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# Your guide to children's residential care





## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank the children, young people, parents, staff and organisations who helped in the creation of the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres and this guide.

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# About this guide

This guide was developed by HIQA with children and young people with experience of care, and aims to show children and young people what they can expect from living in a children's residential centre. This is a guide to the *National Standards for Children's Residential Centres*. You can ask staff in the centre or your social worker for a copy of the standards, or read them on [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

## What are children's residential centres?

A children's residential centre provides a home for children and young people who come into care and ensures that their needs are met when they cannot live with their own family. These centres are run by Tusla or a voluntary or private agency.

### Who is HIQA?

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent organisation. We were set up to help improve the quality and safety of health and social care in Ireland, including children's residential centres. We are responsible for setting standards and inspecting services to make sure they meet the standards.



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## What are National Standards for Children's Residential Centres?

HIQA developed national standards for all children's residential centres to make sure that children and young people receive the best possible care and support while they live in care.

Standards describe what a children's residential centre should do to provide a good-quality and safe service. The standards describe to staff working with you what they need to do to improve the care and support they provide to you and other children living there.

The standards also show you and your family what to expect when you live in a children's residential centre, and what a children's residential centre should be doing to make sure that you are getting the care and support that you need. In this guide, we talk about the standards as they relate to your journey through care.



**The standards  
show you what  
should be in place  
to make sure  
you are cared  
for and supported.**

# Living in care

Everyone should be safe and well looked after while they grow up. If your own family cannot look after you or keep you safe, the government provides care for you.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for making sure that you are cared for properly. The Child and Family Agency, known as Tusla, is responsible for finding a place for you to live and making sure you are well looked after. Depending on the type of care they need, children and young people may be placed in a children's residential centre. The standards show you how you are cared for and supported. Centres are inspected to make sure that they meet these standards.





# Your rights on your journey through care

Your rights are very important. There are lots of different rights, but some are of special importance while you are living in a residential centre.

This guide sets out what you can do if your rights are not being respected. You can get more information in the full standards document which you can read on [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

Your rights include:



The right **to be safe** and free from all types of harm or abuse. This includes physical or emotional violence, injury, abuse or neglect, including bullying and discrimination about your race, sexuality or beliefs. The section on **'Your safety'** has more information on staying safe.



The right for your values and beliefs, such as your religion and your culture, **to be respected** by staff and the other children in the centre.





The right **to be involved in making decisions**. Your key worker and social worker should ask you what you think and listen to your views when making a decision that affects you.



The right **to see what is written down about you** in your files. You can ask to see any files that the centre keeps about you. There might be information in your file about other people that may have to be kept private, and your key worker would have to get their permission before letting you see that part of the file.



The right **to privacy**. You should have your own personal space, and a safe place to keep your personal belongings. You should also be allowed to make and receive messages, emails and telephone calls in private. If there are any restrictions around your access to social media, telephone or mail, you should know why and be involved in this decision.



The right **to make a complaint**, to have it followed up by staff and be kept informed about the outcome of the complaint.

# Before you move to a centre

Your **social worker** works with you to develop your **care plan**. Your care plan is used to find a centre that is suitable for you.

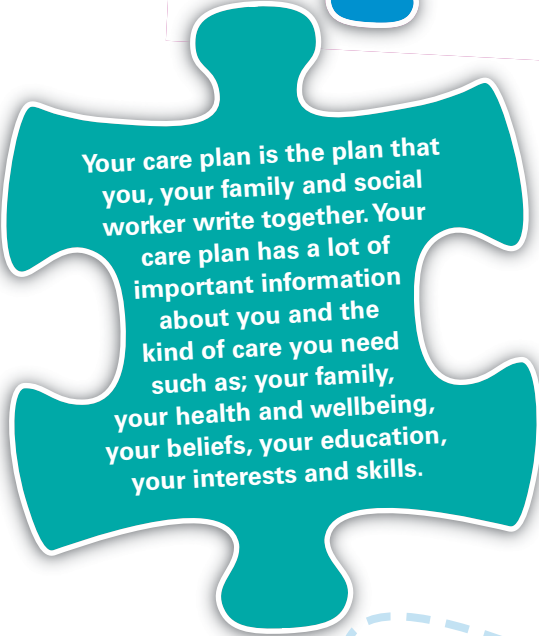
Before you move into a centre, your social worker will tell you what life is like there. You can visit the centre to meet with staff who work there and the other children or young people who live there before you move in. You may have to move to a centre before you get to know the staff and other children, but this should only happen in an emergency.

