevant child until they reach 25.

Foster Parent/ Foster Carer – means a person who has been approved by the local authority or an independent fostering agency.

Health Plan – This sets out your health care needs and how they will be met.

Independent visitor – This is the independent person appointed to be your visitor if you choose to have one. They can have the role of befriending a child for example when a family cannot keep in touch. They can also take on the role of Advocate. (See Advocate)

Independent Reviewing Officer [IRO] – This is the ‘independent reviewing officer’ appointed for you. They organise and chair your reviews. They also check that your care plan is being carried out, that your views and wishes are being properly listened to, and that the council is doing what it should be for you. An IRO has to be registered as a social worker.

Looked after - a child who is in the care of the local authority, either ‘accommodated’ voluntarily or ‘in care’ on a care order made by a court.

Nominated Officer – means a senior officer of the responsible authority that has been chosen by the Director of Children’s Services to make a specific decision and this has been put in writing.

Parent - includes a mother and father of the child whether or not married. A ‘person with parental responsibility’ can also be someone who isn’t a child’s parent, but is a guardian appointed for a child (under section 5 of the 1989 Children Act) or a person who has been given parental responsibility for the child by a court order – either a ‘residence order’ or a ‘special guardianship order’.

Parental Responsibility - The rights and powers of a mother, father or others to make decisions about a child. Where a child is looked after because of a care order, the Local Authority shares parental responsibility with the child’s parents.

Pathway Plan – This is the plan for you leaving care, how you will be prepared for this and how you will be supported. It also includes what support you can expect to meet your needs after you have left care.

Permanence – This word is sometimes used when social workers talk about your care plan. It means as part of your care plan they will discuss how to make sure you’re not moved around to lots of different placements but are able to settle in the placement best for you both now and in the future.

Personal Advisor – This is the person who the Local Authority chooses to support you when you are preparing to leave care and to support you when you have left care.

Personal Education Plan – This sets out you educational and training needs and how they will be met.

Placement Plan – A written plan for your day to day life, what your needs are and how you will be cared for.

Relevant Children – (Section 23 of The Children Act 1989) Young people aged 16 and 17 who are no longer ‘looked after’ but were ‘looked after’ for at least 13 weeks after the age of 14 and had continued to be ‘looked after’ at some time while they were 16 or 17.

Responsible Authority – The authority of the area you live in who has been responsible for making and paying for your placement.

Responsible Person – This is a person employed in the Local Authority and usually means your social worker.

The Officer - means the Director of Children’s Services or other senior officer of the responsible authority nominated in writing by the director to act on behalf of the director.

Qualifying Children – (Section 24 of The Children Act 1989) Young people under the age of 21 (under 24 if in education or training) who ceased being ‘looked after’ or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or privately fostered, after the age of 16 but while still a child. This includes young people who are accommodated within 13 weeks of their 18th birthday who will not qualify for full leaving care services (even if they have been provided with Section 20 support), as they have not been ‘looked after’ for the required 13-week period after the age of 14.



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Office of the Children's Rights Director

Website: www.rights4me.org

Address: Dr Roger Morgan OBE, Children's Rights Director for England, Ofsted, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE

Free phone children's helpline: 08005280731

Telephone: 08456 404040

Department for Education

Website: www.education.gov.uk

Address: Children in Care Division, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London W1P 3BT

If you want to have a look at the full version of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Reviews Regulations (England) 2010 you can find them through a Google search. Just type in 'DfE Care Planning Placement and Review Regulations 2010'.

NB: This booklet is a general guide for young people and not a definitive statement of the law or statutory guidance.

