

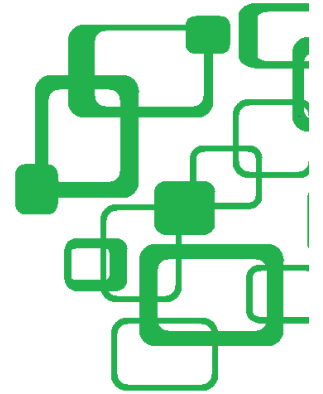
# Minimum Standards for Children's Homes

## Young People's Guide



## Minimum Standards for Children's Homes - Young People's Guide

Every young person has the right to be safe and deserves to be well looked after whilst they are growing up. When your birth family, for whatever reason, is not able to look after you and keep you safe, it is the responsibility of the government to provide care for you.



Minimum standards for children's homes have been developed to make sure that when you are living in a children's home that you are safe, well-looked after and helped to grow into an adult with the best chance to have a good future.

Some children's homes are run by local Trusts and some are run by voluntary agencies, but all of them have to be registered with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (we call it the RQIA in the rest of this guide). Each year, the RQIA inspects children's homes and makes a report on how well they are performing against the standards. They also report on anything that needs to be improved.

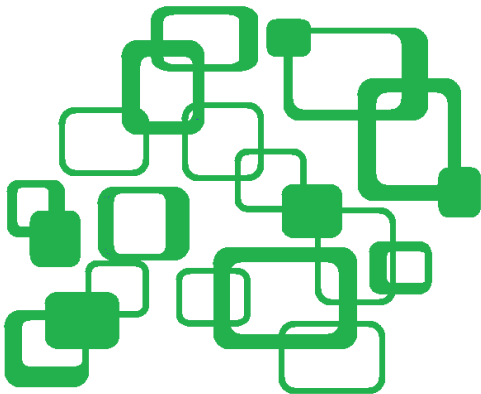
It doesn't matter how long you're in the home for – even if it's only for a very short time, the standards still apply.

The standards cover all the places where children in care stay - children's homes that provide secure care, short break centres and long-term residential care.

When we were writing these standards we worked with Trusts, the Health and Social Care Board and the people who run homes as well as VOYPIC and Barnardo's to

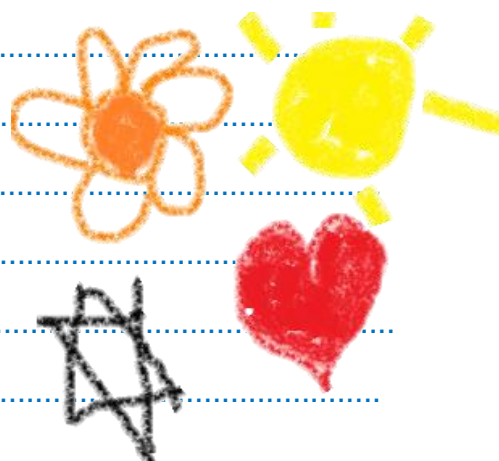
represent the young people who actually use the services. We also spoke to young people who live in children's homes and use short break services.

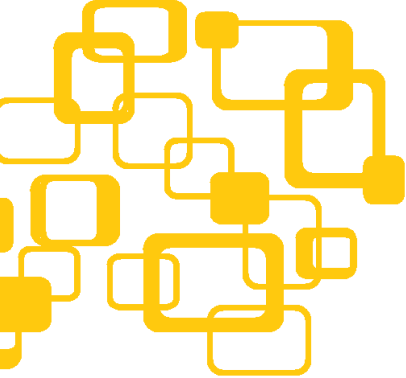
This guide to the standards was written for children and young people and we hope it meets your needs. The full version can be found on the DHSSPS website [<link>](#) or you can get a copy from your keyworker.



# My Information Page

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## Meanings of some words used in this book

### Activities

Activities are the things you spend your free time doing. These could be sports, clubs or organisations you belong to or hobbies like singing or acting.



### Advocate

An advocate is someone who supports you and can speak on your behalf if you need them to. An advocate can help you get the information you need, understand your rights, make your own choices and say what you want; but an advocate will not make choices or decisions for you.

