

# The National Standards for Residential Care - for Young People



DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH & CHILDREN  
AN ROINN SLÁINTE  
AGUS LEANAÍ

The National Standards  
for Residential Care  
- for Young People

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Words that have special meanings  
in the context of residential care  
are explained in the middle of the book,  
at the end of the section for younger  
children.

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# My information page

Your key worker or your social worker can help you to find any information you need for this page.

Name.....

Address .....

.....

Phone number .....

Family address.....

.....

Phone number .....

Centre manager .....

My key worker .....

My social worker .....

Phone number .....

Monitor for this area .....

Phone number .....

Health board inspector.....

Phone number .....

SSI inspector .....

Phone number .....

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The National Standards  
for Residential Care  
- for Young People

## Living in Care

Every young person needs and deserves to be safe and well looked after while they are growing up. If your own family, for whatever reason, is not able to look after you and to keep you safe, then it is up to the government to provide care for you.

The minister who is responsible for seeing that you are cared for properly is the Minister for Children, at the Department of Health and Children.

It is your local health board, however, who is actually responsible for finding a place for you and for making sure you are well looked after, and it is your social worker who makes sure that happens.

Children and young people who cannot be at home with their families and who need care are usually placed either in foster homes (possibly with family members) or in children's residential centres, depending on the kind of care they need.

***“The Child Care Act (1991) and the Child (Residential Care) Regulations (1995 and 1996) are the basis for these national standards and for the inspection of children's residential centres.”***

Residential centres are sometimes run by local health boards, and sometimes they are run by voluntary agencies or independent companies. Centres that are not actually run by the health board are answerable to their local health board for how they look after the young people in their care.



## Standards for Residential Centres

To make sure that all children and young people living in care are well looked after, the Department of Health and Children has put together a set of national standards for residential care centres.

These standards describe the proper way to look after young people in care, and they cover things like safety for young people and the kind of staff that is employed and how they are trained.

It is up to the health boards to make sure that all the residential centres in the country keep to those standards, no matter where they are and no matter who runs them.

The Social Services Inspectorate, which works on behalf of the Department of Health, and the local health boards both provide inspectors to check that the standards are being met.

These standards are all contained in an official handbook called National Standards for Children's Residential Centres. That book should be available in your centre, if you would like to read the standards in detail for yourself. Otherwise, you could ask your social worker to get you a copy, or get it yourself from the Government Publications Office.

The Department of Health and Children has also provided this young people's version of the standards, which was written specially with your needs in mind. We hope you will find it useful and easy to understand.

## Standard 1: Every residential centre should have a written statement on what the centre does

The people who run a children's residential centre have to think very carefully about the kind of centre that they are running.

For example, they need to decide whether they are providing a long-term care centre, or a short-term centre for children and young people who are waiting to move into foster care.

It is important that they think this through and make this information available in the form of a leaflet or brochure of some type, so that everyone knows what kind of centre it is.

This way, the people running the centre will have a clear idea of the kind of training their staff need, and social workers looking for a placement for a child or young person will know whether a particular centre would be a suitable place for that young person.

The people running the centre need to make sure their staff know what is in this leaflet, and they need to review it every now and then to make sure that the way they are running the centre is in keeping with what their leaflet says.

Young people going into care and their families should also be able to get a copy of this leaflet for their information.

This will help you to know what to expect when you go to live at a centre.

## Standard 2: Every residential centre should be properly managed and staffed

It is very important that residential care centres are well run so that they can provide the best possible care for the young people who live there.

Children's residential centres should be staffed and managed by people who are properly qualified.

They should have policies that are based on the law and on the regulations (rules) of the Department of Health and Children.

Residential centres should keep good records, so that if people who are caring for young people need to know anything about the centre or about how they are looking after the young people who are living there, that information is all available.

**“ A centre's policies are guidelines that explain how the centre has decided it will deal with various situations if they arise. These policies should be written down, so that they can act as a guide for staff, and so everyone knows what is the right thing to do when the situation occurs ”**

It is important that the manager who is in charge of a residential centre keeps a register of all the young people who live there or who are there for a short while. When a young person leaves to go home or to a new placement, the register should show when they left and where they went to. You may need information about your time in care in the future, and this information will all be kept safely for you.

The records that are kept about your time in care are called 'files', and these files are private. Your file can only be read by someone

who has particular permission to read it as part of their job.