Staff in the centre will give you a leaflet on what you should know about living there. This includes information on how many other children live in the centre, who works there and how they are going to support you while you live there.

You can ask your social worker questions about the centre before you move in.



Your social worker is responsible for finding a children's residential centre for you to live in.



Your care plan is the plan that you, your family and social worker write together. Your care plan has a lot of important information about you and the kind of care you need such as; your family, your health and wellbeing, your beliefs, your education, your interests and skills.

# When you first move in:

## What the centre is like

The standards say that a children's residential centre should be like an ordinary home, with space for you to have privacy when you need it and space for you to be with other people to have a meal, to talk or watch TV.

Staff will try to make the centre homely, but it is also important that the centre is safe for you to live in. This means that there will be fire exit signs and other safety equipment in the house that you may not be used to seeing. There is also an office, where staff keep important information and organise the centre. When the centre is being painted or new furniture is being bought, you and the other young people living there help to decide what it looks like.

You will have your own bedroom where you can keep your belongings and things that are important to you safe, and you can also spend some quiet time there.

## Staff in the centre

The **person in charge** is the manager of the centre.

The people who work in a children's residential centre are called 'social care workers'. This means that they are trained to care for children who need some support at a certain time in their lives.

There may be other people who work in the centre, including staff who help with



The person in charge manages the day-to-day running of the centre, including making sure that staff are trained and are doing their job properly.

special activities, cooking or cleaning. You will be introduced to new staff members and have a chance to get to know them, unless there is an emergency and the centre needs to bring in a new staff member for a short time.

There should always be enough staff working in the centre to make sure it is safe for everyone, day and night. This means that staff work on different days and at different times — this is called 'shift work'.

Staff will get to know you, your likes and dislikes and your daily routines when you first move in.

Staff have regular meetings to make sure that they know what is happening in your life. They speak with your social worker to let them know how you are getting on.

Your **key worker** will help you to settle into the centre and get to know everyone. Over time, they will get to know you, your likes and dislikes and your daily routine. They will ask for

Your key worker has particular responsibility for looking after you while you are living in the centre.

Your placement plan has information about you, the kind of care and support you need, and anything you might need to stay well and healthy while you are living in the centre. The information in your care plan is used to write your placement plan. Your placement plan will be kept up to date by your key worker during your time in the centre.

your opinion on decisions that affect you and will take time to discuss these decisions with you. Your key worker will arrange for you to meet with your social worker to see how you are doing and what you might need. Your social worker and key worker will make sure that your parents are involved in your care, whenever possible.



Your care record helps everyone to make sure you are getting the kind of care you need.

You, your family, your social worker and staff in the centre have a say in your plan for living in the centre. This is called a **placement plan**.

When you move in, you and your keyworker will start a record of all the important things going on in your life. This is called a **care record**. This record is kept private and is only shared with people who need to know it to help, support and care for you.

Your key worker will help you to get into a routine for day-to-day things like taking care of yourself, going to school and taking up hobbies. Together, you will also start work on other areas of support like seeing your family and friends or dealing with the staff and other children in the centre. Your key worker will make sure that all the other staff working in the centre know what is in your placement plan and what support you might need. This includes details such as what you like to have for breakfast, what time you have to get your bus to school or what you like to watch on TV. It also includes important things like missing your family or dealing with relationships.

# Day-to-day life

## Family and friends

Your family and friends are welcome to visit the centre. This includes your parents, your granny, an aunt or uncle, or your brothers and sisters. There is space for you to see them in private.

If there is any reason why a person cannot visit you, staff will talk to you about this. They will explain the reasons to you and try to help you to understand this. Staff understand that this can be very difficult for you and will talk to you about how to cope with it. Your keyworker and social worker can review these decisions with you as part of the review of your placement plan.

You will be supported to make and keep friendships in school and in the community. Your key worker will help you to decide how and what to tell your friends about why you live in the centre.



You will be supported to make and keep friendships in school and in the community.



## Your safety, wellbeing and development

Your safety, wellbeing and development are really important to everyone working with you.

When you are settled in the centre, staff will talk to you in more detail about what you want and need while you are living there. Staff will also talk to you about your rights and help you to understand them.

If you feel your rights are being denied or you need to talk to someone outside of the centre, your key worker and other staff will make sure that you know about advocates who can support you. An advocate is someone who is not involved in your care but who acts on your behalf. They can be a relative, a friend or an independent person.





## Your safety

Staff in the centre will talk to you about your safety and will support you to stay safe. You and your keyworker will talk about any worries that you might have for your safety. Staff have a plan to follow if they are worried about your safety. It is important that staff teach you ways to protect yourself and keep safe when it is possible for you to do so.