### Citizen

A citizen is someone who is a member of a community, town or country and takes on the rights and responsibilities that come with being a citizen.

### Complaint

You can make a complaint when you think something is wrong with the care or support you're getting.



### Complex health needs

Complex means complicated or difficult. If you have complex health needs, you might have more than one illness or condition that has to be managed or you might have one condition that is more difficult to manage than something very basic.

### Emotions

*Emotions* is another word for feelings.

### Health professionals

Health professionals are people who work in the health service such as doctors, dentists, nurses, opticians, physiotherapists and speech therapists.



## Independent

In this book we talk about *living independently*. This means living on your own as an adult.



## Local community

The local community is the area where you live. If you live in a big town or city, your local community might be those people in the street closest to your home. In a smaller town or village, the local community might be everyone else who lives there.

## Practical

In this book we talk about practical skills for independent living. Practical skills are things that you *do* – like cooking, washing, managing your money.



## Private

If you want to keep something private, it means you don't want other people to know about it.

## Qualified

Qualified means having the skills to do a job. This can mean having an exam to show you have proved having these skills.

## Records

A record is a file or a set of notes.

## Responsibilities

Responsibility is another word for duty.

## Rights

Rights are things that everyone has or is able to do. There are Human Rights and there are additional Rights for Children that are set down in law. However, as well as having rights, you also have responsibilities – so children have the right to live free from conflict or cruelty but also have the responsibility not to bully or harm others.

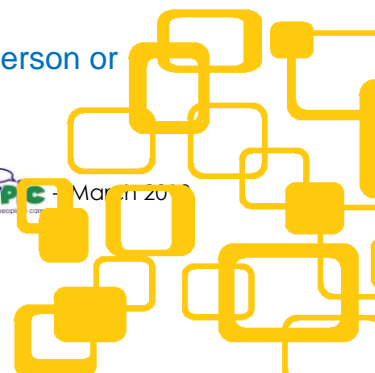


## Trained

Training is another way to make sure someone has the skills to do their job.

## Volunteering

A volunteer is someone who gives up their time for free to help another person or group.



## Standard 1 - Engagement, Participation and Involvement

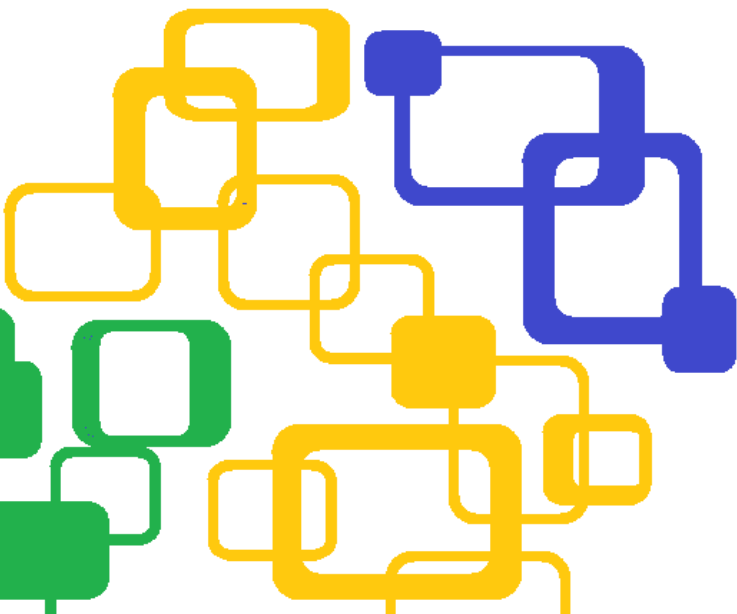
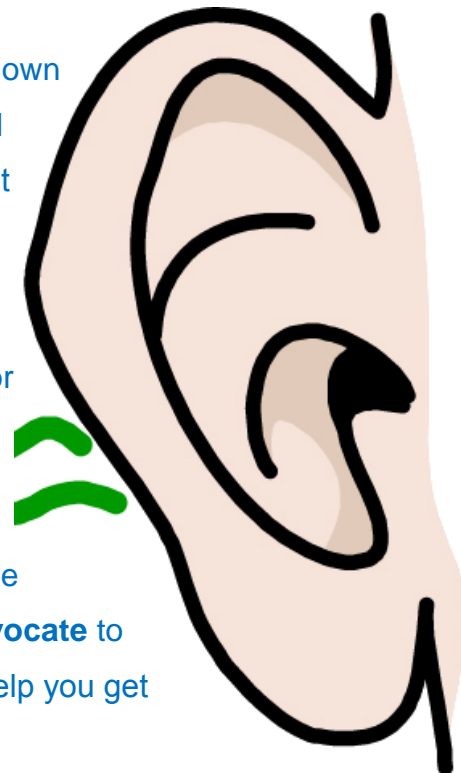
### *Talking and listening to you*