For example, your social worker and staff at the centre need to be able to look in your file, because they need to understand everything about your situation, so that they can make sure you are looked after in the best possible way.

*“ You can ask to see your own file. There is more about that on page 10 ”*

Residential centres are also supposed to tell the health board if anything important happens to any of the young people in their care. For example, if you had an accident, or if you needed to go to hospital, then the residential centre should let your social worker know about it.

There should always be enough staff on duty to look after the young people, and the staff in residential centres should be good with children and young people. Staff have to be checked out to make sure they are suitable people to work with young people, and all staff should be trained in the work they have to do.

### **Standard 3: The health boards should appoint a person to monitor all children's residential centres**

It is each health board's job to make sure that all the children's residential centres in its area are properly run and are keeping to these national standards. To make sure this happens, they must appoint a person whose job is to keep a check on residential centres. This person is called a 'monitor'.

The monitor must check out the centre regularly

- to make sure it is well run
- to make sure it is a safe and healthy place for the young people who live there
- to see that the young people are being treated well
- to check that there are enough staff
- to make sure that the staff are doing their work properly
- to talk to the young people themselves and find out if they are doing OK

The monitor also has to write a report for the health board about how well the centre is doing its job.

You should know who the monitor is for your health board area, and you should meet him or her from time to time.

## Standard 4: The rights of young people should be reflected in what happens in children's residential centres

All young people have rights as human beings and as children. Young people living in care also have particular rights to do with the way they are being looked after.

The people who look after you should make sure you understand and get your rights.

One of your most important rights as a young person in care is that you should be consulted when decisions are being made about your life. That means that staff in your residential centre and your social worker should talk to you to find out how you feel about decisions that need to be made about your life in care.

Another important right you have is the right to complain.

If you have concerns about anything to do with your care, you have the right to say so, and the staff of the residential centre should listen to you. If you want to make a complaint, they should explain to you how to do this, and help you with it.

If you make a complaint, the staff at the centre should write it down or get you to write it down, and they should make sure it is kept on file. They should investigate your complaint, and see what they can do to help to fix it. If there is a delay in investigating a complaint, they should let you know about it. And when the complaint is resolved, they should write down how it worked out, and whether you were happy with the result, and they should keep that on file also.

“If you would like to find out about your rights, you could read the UN Convention on Children's Rights or you could ask the National Children's Office for advice”

If your complaint is about the centre or the staff of the centre, you should be able to make your complaint to somebody outside the centre (to your social worker, for example), and the staff at the centre should be ready to help you to do this.

If a complaint is serious, the centre should report it to the health board.

If you feel that you need to take your complaint to a higher authority you could get in touch yourself with the child care manager of your local health board.

If your complain is not being dealt with you can get in touch with the ombudsman for children (see page 27 for details).

Another right you have is the right to see what information is being kept on file about you. The residential centre staff should make sure you know about this right.

However, there could sometimes be parts of your file that you are not allowed to read. Some things in your file might be very upsetting and, depending on your age, it might be better for you not to see them until you are older.

Also, there might be things in your file that refer to other people (your parents, for example). It is important that other people's privacy is respected, and so the people looking after you would need to get their permission, before letting you read that part of the file.

## Standard 5: There should be a written care plan for every young person in care

When you are taken into care, the people whose job it is to look after you need to think very carefully about what is best for you. They need to talk to you and your family about this too, and when they have listened to what you have to say and what your needs and hopes are, they are expected to make a plan about how you will be cared for.

This is called your 'care plan', and your social worker should show it to you and your family and talk to you about it.

### what is in your care plan

Your care plan contains lots of information about you and the kind of care you need and how you hope to live your life in the future. It should mention any particular problems or needs you might have, for example, if you need counselling, or if you have a medical condition like asthma or diabetes or a disability, or if you need to have certain kinds of food, or if you are a member of a particular church or religious community.

Another thing it should mention is the things you are good at and want to develop. For example, you might want to have music or swimming lessons or you might want to keep up a sport that you play.

Your care plan should also say if you have particular wishes about your care, for example, if you would like to be in a placement

***“ You might not be able to have exactly what you want, but you should at least be asked what you would like and it should be written down ”***



together with your sisters and brothers,  
or if you would like a particular member of your family  
to be able to come and visit you.

One of the main things that needs to go into your care plan  
is the kind of care that is suitable for you.

