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Department for
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A lot has got better for children and young people living in care, 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. Here is a quick summary of them. If you want to know more about them you could ask your social worker to explain them to you or have a look at the full children's guide at www.rights4me.org or put 'Department for Education Care Planning Placement and Review' into Google.

What should my care plan include?

When you become looked after, plans are made for the important things in your life. Your care plan must say what will happen now and in the future, including how your needs will be met. This includes things like your health, education and contact with your family and friends. It should say who will help and support you to keep safe and do well in life. You should be asked about your wishes and feelings and wherever possible your plan should be agreed with you.

What are the rules about placements?

Before a decision is made about your placement your social worker has to make sure it is the best possible placement for you and that it can meet your needs that are set out in your care plan. You should be asked what your wishes and feelings are and these should be taken into consideration. You will usually be able to visit it before you go to live there. When your placement ends it usually has to be agreed at your review first. Your social worker must make sure you have another place to go to that meets your needs.

There are lots of different types of placement. Your social worker has to consider placing you with your family or friends where this is in your best interests. If this is not possible then they may consider placing you with a foster carer or in a children's home. Where possible you should be able to carry on going to the same school and live with your brothers and sisters if they are already in a placement. If you are older then you may be placed in a different sort of placement such as independent accommodation.

How often should my social worker visit me?

You should develop a trusting relationship with your social worker so that you can feel confident telling them what it's really like for you living in your placement. This will help them to decide if you or your carers need any extra help. Wherever possible you should have the opportunity to talk with your social worker alone, unless you don't want to or there is a good reason why not. You can find all the details about how often your social worker should visit you in the full young person's guide but in general they should visit you within your first week of placement and then no less than every 6 weeks.

What does an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) do?

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 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).

They are responsible for asking you what you think 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 have a home that is just right for your needs, so that you can do well in life.


What about my case reviews?

Your reviews are meetings to talk about your care plan and to make any changes to it when necessary. You will normally be invited to your review depending on your age and understanding. The rules say who should be invited and that you (and usually your parents) should be asked about the best time and place to have 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 should be asked about your wishes and feelings to do with your care plan. The things that will be talked about in your review will include how things are going for you in your placement, any changes since your last review and whether or not the things that needed doing, and were agreed at your last review, have been done.





If there are any disagreements between people at the review that can't be sorted out and you are still not satisfied, then your IRO should explain your right to make a complaint and to have an advocate to help you to make this if you want one.

Leaving Care

There are rules about what support you should have when you leave care. Some of this support depends on your age and how long you were looked after. (See the full young person's guide for these rules.) 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.

Around your 16th birthday, your care plan becomes a 'pathway plan', usually as soon as possible after an assessment of your needs has been done. The pathway plan says what needs to be done to help you prepare for becoming an adult. Your social worker should make sure they know your needs so that your pathway plan is right for you. This could include things like helping you 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 should not be made to feel that you have to stop being looked after before you are ready.

What is an Independent Visitor?

This is an adult, who is not a social worker, appointed to visit you, if you choose to have one. An independent visitor 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. You may choose to have one for example if your family cannot keep in touch or if you don't have much contact with people outside of your placement. They aren't employed by your local authority but they do have to have checks done on them to make sure they are safe people to work with children and young people.

If you want to have an independent visitor you should be able to meet them first before the decision to appoint them is made. You should be involved in deciding what information they can be told about you, as they do not have the right to look at your files.

Short breaks

The government has written some guidance about looking after children, especially 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. The 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 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 away from where you normally live.

Your Case Record

Your local authority must have a case record for you. The rules say what sort of information has to be kept in this. You can put things in this file as well if you want to. This could be things that are important to you like copies of photographs and school certificates.

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

It has to be kept safe and secure so only the people with the right to see it can look at it. That includes you.

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.



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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 put in 'DfE Care Planning Placement and Review Regulations 2010'.