This standard is about staff listening to you and taking action on your wishes about the care you receive in the home. You should be included in the decisions about how things are done in the home as well as your own care. The staff in the home should also listen to the thoughts and views of people close to you when they're making decisions about your care— these people might be your family, foster carers or other social workers.

When one young person living in the home makes a bad choice or does something wrong, the rest of the people there shouldn't be punished for their mistakes.

If you have any issues or want to make a complaint, you should be supported to do this. You should also have the support of an **advocate** to speak on your behalf if you need them. An advocate's job is to help you get your views across to people involved in your care.

If you need help to get your views across, perhaps with special equipment, then this should be provided for you.



## Standard 2 - Promoting a Positive Identity and Potential through Individualised Care and Support

*Young people living in residential care have their unique needs met to help them grow into capable adults*

Your identity is your personality and what makes you unique. Your potential is what you're capable of doing or being as you grow up. The aim of this standard is to ensure that you get the support and help you need to make the best of your opportunities as you grow into an adult.

Lots of things can affect your identity and potential – it may be your religion, ethnicity, sexuality or any disability you may have. It may even be whether you're a boy or a girl. Staff should help you with your feelings about these things.

Staff should also help you understand and come to terms with your own family history and the reasons why you live in care. This can be done with your parents, brothers and sisters and any other carers who have looked after you.

An important part of growing up is being allowed to become responsible for making decisions about your own life. This standard says that you are allowed to make choices about how you spend your money allowances and the things you buy with it.



## Standard 3 - Living in a Supportive Home

*Young people living in children's homes have chances, opportunities and are respected in the same way as other young people of their age*

This standard talks about supporting you as you grow up. Part of growing up is being allowed to learn from your mistakes. This standard says that if you make a poor choice or decision, you shouldn't be punished for it forever. You should be allowed to show what you've learned and trusted to make a better choice the next time.


This standard is also about making the children's home feel like **your** home. It says that you should have the keys to your bedroom and not be locked out of the kitchen. You should have internet access in your home. If you need help with things like washing and dressing, you are able to tell staff how you prefer to be helped and when you can do things for yourself.



We know there are times when there are difficulties or incidents in children's homes. This standard says that the PSNI should only be called to help manage extreme behaviour. You should be aware and understand the reasons why the PSNI might be called. There should be a set of rules that are explained to you and that you understand what will happen if rules are not followed.

If you're using short break care, you should be allowed to keep your mobile phone with you.





## Standard 4 - Safeguarding

*Young people living in children's homes are protected from harm and abuse and learn how to make decisions to keep themselves safe as they grow up*

Safeguarding is about keeping you safe from harm and protecting you from bullying or abuse.

Staff must know how to protect you, keep you safe and help you make your own decisions that don't put you at risk. If you are being bullied or abused or are at risk of being abused, staff must know what to do to help and protect you.