It is important that the social workers are clear about this,  
and that they do everything they can  
to find you a placement that will suit you.

It is also important that you understand  
why a particular placement has been chosen for you  
and that you know what to expect.

When you go to live in a residential centre,  
it is your social worker's job  
to make sure the staff there have the information they need  
about you and your care plan.

It is the job of the staff of your residential centre  
to help you to settle into the centre,  
and to tell you all you need to know  
about the house rules  
about things like pocket money,  
bedtimes, making phone calls, visits and so on.

Your care plan should also say  
what kind of education you need and would like to have  
and, if you have any health problems,  
what sort of health care you need.

It also contains information about your day-to-day life  
in the centre you are living in at the moment  
and about what suits you best.

It's important to have all this written down,  
because that helps everyone  
to make sure that you are getting the kind of care you need.  
This is especially important

if you move from one placement to another,  
or if there are changes in care staff and social workers.

The new people who are working with you  
need to get the full picture about your needs,  
your life in care and the plans for your future.

Having the care plan written down also helps you and your family to think about how your time in care can be used in your best interests, and to plan for your future.

All this information is kept in a special, private file, and you can see it if you want to.

## reviewing the plan

Every now and then you should be able to take a look at your care plan, together with staff and your social worker, and see how it is working out. You can make changes to it as you grow up and your needs and hopes develop and change. After all, the things that might be very important to you when you are twelve might not be important at all when you are fifteen, and your care plan needs to keep up with changes in your life.

Changes to your care plan are made at review meetings, when you and your social worker and the staff of your residential centre get together to review your care plan and see how it is going. Your parents will usually be invited too, and even if they don't come to the meeting, they will get a letter explaining what went on.

Review meetings are usually called by your social worker at regular intervals, but you or your family can also ask for a special review meeting to be held if you would like to discuss any aspect of your care.

## keeping in touch

Young people in care usually like to keep in touch with their families and to see them regularly.

As long as it is safe for you to have visits from your family, your social worker and the staff of the residential centre should work out arrangements for these visits with you. These arrangements should be written into your care plan.

You might like to see other people in your family, apart from your parents –  
your granny or an aunt or uncle  
or your brothers and sisters,  
or even a family friend or neighbour.

You might also like to keep in touch with or have visits from people who have cared for you in the past.

You should discuss this with the staff and they should do their best to keep you in touch with whoever you would like to see.

If there is a reason why you can't see a particular person in your family, your social worker and the staff at the residential centre should explain this to you, and they should write this explanation into your care plan.

### **role of the social worker and staff**

When you are living in a residential centre, it is the staff there who look after you every day.

They should be good with young people

and be good listeners.

They should keep an eye on you and make sure you are OK,

and if they think you have a problem, they should try to sort it out for you, or help you to sort it out for yourself.

It is important that you also have somebody outside the centre that you can talk to if you need advice or help or if there is something about your care that you need to discuss. That person is your social worker.

*“Of course you can talk to your family and friends about things in general, but your social worker is a good person to talk to about anything to do with your care”*

It is your social worker's job to draw up your care plan and keep it up to date, and make the arrangements for review meetings. Your social worker should also come to see you every now and then and check that you are doing all right.

Social workers and care staff should work together to make sure that you are well looked after, and to make sure you get everything you need for your health and well-being and for your education.

### leaving care

You will eventually leave the centre you are in. Maybe you will go to a foster family or to another care placement, or you might go home to your family, or you will leave when it comes to time to go to college or get a job and start to make your own life.

Leaving care is a very big step, and it is important that you have proper plans in place, which will help you to settle into the next phase of your life.

Preparations for leaving care are an important part of your care plan, and you should be involved in making these preparations, along with care staff and your social worker.

For example, you and your carers will need to discuss where you will live, whether you would like to come back to the centre that has been your home, for visits, especially at Christmas or on other important occasions, and who you can talk to if you need advice after you leave the centre.

Leaving a place where you have grown up can be a very emotional experience, and staff should help you to come to terms with this change in your life.

They should make sure you have mementoes of your time in care – things like photographs and maybe videos or tapes of your friends and the staff who have looked after you – and they should help you with the changeover to your new life.

Different areas will have their own arrangements in place to help young people leaving care and setting up on their own. Your social worker should tell you what kind of help is available for you and help you to get the things and the advice you need.

