

How do IVs support the Child's Welfare?

The IVs role is to promote the welfare of the young person and to be completely child-focused. Their purpose is not to make their own judgments about the care being provided by professionals but rather to listen and advise the young person and encourage them to participate in the decisions that are made about them. The IV is not intended to be a skilled advocate. If a young person is unhappy, the IV will signpost them on to the appropriate service.

How are IVs chosen?

All potential IVs are assessed by interview and during their training. The vetting process includes taking up references and having a satisfactory Enhanced CRB check. We may also ask for a health reference.



Who are NYAS?

NYAS is a national children's charity, with over 25 years' experience of providing advocacy and other services to children in care and children in need.

How can I make a referral?

Just contact your local IV Co-ordinator, at the address below, who will be pleased to guide you through the process.



NYAS Helpline

0300 330 3131

Weekdays 9am-8pm, Saturdays 10am-4pm

Independent Visitors

Information for Social Workers



All photographs are posed by models.

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What is an Independent Visitor?

Independent Visitors (IVs) are long-term adult befrienders to children and young people who are in care. They are unpaid volunteers receiving only expenses, who are interested in and committed to working with children and young people. IVs are independent of the local authority and trained and supported by their local NYAS Co-ordinator.

The aim of the IV is to befriend the child or young person, and offer friendship, stability, support, advice and encouragement on a one-to-one basis.

Who can have an IV?

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to provide IVs to children and young people in care, living in or out of the area, and who have little or no contact with their families. The child must agree to have an IV. The Children and Young Person's Act 2008 broadens this duty to include all children in care, if it is in their interests. To find out more contact your local NYAS Co-ordinator.

Won't this be just another adult in a young person's life?

For some young people, the only regular contact they have with adults is with their carers or with social work and other professionals. Having an IV who spends time just with them and is focussed on their needs can be invaluable. The IV is able to provide support throughout changes of placement or social worker, helping a young person with their sense of history and self worth. The IV also provides an additional, important safeguard for young people in residential care and in other placements.

What do IVs do?

IVs meet up with the child/young person monthly. Visits will be arranged with the child/young person and their carers. Initial visits may take place in the young person's home. Once the friendship is established, visits can include trips to local places of interest or other activities that the child or young person enjoys. The emphasis of the visits is not on providing treats, but building a long-term relationship. The child or young person will not visit the IVs home.

IVs are not a substitute parent or carer. They seek to compliment the vital role of Social Workers and carers in contributing to and promoting the young person's developmental, social, emotional, educational, religious, and cultural needs. IVs have a duty to remain "child focussed", although they may be sympathetic to the point of view of others involved in caring for the child or young person. Their role is to be open-minded and to question the things they are told by others, if they think they are not in the child/young person's best interests.



What about confidentiality?

Young people are assured of confidentiality with IVs, unless something is disclosed that places the young person, or someone they know at risk.

Do IVs attend Reviews?

The IV can, at the child's request, attend meetings and reviews to help and support the young person in expressing their views.

How long does it take to get an IV?

IV Co-ordinators take a lot of care when trying to match the right IV to the right young person. This may take some time, depending on the young person's requirements and the available IVs.

