

Information for adult volunteers



Do you have a few hours a month to help support a vulnerable young person? Could you make a difference in their life?

What is an Independent Visitor?

*"Someone who will listen to me"
"Would speak up for me if I can't"
"Someone who is patient"
"Would take me to the cinema"
"Will help me make decisions"
"Will ask how my day's been"
"Wants me to be independent"*

In Kirklees, there are many children and young people in the care of the local authority who would benefit from a positive relationship with a trusted, responsible adult.

An Independent Visitor is a volunteer over the age of 18 who has time to spend with one of these children or young people.

Independent Visitors are chosen by each individual child or young person to be someone that they can talk to and get along with.

An Independent Visitor is NOT a social worker or carer. They are not paid to spend time with the child or young person, they do it because they want to.



What does an Independent Visitor do?

By becoming an Independent Visitor, you can help give a looked after child or young person regular, independent adult support and guidance, as well as having some fun along the way. Independent Visitors:

- Must be committed to the safety and well being of young people
- Must have the skills to befriend, listen to and support young people
- Will receive a thorough induction, peer group support, ongoing supervision and development
- Have a fantastic opportunity to enhance their knowledge, skills and gain valuable experience
- Go on enjoyable activities and have fun!

Independent Visitors will visit their young person regularly. This might be more often to start with whilst you are getting to know each other.

Hopefully you will have lots in common such as hobbies and interests. You might wish to arrange to do these together.

An Independent Visitor is also someone who the child or young person could talk to and ask for advice. They may ask you to support them in their review or meetings at school.

Independent Visitors are volunteers and are not paid for the time they spend with their child or young person, but they can reclaim their expenses.

Who can have an Independent Visitor?

We would like all young people in care in Kirklees to have one, if they want one.

Sometimes there are young people who really need an Independent Visitor because they don't have much contact with their family or friends. We try to get them one first.

It can sometimes take a while for us to find each child or young person the right Independent Visitor. We need to make sure we have as wide a variety of people registered as Independent Visitors as possible in order to make more matches with our looked after children and young people.

How long can I be an Independent Visitor?

You can be an Independent Visitor for as long as both you and the child or young person are happy to keep visiting each other. This might be for a short time or for many years. We ask volunteers to commit a minimum of one year to the scheme.

We will keep checking with both of you to make sure everything is going well and you are both still happy.

How do I become an Independent Visitor?

The needs and safety of our looked after children and young people are paramount. For that reason, we need to make sure that all volunteers are good people who enjoy spending time with young people and who young people will enjoy spending time with.

All Independent Visitors complete an application form prior to being invited for an interview. We also do police checks, ask for references and run an initial training

course before you will be introduced to any children or young people. Once you are accepted as an Independent Visitor, you will receive ongoing training and support from a professional volunteer coordinator.



What happens then?

Each looked after child or young person is able to request an Independent Visitor for themselves. Once a child or young person makes a request, we find out the kind of person they would like to be their Independent Visitor and find one of our volunteers we think would be suitable. Information about the suggested Independent Visitor is then provided to the child or young person for them to look at.

If the child or young person agrees, a meeting is arranged between them, the proposed Independent Visitor and the Independent Visitor coordinator. This gives you the chance to meet each other and for the child or young person to interview you themselves and decide if they will enjoy spending time with you.

If the child or young person decides they are happy with the proposed Independent Visitor then you will be allowed to start visiting them.



Information in other formats

Kirklees Children and Young People Service is committed to ensure that its communication is clear, plain and available to everyone. This can be made available in languages other than English, audio DC, audiotape and Braille.

Please phone **01484 225293**
or email **chyps.marketing@kirklees.gov.uk**

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Kirklees Independent Visitors

For more information on the Independent Visitors scheme,
go to **www.kirklees.gov.uk/independentvisitors**.

Alternatively, please contact:

Chris Berridge

Independent Service Officer
Looked After Children Independent Service Team
Children's Rights Team
Brian Jackson House
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Huddersfield
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www.kirklees.gov.uk/care2listen