## **Standard 6: Staff should relate to young people in an open and respectful way, and young people in care should have the same opportunities as other young people of their age**

### **respect and support**

Your needs and preferences should be respected by staff in the residential centre, and you should feel that there is an adult you can trust who will understand and support you, especially if you are feeling low or confused.

All young people in care are entitled to respect, and they should not be treated unfairly because of their race, culture or gender or because they have a disability. There should be a positive attitude in the centre to people's differences, and everyone should be encouraged to be proud of who they are.

### **everyday life in a residential centre**

Living in care should be as much like living in a family as possible. You should be able to have birthday parties, like other youngsters, and you should be able to take part in sports or whatever your hobby is.

Care staff should encourage you to take an interest in your appearance and help you to choose your clothes, and they should make sure that the things that are precious to you, like photographs or certificates and medals, are kept safe for you.

Meals should be social occasions,  
with everyone joining in,  
and there should be healthy and tasty food.  
If you are a vegetarian,  
or if you need special foods,  
for example if you have food allergies,  
or if your religion does not allow you to eat certain kinds of food,  
then you should be able to get food  
that is suitable for you.  
You should be able to make yourself a sandwich  
or help yourself to something from the fridge  
if you are hungry,  
and you should be encouraged to cook sometimes  
and to develop healthy eating habits.

### **behaviour and sanctions**

Staff should do their best to help young people  
to take responsibility for their own behaviour,  
rather than just punishing them when things go wrong.

The care staff and the young people  
should talk about the kinds of behaviour  
that they feel are acceptable,  
and together they should decide  
on a code of behaviour for the centre.

That way, the young people living in the centre  
will understand the kind of behaviour  
that is expected of them,  
and they can encourage each other  
to behave well and make life pleasant for everyone.

There will be consequences if you misbehave, of course,  
but whatever the sanctions or punishments are,  
you should know what to expect,  
and the sanctions should be fair.  
You should never be slapped or hurt in any way  
as a punishment,  
and you should never be humiliated  
or made to feel bad about yourself.

The centre should have a written policy on how they manage misbehaviour and they should keep a record of what happens when young people misbehave.

Sometimes a young person who is very upset and angry can get badly out of control and may need to be physically restrained. (That means a member of staff physically holds the person while they are in a very angry state.) Physical restraint should not be used as a punishment, but only to protect the young person, other children in the centre, or staff members. Care staff should be properly trained so that they can use physical restraint without hurting the angry young person and without getting hurt themselves.

The residential centre should have a written policy on physical restraint, and all the young people living in the centre should know what it is.

When physical restraint has to be used, staff should write down what happened and report the incident to management. They should also let your social worker and your parents know about it if you have been involved in the incident.

There also needs to be a written policy on what to do if a young person runs away, and this needs to take into account each young person's circumstances. This policy should say who should be told if a young person runs away, and what should happen when they come back.



## **Standard 7: Children’s residential centres should be places where young people are safe from harm and where there is an open and supportive atmosphere**

Some young people may be placed in residential centres because they have been in unsafe situations in the past, and possibly they might have been abused or neglected at home.

The whole idea is to get them away from these problems and give them a place where they are safe.

For that reason it is especially important that residential centres are places where young people are completely safe from harm and where there is no danger to them.

Residential centres need to have clear written policies about how the young people who live there are protected, and the staff need to know about and understand these policies.

Centres need to make sure that members of staff are safe people to have working with young people.

They do this by checking with the guards, for example, and with places staff have worked in before.

Centres need to have written guidelines on what is acceptable contact between staff and the young people who are in their care.

Staff need to be properly trained in child protection and there need to be plans in place to deal with any allegations of abuse or neglect, past or current, that a young person in care might make, either about staff in the centre itself or about people outside the centre or about other young people living in the centre.

Staff need to make sure that there is an open and supportive atmosphere in the centre. They need to make sure that you have your privacy and are able to keep in touch with your family, as long as that is safe for you.

They should also make sure

that you understand your rights and know about groups and organisations (like IAYPIC) that might be supportive to you, especially if you have any worries that you need to talk to someone about.

“ *There is information about IAYPIC and other organisations that might be helpful to you on page 27* ”

## **Standard 8: Social workers and residential centre staff should make sure that the young people in their care have access to suitable education**

Every young person is entitled to an education, and while you are in care you should go to school or college like other young people of your age.