The centre can only employ staff who have been checked by An Garda Síochána (Irish police) to make sure that you are always safe. The centre has policies (written documents) that all staff must follow to keep you safe. You can ask staff to see these policies and explain them to you.

You are helped and supported to understand your feelings and behaviour. Staff understand that you might feel angry or upset about living in the centre. This may cause you to behave in a way that puts yourself or others at risk. Staff have a policy that guides them when they are managing unsafe behaviour. You should know about this policy and understand how it is used.



Staff look out for anything that may put your safety at risk. This ensures they can act quickly to stop anything from going wrong. If an accident or incident happens in the centre, you are listened to and can discuss this with staff and the other children or young people living in the centre.

If something goes wrong, the centre looks into what happened so they can learn from it and take steps to stop it from happening again.

## Your wellbeing



Being healthy is about more than not being ill. There are different areas of your health that are important to look after – your physical, mental, social, sexual and spiritual health are all very important. You and your key worker will talk about what you need to stay healthy. Staff will support you to be healthy and to make positive choices about lots of things including diet, exercise, alcohol, sexual health and relationships.

If you need to go to the doctor, dentist or to see a health specialist you will be supported to get the care you need. Staff in the centre have access to your medical information so that they can make the right decisions about the best way to look after you if you are sick or need medical attention.

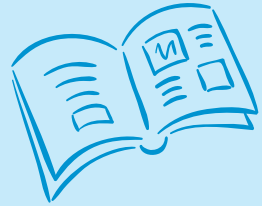
If you are aged over 16 you have the right to agree to or refuse surgical, medical or dental treatment.

## Your development

It's important that you are looked after and supported to develop your interests and skills while living in the centre.

As part of your placement plan, you and your keyworker will look at what you are interested in, what hobbies you have and what activities you like. Staff will help you to get involved in the local community and get to know other children or young people your age in the area, for example by joining a class or taking up other hobbies.

You are entitled to go to **school, college or a training course** during your time in the centre. Your key worker will talk to you about the kind of education or training that best suits you and that you want to do. You will be supported to do your best in education; including having a quiet space to do your homework or to study. Staff will attend meetings about your education and training and keep in contact with your teachers. This helps staff and teachers support you to do your best.



It is important that you talk to your key worker about any problems you might have in school or training and make a plan with them to help you. For example, you can ask your key worker about getting extra classes in a subject if you feel it would help you.

You and your key worker will discuss what you would like to do after you leave school or training and look at ways to achieve this. This is part of your care plan and you can review it regularly with your social worker.



# Getting ready to leave the centre

Staff will work with you to help prepare you to leave the centre. You will also be able to tell the centre what it was like living there.

## Moving to another care service

If you move to another care service, this will be based on your needs and the reasons will be explained to you by your key worker and social worker. Your key worker will make sure you are involved in the decision and are given information about your move. Your key worker will share any important information about you with the staff in the new service so that they can meet your needs.

## Leaving care

Preparing to leave care is an important step and you are involved in planning for this. It can be an emotional time, both exciting and a bit scary. Your social worker and key worker help you to plan for when you leave care. They write this down in an **aftercare plan**.



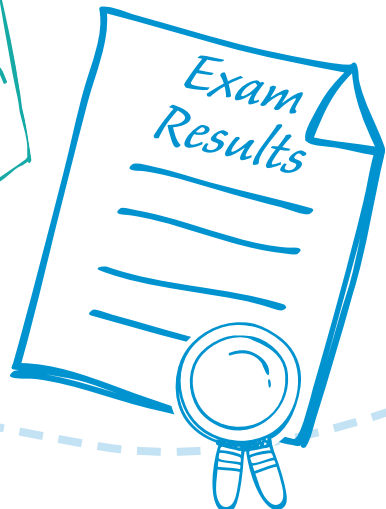
Your aftercare plan helps you to make the change from living in a children's residential centre to being an independent adult.

Staff will help you to develop the life skills you will need when you leave care. These skills include learning how to look after your health, learning to cook for yourself, how to pay rent and bills, and how to have positive relationships.

Your key worker and social worker will discuss and agree any plan for leaving care with you and your family.



Your key worker and the staff in the centre will make sure you have mementoes of your life such as photos and certificates, as well as important documents such as your exam results.



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## **REMEMBER**

You have the right to be safe, to receive the care and support you need and to reach your maximum potential. This does not change because you cannot live with your own family. When living in a children's residential centre you should be treated with dignity and respect at all times and your views should be considered when decisions that affect you are being made.



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