

Please share your views about placements in care

If you have direct experience of the care system – the government needs your views and expertise (deadline 23 June 2020).

The Department for Education is the part of government which makes rules about the care system. It especially wants to hear from 14-30 year-olds who are in care now or were in care in the past.

What's this about?

The government wants to make sure children and young people (up to the age of 18) in care who live in independent and semi-independent accommodation are happy, safe and well.

It plans to make improvements so that every child and young person who is in care has their needs met and their rights respected – no matter where they live.

Independent and semi-independent accommodation

This is usually known as unregulated. It includes hostels, foyers, flats, shared housing and supported living.

Independent and semi-independent accommodation provides support only and not care.

Living in care in non-family settings

Most children and young people in care live with foster families. But this isn't right or possible for everyone. That's where children's homes and independent and semi-independent accommodation come in.

Children's homes

Children and young people live in children's homes until they're 18, or sometimes older. The people who work in children's homes must **care for children and young people**. This care must fit the child or young person's age, needs and wishes and feelings.

Children's homes are **regulated**. They have to follow a set of legal rules, known as regulations. They have to be registered with Ofsted and they are inspected to make sure they follow these rules.

Independent and semi-independent accommodation

Children and young people live in independent or semi-independent accommodation until they're 18, or sometimes older. **Whatever their age, they can only receive support – not care.**

Independent and semi-independent accommodation is unregulated at the moment. This means there are no national rules – for example about the quality of accommodation – and it is not inspected by Ofsted.

As you can see from the boxes above, there are three main differences between children's homes and independent and semi-independent accommodation right now: **1)** relating to care; **2)** relating to rules; and **3)** relating to Ofsted.

For teenagers, care in a children's home includes:

- ⇒ Having adults around all the time, looking out for you and 'being there' for you
- ⇒ Having meals cooked for you, or cooking together
- ⇒ Having adults who'll do family-type things with you – like listening to music, playing board games, going for exercise or watching films together
- ⇒ Having adults close by who notice when you need someone to talk to
- ⇒ Having adults who know you well, and can help you when you're feeling upset or stressed
- ⇒ Having family-type rules around going out, keeping in touch and staying safe
- ⇒ Having someone to take you to college on your first day, and to go to parent/carer evenings
- ⇒ Having someone to help you with your homework, or to do projects with
- ⇒ Having someone to help you make dental or medical appointments (and going with you if you want them to)
- ⇒ Having adults who can go with you to other important appointments
- ⇒ Having someone to speak to and give you guidance about relationships and growing up
- ⇒ Having adults who'll help you prepare for, and attend, university and job interviews
- ⇒ Having adults who encourage your hobbies and interests
- ⇒ Having a fuss made of you when it's your birthday
- ⇒ Having adults around to celebrate your successes
- ⇒ Helping you look after your bedroom, and keeping all the other areas nice where you live
- ⇒ Having adults who you trust to speak on your behalf or who find someone to be your advocate (to help make sure your views are taken seriously and your rights are protected)
- ⇒ Having help with getting back in touch with your family, if this is what you want.

Above all, care is all of the relationships and connections between young people and adults who live and work in children's homes. From this, comes the feelings of being safe, valued and that you really matter.

Why is the government planning to improve things?

The government is concerned that teenagers living in independent and semi-independent accommodation are not always happy, safe and well.

What might the government change?

The next page gives you the government's main ideas for making things better.

For those under the age of 16

The government suggests:

- Banning the use of independent and semi-independent accommodation for teenagers under the age of 16. This means they will always live in places where they receive care.

For those aged 16 and 17

The government suggests:

- All independent and semi-independent accommodation to follow nationally agreed standards, which is a list of rules the accommodation would have to meet. These would cover four things – what the accommodation plans to provide to young people; the quality of accommodation; support to young people; and the protection of young people;
- To make councils contact the police before making a placement to check if they have any concerns about the location or accommodation;
- Independent reviewing officers (IROs) to check that teenagers are living in suitable accommodation; and
- To give Ofsted more power to make sure those who run independent and semi-independent accommodation are sticking to the legal rules. The main rule is if people working there give care, the place must be registered as a children's home.

Please send your views by 23 June

You have the direct experience and knowledge which the government needs to make things better.

Please send your views here: CSCUnregulated.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk

What happens after the deadline?

After the deadline, the government will look at what people have said – both about the government's ideas and any new ideas.

After that, the government will write a report which says what people – including children and young people – have said, and what the government will do next. This report will be published on the official government website where everyone can read it.

The government's response will list all the organisations and groups who have given their own views, as well as those who helped put the government in touch with children and young people.

**Thank you for helping the government work out what's best
for children and young people in care.**