Staff should have a positive attitude to education, and help you to develop the same kind of attitude.

It is a good idea if you can stay on at the same school you were at before going into care, so that your education is not disrupted, and the people looking after you should try to make sure that happens.

Not every young person needs or wants the same kind of education.

Care staff should help you to choose the kind of education that suits you, and they should help you to do your best and encourage you to see it through.

They should take an interest in your education and go to school meetings, and they should invite members of your family to attend school meetings too, as long as you are happy about that.

They should make sure you get any special help you need if you have a problem at school.

They should make sure you do your homework and help you with it if they can.

And they should make sure that you have a quiet place to study.

Your centre should have good supports for your school work, things like good reference books or a computer.

If there is no internet access in your centre, you should be able to go to a library or an internet café to use the internet.

When you are coming to the end of school, they should encourage you to go on to higher education or training, and they should help you to choose what you would like to do after school.

## **Standard 9: Young people in care should get the kind of health care they need and should be encouraged, as they grow older, to make their own decisions with regard to their health**

When you go to live at a centre, you usually have a check-up, especially if you have any health problems, or if you or the staff think you might have a health problem.

You should get whatever medical treatment you need, including going to the dentist and getting your eyes tested or any kind of special treatment that might be necessary. You should have your own medical card to cover all your health care and medication.

Care staff should keep a record of any health problems you have, any medication you take or have taken, and especially of any hospital care you have had. Staff at your residential centre should talk to your doctor and fill him or her in on any information they have about your medical history and your health needs. The people who are caring for you all need to know the full story about your medical situation, so that they can make the right decisions about what is the best way to look after you if you get sick.

It is usually a good idea if you can still see your own doctor when you go into care, instead of having to change. Your own doctor will know your medical history and understand any health problems you have, and you will probably feel more comfortable with that.

If your doctor is a man, but you would prefer to see a woman doctor (or the other way around), staff at your residential centre should make arrangements for you to change doctors.

Doctors and staff should consult you about your health care, and if you need special treatment of any kind. Your parents should usually be asked for their permission and your social worker should also be consulted – except of course in an emergency, where this might not be possible.

As you get older (16 and over), you should be asked for your consent for treatments and medical procedures like operations.

Residential centres should be health-conscious.

There should be good, nourishing food, and the centre should be a no-smoking area.

Staff should encourage you not to smoke outside the centre as well.

If you do smoke, they should give you all the help you need to give it up.

There should be one person on the staff of the centre who is specially responsible for talking to you about your health, and also about things like relationships, physical and sexual development, and the danger of sexually transmitted diseases.

## **Standard 10: Residential centres should be in suitable and well-maintained buildings**

Residential centres should be safe and secure,  
warm and comfortable,  
well furnished and well lit,  
with enough space for all the people who live there.  
The health and safety and fire regulations  
should all be kept to.

Staff should have training in fire prevention,  
and there should be regular fire drills.  
Some members of staff should also have training in first aid.

The house should be properly looked after and cleaned,  
and it should be as much like  
an ordinary family home as possible.  
You should have your own room,  
and there should be somewhere  
for you to lock away your valuables safely.

There should also be a place for the younger children to play  
and for you to relax and listen to music or watch TV  
or do whatever you like to do  
when you are not busy with school work.  
You should be able to have your friends to visit,  
and there should be somewhere you can have visits  
from your family or your social worker in private.

If the house is being painted  
or new furniture is being bought,  
you and the other young people living there  
should be involved in deciding how it will look,  
especially if your own room is being painted or furnished.







# All About Me

You can fill in these pages if you like.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

My friends sometimes call me \_\_\_\_\_

My brothers and sisters are called \_\_\_\_\_

My best friend is \_\_\_\_\_

My hobby is \_\_\_\_\_

I support \_\_\_\_\_

My favourite player is \_\_\_\_\_

My favourite band/singer is \_\_\_\_\_

My favourite song is \_\_\_\_\_

My favourite TV programme is \_\_\_\_\_

My favourite film star is \_\_\_\_\_

My favourite subject at school is \_\_\_\_\_

I am really good at \_\_\_\_\_

When I leave school, I would like to be a \_\_\_\_\_

**If you have a particular health problem, or need to take medication, you can write it in here if you like:**

---

---

My doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

My dentist: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

My optician: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes:

Notes: