

## 1.14.4 Advocacy and Independent Visitors

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### Regulations and standards

#### England

- [Regulation 7: The children's wishes and feelings standard](#)
- [Guide to the children's wishes and feelings standard](#)
- [Regulation 22: Contact and access to communications](#)
- [Regulation 44: Independent person: visits and reports](#)
- [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/441643/Children\\_Act\\_Guidance\\_2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441643/Children_Act_Guidance_2015.pdf)
- [Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

#### Wales

- [Regulation 19: Information about the service.](#)  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1264/regulation/19/made>
- [Regulation 23: Information](#)  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1264/regulation/23/made>
- [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#)
- [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
- [Statutory Guidance For service providers and responsible individuals on meeting service standard regulations](#)
- <https://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/180201statutory-guidanceen.pdf>

### 1. Children's Rights Director and Advocates

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All children should have access to independent advice, from an independent advocate and should be provided with information about how to contact the **Children's Rights Director**.

In relation to advocacy, Homes managers must ensure that each child has access to an independent person whom they may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the home, (such as an advocate, children's rights officer, adult family member, personal adviser, befriender, visitor acting on behalf of an organisation carrying on the home, independent visitor, or mentor). The person can represent or assist a child at a meeting (for example a **Looked After Review**), assist in making a complaint or bringing a matter to the attention of staff and managers or the **Regulatory Authority**.

## 2. Independent Visitors

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### 2.1 When to Appoint an Independent Visitor

The **Placing Authority** must appoint an **Independent Visitor** where it appears to them that it would be in the child's best interest to do so.

Where an appointment is considered necessary, the child's social worker will identify whether there is a person already known to the child and independent of the local authority who may be suitable. If there is not, each authority will have its own procedures for appointment.

Independent Visitors must be suitably qualified and have undergone necessary checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service, Children's Services records and the **NSPCC**.

The child must be consulted about the appointment and if he or she objects, the appointment should not be made.

### 2.2 Duties of Independent Visitor

The independent visitor should undertake regular visits to the child and maintain other contact, by telephone and letter as appropriate.

The main purpose of the visits and contacts will be to befriend the child and give advice and assistance as appropriate.

## 3. Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

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Under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, the role of the **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** has substantially changed, in essence, the IRO has a responsibility to monitor the child's case in between Looked After Reviews.

For example:

- The IRO should be notified within 2 working days of a child becoming **Looked After**;
- Children should be told who their IRO is and how to make contact with him/her;
- The IRO must be consulted before a child is placed outside the area where the child normally lives;
- The IRO should be notified and consulted if a child persistently absents him/herself or has been missing from the home;
- Children have a right to contact their IRO if they are concerned about their placement or **Care Plan**.

Home's managers should be aware of these wider responsibility and should ensure that children are informed of their right to consult or notify the IRO; and Home's Managers should also consult the IRO if they are concerned about the child's placement.

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