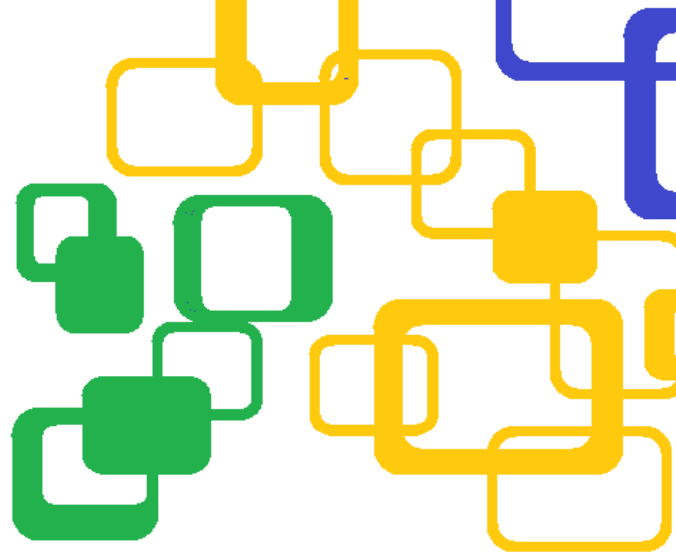
An important part of this standard is feeling safe, so every home must have a clear way of dealing with bullying that you know about.

## Standard 5 - Young People Missing from Care

*Young people who run away from residential care are found, looked after and helped with any problems they have with their home.*

This standard says that staff must help you understand the risks to your safety if you're thinking about running away.

If someone runs away from the home, the staff need to know what to do to try to find the young person and how to help them. This might mean working to find a new placement if the young person feels they can't return to their children's home.



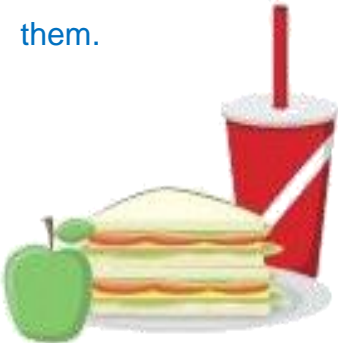
**Standard 6 - Promoting Good Health and Wellbeing**  
*Young people living in children's homes get the healthcare they need and are helped to make choices that keep them healthy and well.*

It's important to learn how to make the right choices about your health. You have to be able to see a doctor, dentist and any other health professionals you need.

Depending on how old you are, you should be able to see a doctor or dentist or health professional on your own.

Staff should show you how to make healthy choices for example, with the food you eat and the exercise you take and how to look after yourself to keep fit and well.

If you have complex health needs, there should be staff in the home that are properly trained to look after you. Likewise, if there are some young people in the home who need help with drug or alcohol issues, only people who are properly trained will help them.



## Standard 7 - Leisure Activities

*Young people living in children's home have the same opportunities as other young people their age to take part in a range of hobbies and activities*

You should be able to take part in different sorts of activities in and out of the children's home and staff should know what sorts of things there are to do in your area.

There are all sorts of activities that you might be interested in and staff should help you to take part, including making sure you can get safely to and from them.

When the staff arrange things for young people to do as a group, they should try to make sure that it's something suitable for the whole group and that everyone can participate

The home should make it possible for your friends to visit and for you to visit friends.





## Standard 8 - Citizenship and Participation in Community Life

*Young people living in children's home are accepted in the community around their home*

As a young person, you have rights that the local community should respect, but as a citizen, you have responsibilities to your local community that you should also respect.

Staff should find opportunities for you to take part in community life such as volunteering, getting a part time job, work experience and joining local clubs.

These experiences will help you become part of the community. They will help build relationships with people and get them to understand more about you and your home. If people in the area have complaints about some young people in your home, staff should work with them to resolve any issues before they get too complicated

In short break care, homes should think carefully about whether staff need a uniform and about the ways mini-buses are painted so as not to draw lots of attention to the young people when they're out and about

## Standard 9 – Promoting Educational Achievement

*Young people living in children's homes have opportunities to learn and achieve*

This standard is about making sure you're able to achieve your potential at school. The staff in the home should know what's in your personal education plan or PEP and how to help meet the goals in it. There should be somewhere in the home for you to do your homework. When you leave school, the staff should work with you to allow you to go to college, training or work, depending on what you feel is right for you.



You should have internet access in your home.

For young people in short break care during term time, the home should make arrangements for them to get to and from school and have all the equipment they need to do their homework.

