

What to do next

Complete a referral online

Please send your enquiries to:

childrensrights@northamptonshire.gov.uk

For the attention of:

Independent Visitor Coordinator

If you would like to discuss a referral or would like more information you can call one of the Independent Visitor Coordinators:

Wendy Owers

07990 916388

Samantha Linton

07788 321826

Northamptonshire Independent Visitor Service



Information for Professionals

What is an Independent Visitor?

An Independent Visitor is a volunteer that spends some of their spare time as a befriender to a child or young person in care. The child or young person will have little or no contact with their birth family.

Independent Visitors commit to this role for at least two years, but the hope is that this relationship will last for many years.

They will share interests and hobbies with the child or young person and help them to engage in new experiences. Above all they will have fun!

Independent Visitors can be a positive role model for the child/young person and quite often can become the most consistent person in the child's life over a long period of time.

The Independent Visitor will go through a vigorous recruitment process, attend training and have regular supervision.

Once matched, an Independent Visitor will be given a monthly budget to cover the cost of activities. This can be 'saved up' to cover larger trips as one off experiences. The volunteer is encouraged to involve the child or young person in planning and budgeting.

The ideal is to visit every 2 weeks for 2 hours, but at least once per month is expected. Matches are reviewed twice per year.

The Law

The scope of the Independent Visitors role is defined in the Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 2 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review, which was published in March 2010. Having repeated the statutory basis for Independent Visitors to be appointed in the Children's Act 1989 and the Children's and Young Peoples Act 2008. Children and Young People who meet certain criteria must be offered the opportunity of having an adult outside of the professional network in their lives., if they wish to have one.

Key Facts

- An Independent Visitor is totally independent and everything that is shared with them is kept confidential unless there is a safeguarding concern. These will be shared with their social worker.
- An Independent Visitor is a friend/mentor. They may replace the contact that they would have had with their birth family. They are committed to spending planned time with the child unconditionally on a regular basis. The visits will only be cancelled if the child or young person, or the Independent Visitor, is unwell or it is deemed unsafe to do so.
- The child needs to have been in care for at least 1 year, with care proceedings being concluded. The long term plan needs to be either, long term fostering or residential care. This does not apply to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Referrals need to reflect that the child/young person would benefit from having an Independent Visitor in their life and isn't an alternative to respite care.
- Referrals may be refused if there are serious safeguarding issues, or if the young person is about to move placement.
- Matching may take a while due to the recruitment process, training and finding the right Independent Visitor for the child/young person. Children placed out of county may take longer.
- Out of County referrals go to commissioning for spot purchasing. Your manager will need to agree to pay for the cost.
- If unsure please contact us to discuss further.