Minimum Standards for Children’s Homes

Children’s version

Participation Network
Supporting the Public Sector to engage children & young people
When children are in a children’s home, they must be kept safe, be well looked after and given every chance to grow up to be the best they can.

Sometimes, when children have serious problems and are in danger of being hurt or hurting themselves, they need to live in a secure children’s home.

All types of children’s homes have to be inspected. This guide is for you - to let you know the things (called standards) that the inspectors look for.

If the home doesn’t live up to these standards, the inspectors will ask them to change.

These standards also apply to some of the places that children go to for short breaks or respite. Even though children only stay in these places for a short time, the standards make sure that you are well-looked after and cared for when you’re there.

If there is anything here that you’re not sure about you can talk to your key worker.
What inspectors look for ……

Standard 1 - Staff are listening to you
- The people who work in the home should ask you what you think and listen to what you want before they make decisions about what happens.
- If someone in the home does something wrong no-one else should be punished for it.
- You should have someone to speak up for you if you need it.
- If you need special equipment to help you speak up for yourself you should have it.

Standard 2 - Staff are helping you to feel good about yourself
- The people who work in the home help you to make the most of your chances as you grow up.
- You should get help to be proud of the person you are and to deal with your feelings.
- You should be able to make choices - like about how to spend your pocket money.

Standard 3 - The home feels like a proper home
- You are allowed to make mistakes and learn from them.
- You should have keys to your bedroom, be able to use the kitchen and go on the internet.
- If you need help to wash and dress you should decide how you want to be helped.
- You should know the rules and the police should only be called when there is serious trouble.

Standard 4 - Children are kept safe
- There should be no bullying in the home and you shouldn’t be hurt in any way.
- Staff must know how to keep you safe.

Standard 5 - Children who run away are helped
- Staff must warn you of the dangers of running away.
- If children run away they must be found and helped.

Standard 6 - Children know how to be healthy
- You must be able to see a doctor or dentist if you need one - and on your own if you are old enough.
- Staff must teach you how to eat good food, exercise and be healthy.
- If you have special health needs you must get expert help.
Standard 7 - Children can have fun
- Staff should help you to get out and about to play and do things you enjoy.
- If you go out as a group you should do fun things that everyone can enjoy.
- You should be able to visit friends and have them visit you.

Standard 8 - Children are part of the community
- Staff should help you be part of the local community - maybe by volunteering, getting a part-time job or joining clubs.
- If neighbours make complaints staff should help them sort things out.

Standard 9 - Children are doing well at school
- Staff must know what is in your education plan and you should have somewhere to do your homework
- When you leave school staff should help you to go to college or training or work - whatever you think is best for you.

Standard 10 - Children can meet people they care about
- Staff should help you to meet your family, other carers and friends outside the home - and give you somewhere private if you want to meet them inside the home.
- You should be able to have photos, emails, letters and phone calls from people you care about - and visit your family home if that is okay.
- If there are reasons that you shouldn’t see some people or go home then staff should explain and help you understand why.

Standard 11 - The home is a nice place to live
- The home should be well decorated and well looked after - if something breaks it should be fixed quickly.
- You should be able to come and go the same as other children who don’t live in a children’s home.
**Standard 12 - Children get help to move in and move out**

- You should visit the home before you move in and get lots of information about what it will be like to live there.
- You should get your own worker (called a key worker) to help you settle in and you should be able to ask for someone else if you don’t get on.
- You should get help to get ready when it’s time to leave.

**Standard 13 - Children know what happens in meetings about them and have a say in who goes**

- When adults meet to talk about how you are getting on in the home you should be able to join in.
- If you are not happy about someone going to the meeting you can let staff know.
- Staff will help you to get ready for the meeting and to deal with what happens.
- You should get a written note about what happened at the meeting and have somewhere safe to put it.

**Standard 14 - Older young people are helped to get ready to leave**

- Before you leave the home staff should have helped you learn practical things like cooking, doing housework and using money sensibly.
- You should also know how to deal with your feelings and how to have good relationships.
- If you need special health care when you leave this should be organised for you before you go.
- If you are going to use adult disability services you should be supported to go to the place and meet the workers before you leave - to make sure they can help you.

**Standard 15 - Children know what the home is for and how it can help them**

- Details of what the home is all about should be put in writing.
- A Children’s Guide, that all children can understand, should tell them everything they need to know about living in the home.
Standard 16 - The home is well run
- The home must be well organised and the staff should be able to work well with the children living there.
- Children have a say in running the home and what happens there.

Standard 17 - There are enough staff
- There should be enough staff to run the home smoothly - and they must be properly trained for the job.
- There must be rules about what will happen if a child says that a staff member has hurt them in any way.

Standard 18 - There are rules about what is written down about children
- You and your parents should be able to see what is written down about you and these records must be kept safe.
- There should be a life story of things that happen as you grow up in the home - to help you remember - and the home should keep a spare copy in case yours gets lost.

Standard 19 - Children using short break care are getting help and having a good time
- Children using short break services have the same rights and chances as other children and young people.
- They are well looked after and get all the help they need if they have disabilities.
- If the home is only for short breaks staff should maybe not wear uniforms or use buses that say it's a children's home.
- If you are in the home on a short break you should be allowed to keep your mobile phone.

Standard 20 - Children in secure children’s homes are getting help
- Children in a secure children’s home get help to deal with their problems.
- They should have the same rights and be as well looked after as children in other children’s homes.

Standard 21 - The home knows how to deal with complaints
- Children and families must know how to make a complaint.
- There must be rules about how long it takes to look into a complaint.
- The person in charge should look at all the complaints to see how the home could be made better.
- If someone has made a complaint, they must be told what has been done about it.

Standard 22 - The home is a safe place to live and work
- Staff must know how to deal with things like fires and accidents and how to stop them from happening.

- If you need special equipment during your stay in the short break centre or extra help with things like eating and washing, this is provided for you.
- If you are in the home for a short break you should be helped to get to and from school and get any equipment you need to do homework.