

One minute guide



Independent Visitors Scheme:
Understanding what the Independent Visitors scheme is and why it is important.

What is an Independent Visitor?

An independent visitor is a volunteer who can provide a long-term, consistent, reliable and appropriate adult-child relationship to a looked after child, which is independent of social services. The volunteers commit to visiting a young person once a month with the aim to befriend the young person and take a genuine interest in their life, interests and hobbies.

How is the service changing?

As opposed to the former process of requesting the service from a third party supplier as and when a request was made, North Yorkshire County Council are now launching their own Independent Visitors scheme, enabling looked after children to more easily request and access an Independent Visitor (IV). Although all looked after children can request access to the scheme at any time, we will look to identify and refer specific young people who we feel would especially benefit from having an IV. The scheme will recruit volunteers from our communities who can offer invaluable one-to-one support and friendship to North Yorkshire's looked after children.

How can referrals be made to request an Independent Visitor?

When a looked after child has their looked after review, which is chaired by an independent reviewing officer, there will be a discussion during the meeting as to whether it would be appropriate for the young person to have an IV and more importantly if the young person wants to access the scheme. The child's social worker will make a referral to the scheme's coordinator who will facilitate the matching process and can provide further information and guidance to social workers, carers and other professionals regarding the role of the Independent Visitor.

Who will be eligible?

Decisions about whether to consider appointing an independent visitor will be determined according to the needs of the child and their individual circumstances. To be eligible for the scheme children must be in the care of North Yorkshire County Council and be aged 10-17. If a child is placed in North Yorkshire by another Local Authority, it remains the responsibility of the placing authority to uphold the young person's right to access an IV.

Children meeting the following criteria will be prioritised during the referral and matching processes;

- Communication between the child and parent (or individual with parental responsibility) has been infrequent; or
- The child has not been visited by a parent or anyone else they have a meaningful relationship with in their network during the preceding 12 months.

Although matching young people with little to no contact with their birth family will be prioritised there are also a number of other circumstances in which we would encourage you to consider making a referral:

- a child is placed at a distance from home, particularly where the placement is out-of-authority, which makes it difficult to maintain sufficient contact with their network
- a child is unable to go out independently or experiences difficulties in communicating and/or building positive relationships
- a child is likely to engage in behaviours which will put them at risk, as a result of peer pressure or forming inappropriate relationships with people who are significantly older
- a child is placed in a residential setting and would benefit from a more individualised relationship
- a child is an unaccompanied asylum seeker
- it would make a positive contribution to promoting the child's education and health.

Who is our provider?

North Yorkshire Youth (NYY) will be providing the scheme on behalf of NYCC. NYY are an organisation who provide development and training opportunities for young people in our communities, primarily through activities held in Carlton Lodge and youth centres across the county.

For more information about the scheme or to make a referral please contact Bev Knights (Independent Visitor Coordinator) at bev@nyy.org.uk / 01845 522 145.