## Standard 10 – Promoting and Supporting Contact

*Young people living in children's home have appropriate contact with their family and other people important to them*

Contact with your family, other carers and friends inside and outside of your home should be encouraged and supported by staff. There should be somewhere private in your home that you can meet the people important to you.

Staff should make sure you are able to have photos, emails, letters and telephone calls from the people important to you. You should also have home visits to your home. Sometimes, your care plan or a court might decide that some contact is not the best thing for you or sometimes contact may be upsetting you. When this happens, staff should work with you to help you understand and cope with your feelings.

## Standard 11 – Providing a Suitable Physical Environment

*Children's homes are in suitable and well-maintained buildings*

This standard is about the building and grounds of your children's home. It should be homely and well-decorated and when something is broken, it should be fixed quickly.

The home, its grounds and everything in it should be safe and secure so you are safe living there. Unless it is a secure home, however you should be able to move around or in and out of your home in the same way as any other young person not living in a children's home

## Standard 12 – Preparing for a Placement

*Before a young person moves into a children's home, the home makes sure it can meet their needs and help them with the move*

When a decision is made to move a young person into a children's home, the home must be sure that it is able to meet their needs. Before you move into the home, you should be given an information pack about it and be allowed to visit along with your family or carers. You can ask for family or carers to help you move in.

When you move into the home, you should get a keyworker who will help you settle in and deal with your feelings about your new home. If you don't get on with your keyworker, you can ask for someone else (but this might not always be possible straight away). This should be put in place as soon as possible.

When you leave the home there should be help for you whether you are moving to a new placement, back to your family or on to independent living.

## Standard 13 - Reviews

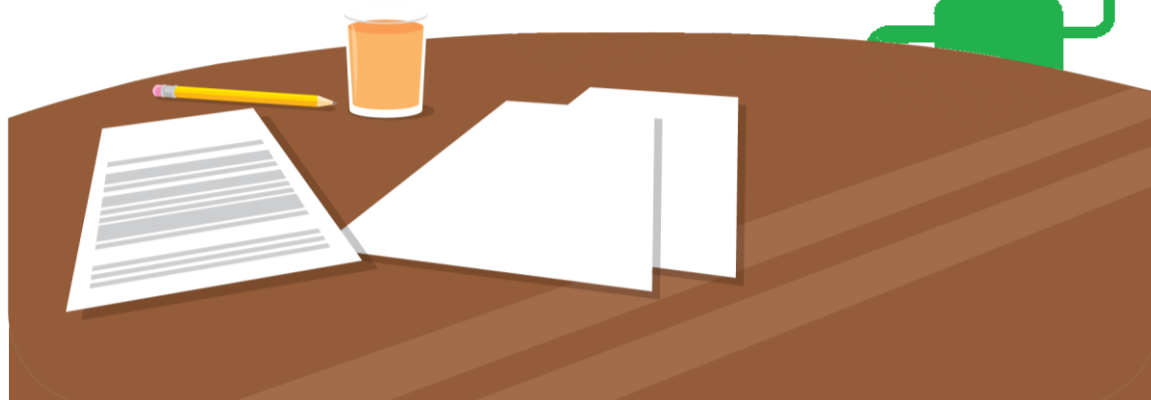
*Young people understand what happens at review meetings and have some say in who attends*

You should be able to take part in reviews of your care plan and staff should make sure you know when these are happening. Before the review, you should be told who will be taking part. If there's someone that you're not happy about, you can let the staff know.

Sometimes, there might be people there who only need to come for part of the meeting, and staff should make sure they leave when their part is over.

When a review meeting doesn't go the way you were expecting, staff should support you with your feelings about the decisions made.

You should get a note of the meeting to keep and you should have somewhere safe to store it.





## **Standard 14 – Promoting Independence, Moves to Adulthood and Leaving care**

*Young people are prepared for moving on from living in children's homes*

Throughout these standards, we've talked about growing up. As you become an adult and think about leaving to live independently, staff should be working with you to make sure you have all the skills you need.

Some of these will be practical things like cooking, looking after your home or managing your money. Some will be about your emotions and learning how to have successful relationships as an adult.

If you need to access adult services, for example for healthcare, the home should make sure that these are in place for you before you move out. If you move to adult disability services as a young person, you should be able to visit and meet the people there and the staff should understand all your needs.

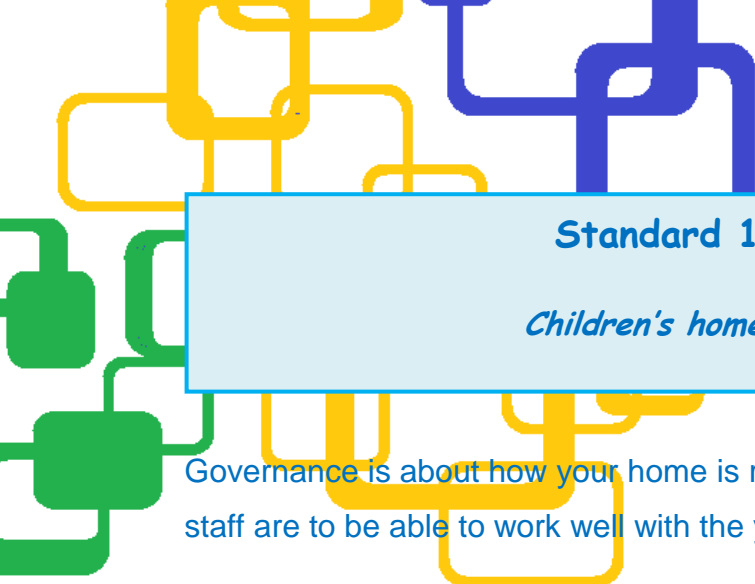
## **Standard 15 – Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide**

*Every children's home must have a written statement on what it does and  
how it works*

The Statement of Purpose is the document that sets out what the home can offer for young people and how it provides its services. Everyone who works and lives in the home should understand the Statement of Purpose and everything that happens in the home should link to it.

The Children's Guide is written especially for the young people who live in the home and gives them all the information they need about living there. The information should be easy for you to understand. If you need a different way of communicating like pictures or Makaton, this should be there for you.





## Standard 16 - Governance

*Children's homes are well-managed*

Governance is about how your home is run. The home has to be well-managed if staff are to be able to work well with the young people living there.

The standard says that there has to be evidence that young people living in the home are involved in running it for example, notes of house meetings; actions agreed and followed up; and promoting participation at house meetings

## Standard 17 - Staffing

*Children's homes have the right number of staff who are properly trained for their jobs*

This standard says that there should be enough staff in the home to make sure it runs well. The staff should all be trained and qualified to do their jobs.

There have to be rules about what happens if a young person says that a member of staff has abused or hurt them. These rules should say how the young person and member of staff are treated during the investigations.

## Standard 18 - Management of Records

*Children's homes keep appropriate records safely and for the right length of time*

There are lots of rules about how records about young people in children's homes have to be kept. This standard is about making, keeping and storing these records and notes. You and your parents should be able to see the records about you if you want to read them.

As well as official records, there should be a record of your life story so that you can keep memories of important things that have happened. In case you lose your copy of your life story, there should also be a copy kept safely in the home.

## Standard 19 - Secure Accommodation

*Children living in secure children's homes receive the support and therapy they need*

This standard says that children living in a secure children's home experience positive support with their problems as well as security, and receive the same measures to safeguard and promote their rights and welfare as they should in other children's homes.

## Standard 20 - Complaints

*Children's homes know how to deal with complaints and learn from them to make life better for young people and staff living and working there*

This standard sets out how complaints should be dealt with. If you make a complaint about the home, there are rules in place about how long it should take to investigate your issues and how to help you through that.

Where complaints are made, the manager of the home should review them to see if there are things that could be done differently to make life better in the home.



## Standard 21- Safe and Healthy Working Practices

*Children's homes are safe places to live and work*

This standard is about issues like health and safety, fire safety, transport, preventing accidents and first aid.

## Useful Addresses

HSC Board

Trusts

VOYPIC

Barnardos

NICCY

RQIA

DHSSPS