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Nottingham City SCB
Procedures Manual

5.4.2 Advocacy and Independent Visitors



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1. Advocates

An appointment of an **Advocate** for a **Looked After** child is appropriate where a child wishes to be represented at a meeting (for example a **Looked After Review**) or assisted in making a complaint or bringing a matter to the attention of the care provider, the local authority or the **Regulatory Authority**.

Information must be provided to all Looked After Children about how they can gain access to a suitably skilled **Advocate**. Staff have been informed that the Department has a contract with National Youth Advocacy Service, NYAS, for Advocacy and Independent visiting and how to make contact with the service.

Information should be included in the Children's Guide or provided to them at any time by their social worker or **Independent Reviewing Officer** especially where their wishes and feelings may not be in accordance with plans being made for them.

Assistance must also be given to enable an **Advocate** to be appointed for the child for example by approaching the independent organisation of the child's choice if requested to do so.

2. Independent Visitors

2.1 When to Appoint

An appointment of an Independent Visitor for a Looked After Child must be made:

- ∞ Where it appears to be in the best interests of the child to make such an appointment.

A decision to appoint an **Independent Visitor** will usually be made at a child's Looked After Review except where the child is placed in secure accommodation, in which case arrangements must be made by the child's social worker for the appointment to take place as soon as practicable after the placement.

Where an appointment is considered necessary, the child's social worker will identify a suitable person to be appointed. The Independent Visitor may be a person already known to the child and independent of the local authority who may be suitable.

Before the appointment is made, the proposed Independent Visitor must have been checked with the **Disclosure and Barring Service** (DBS), local Children's Services and Probation records and have the agreement of the social worker's manager. The appointment must be confirmed in writing.

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 will have a duty to make 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 with the aim of promoting the child's development and social, emotional, educational, religious and cultural needs.

The Independent Visitor should also encourage the child to participate in decision-making.

The views of the Independent Visitor should be sought before each Looked After Review to which he or she should be invited if the child requests it.

2.3 Review of Appointment

The need to continue the appointment should be considered at the child's Looked After Reviews, and the child's wishes and feelings will be the main consideration in deciding the need for the continued appointment.

There is a Lead Service Manager who meets at least Quarterly with NYAS to monitor the delivery of the service.

Any issues regarding the delivery scheme can be referred to this manager.

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