

Guidance for individuals attending a 'looked after' child review in the role of supporter and contract of expectations

Introduction

Children's wellbeing directorate encourages the meaningful participation of parents, where appropriate, at 'looked after' review meetings for their child, including through the presence of advocates or supporters. The role of supporter is distinct from the role of advocate: an advocate represents a recognised, regulatory body and is present in a professional capacity, whereas a supporter will have a prior personal relationship with the parent they are supporting.

This guidance explains the role of supporters at 'looked after' review meetings, and the standards of conduct that are expected.

This guidance has been written in accordance with the care planning, placement and case review regulations (2015) and the IRO handbook statutory guidance (2010).

The role of the chairperson (independent reviewing officer)

- the presence, number and contributions of supporters at a 'looked after' review meeting is subject to the agreement of the chairperson
- the level and manner of involvement from supporters should be discussed and agreed with the chairperson in advance of the 'looked after' review meeting
- the chairperson should, at the start of the meeting, make clear the presence and role of the supporter in attendance and ensure that parent(s) are happy for the supporter to hear the information shared, which is likely to be personal and sensitive
- where age appropriate, the chairperson should obtain the consent of the child / young person regarding the presence of the supporter and the information being shared
- the chairperson is responsible for ensuring that all those attending a 'looked after' review meeting conduct themselves appropriately and any person can be asked to leave the meeting as a result of their conduct
- the decision of the chairperson in relation to the presence and role of the supporter is final

Supporters CAN:

- attend a 'looked after' review meeting with a parent (or person with parental responsibility), for the purpose of expressing the parent's views and supporting the parent to participate in the discussion
- in exceptional circumstances, attend a 'looked after' review meeting on behalf of a parent for the purpose outlined above, but only with the explicit, written consent of the parent being represented and only where the parent has discussed this directly with the chairperson or social worker

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- ask for clarification of information shared at the meeting, through the chairperson
- be present throughout the meeting and hear all information shared, other than information that must be shared confidentially, without parents present
- contribute to discussions in relation to the child's care plan as appropriate, as part of the family's ongoing support network

Supporters CANNOT:

- express their own views or opinions about any of the information shared
- challenge or question any professionals attending the meeting directly
- share any of the information discussed outside of the meeting: an intentional breach of data protection in relation to confidential information could result in criminal action being taken against you
- partake in the decision-making at the 'looked after' review meeting with regard to any element of the child's care plan
- act as interpreter of any kind – it is the responsibility of the child's social worker to ensure that alternative arrangements are in place where an interpreter is required
- receive minutes of the 'looked after' review meeting

Complaints

Supporters are not entitled to make representations by way of complaint in relation to the outcome of, or any recommendations or decisions made at, the 'looked after' review meeting. They may however, in their role as supporter, support a parent or child to make such representations. Supporters are entitled to make a complaint on their own behalf if the manner in which they themselves have been treated causes them concern.

Statement

I have read the guidance above and understand my role and contribution to this 'looked after' review meeting, as supporter. I have had the opportunity to discuss my role with the chairperson in advance of the meeting, and to ask clarifying questions in relation to my role, where appropriate.

I understand the importance of the confidentiality of highly sensitive information and that I must not share any information discussed, outside of the meeting.

I understand that should concerns arise before or during the meeting regarding my conduct or any aspect of the guidance above not being adhered to, the chairperson may request that I leave the meeting and that ultimately the meeting may be adjourned and reconvened without my presence. I understand that in this regard the decision of the chairperson is final.

Signed:

Print name:

Date: