

What happens now?

If it has been suggested that the young person in your care would benefit from an Independent Visitor (IV), their social worker will make a referral to the IV scheme. Following this, scheme staff will talk to the social worker to find out more information and will then make contact with you to arrange a convenient time to visit you and the young person. At this visit the young person will be asked about their interests and about the sort of IV with whom they would like to be matched. You as carers will also be involved in part of this discussion. As soon as a suitable visitor is available we will get in touch with you and the young person to tell you more about them. The young person will be introduced to them initially in their foster or residential home, so that you also will have an opportunity to meet them. Once the young person is matched and the relationship is underway, we will ask you for feedback on the scheme; your views as carers are important in helping us to evaluate and improve the service we provide.



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Wiltshire Independent Visitor (IV) Scheme

Information for carers



If you would like any further information or have anything you would like to discuss once the young person you look after has been matched up with a visitor, please contact IV scheme staff, details below.

Wiltshire Independent Visitor Scheme,
Wiltshire Council Conference and Reviewing
Service, County Hall, Bythesea Road,
Trowbridge BA14 8JN

Phone: **01225 713934** or **01225 713961**
Email: IVScheme@wiltshire.gov.uk

A bit of background to the Independent Visitor (IV) scheme...

Wiltshire IV Scheme was first established in 2000. Based within the conference and reviewing service, it is funded by Wiltshire Council, but run at 'arms length' from other council services.

The 1989 Children Act and 2008 Children and Young Person's Act state that all local authorities have a duty to offer IVs to those young people who are in care where this is considered to be in the young person's best interests.

Young people who are in care often experience a lot of disruption in their lives; there may be many adults involved in their care, but these may change over time, as social workers or other adults come and go, or as the young people themselves move from one placement to another. An IV is someone who can be a consistent figure in their lives, when there may be no one in their family who is able to take this role.



What is an IV?

All visitors are adult volunteers, who have some time and space in their life to spend with a young person who has asked to have an IV. They are just ordinary people, who bring lots of different interests and personal qualities to the scheme. All volunteers are assessed throughout their training, and are fully vetted and screened, a process which includes an enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS) check. They receive ongoing support from IV scheme staff once matched with a young person.

What do IVs do?

The role of the IV is to befriend the child or young person they are matched with, offering them consistency, support, advice and encouragement. They will usually visit every three or four weeks (although sometimes this may be more or less frequent, as a young person's circumstances change). Visits would usually last for a few hours at a time, depending on the type of activity which has been planned, but should always be arranged to fit in with existing commitments and routines. Activities might include such things as walks, cinema, playing a sport, visiting a place of interest, or just chatting over a drink or snack. What is done at each visit is decided on by the volunteer and the young person, but there is an emphasis on spending quality time together to build a relationship, rather than just having expensive treats.

Your relationship with the IV?

The Children Act regulations require that IVs are young person focused in their approach, although visitors will still be sensitive to the perspectives and views of other people. IVs will therefore treat you with respect, but will not engage in lengthy discussions with you, as this could compromise their independent role. What the young person talks about when they are with their visitor is confidential, and will not be passed on to anyone else outside the IV scheme without their permission, (unless something that they say suggests that they or another young person may be at risk).

The role of the IV is different from, but complementary to that of the carer. An IV's relationship with a young person is not complicated by the hassles of day-to-day life, which you may experience with them as their carer; their visits are best seen as an opportunity for the young person to step outside their usual routine, and to leave behind their problems for a few hours. It is important that a young person's contact with their IV is regular, reliable and planned, and we would ask you for your co-operation in making this possible. Visits should be looked upon in the same way as if they were contact from a parent or relative, and so should not be cancelled as a sanction if there are other issues going on within the foster home.