

How does the Scheme work?

Initial contact meeting to discuss matches

(project worker, young person,
foster/kinship carer/ residential social worker)



Match meeting

(project worker, young person, foster carer/kinship
carer/ residential social worker and volunteer)



Fortnightly visits



First review (after six visits)



Ongoing reviews (every six months)



Exit Review

(when the young person is 18 years old,
or earlier if the young person or volunteer
chooses to end the match)

Throughout the match, the project worker monitors the match and provides ongoing support to the volunteer Independent Visitor. The project worker is invited to provide feedback on the match at the young person's LAC review and the volunteer Independent Visitor can attend it at the young person's request.

Contact Us

If you would like to refer someone to the Scheme, please contact the project worker before completing your referral form.

"It's really important to young people who have no visits from family and friends, as they view the IV as different from residential staff and other professionals."
(Residential Social Worker)

For information or advice, or to make an enquiry, please contact:

Independent Visitor Scheme
NIACRO
Amelia House
4 Amelia Street
Belfast
BT2 7GS

Phone: 028 9032 0157
Email: niacro@niacro.co.uk
Website: www.niacro.co.uk



Independent
Visitor
Scheme

Information for professionals

What is the Independent Visitor Scheme?

The Independent Visitor (IV) Scheme offers a volunteer-led independent befriending and support service to young people who are 'looked after' by the Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts and have infrequent or poor quality contact with a parent or person with parental responsibility for them.

A young person is matched with their volunteer for a minimum of one year, though this can be extended with the agreement of the young person and their volunteer.

Who is it for?

The Scheme is available to young people who:

- are 'looked after' as specified in Article 31(1) of the Children (NI) Order 1995;
- are under 18 years of age and under the statutory responsibility of the Belfast or South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts; and
- have infrequent, poor quality or no contact with their parents or a person with parental responsibility for them.

"It's given me the opportunity to take on a challenge, whilst having fun at the same time. I look forward to taking my young person out as no two visits are the same."

(Volunteer Independent Visitor)

What does an Independent Visitor do?

Independent Visitors are trained volunteers who provide support, encouragement and continuity of contact to young people.

The role of the Independent Visitor is to:

- provide continuity to a young person who may have experienced a succession of care placements in his/her life;
- work towards building a long term trusting and supportive relationship with the young person;
- act as a positive influence in the young person's life by promoting the social, emotional, educational, physical and cultural development of young people who engage with the Scheme; and
- support the young person to exercise their rights and participate in making decisions about their life, including attending Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews as appropriate.

"IV provides a reliable, long term relationship – restoring the young person's ability to trust adults."

(Foster Carer)

How is a young person referred to the Scheme?

The decision to refer a young person to the Scheme is discussed and agreed at the Looked After Child (LAC) Review or via the LAC chair.

"I've a great IV. He helps me with confidence and is a great role model!"

(Young Person)

Subject to the young person's consent, a referral is made by their social worker to the IV project worker, who matches the young person to a volunteer Independent Visitor based on the young person's needs and interests.

It is important to call the IV project worker before completing the referral form. They can discuss the young person's needs with you and how the Scheme could support them, as well as discussing any potential volunteer matches based on what the young person likes.

