

## The Right Side of Care

# Participation and Engagement, Advocates and Independent Visitors

The leaflets in this pack have been developed with children and young people from Wirral to give you some information when you first become looked after. You can also visit our website for children looked after, young people and care leavers: [www.therightsideofcare.com](http://www.therightsideofcare.com)

# Participation and Engagement service

## What is the participation and engagement service?

The participation and engagement service aims to:

- Make sure children looked after and young people have a voice in decisions made about them.
- Represent children and young peoples views locally, regionally and nationally.
- Develop links for children looked after and young people to contribute towards the development of the children and young peoples department
- To make sure that services for them are relevant to their needs
- Develop projects locally, regionally and nationally
- Ensure children looked after are consulted around service delivery and are involved in the recruitment, selection and training of social care staff

# Care Councils

The Participation and Engagement service leads three groups, the children in care council (CICC), the care leavers council (CLC) and the care leavers council 21+ (CLC21+).

These groups are made up of young people who have all been in care, who have had different experiences and would like to make a change.

The CICC and CLC'S are always looking for new members. They meet once a month to make sure your views and ideas are listened to by those making decisions about you.

They are involved in lots of interesting projects that make a difference for young people who are looked after. It could give you the chance to meet new people and have your voice heard.

The CICC and CLC's also contribute to recruitment, training and selection of professionals in areas that effect you. All children looked after are consulted about these big decisions.

**If you would like to join,  
contact us by:**

E-mail: [lac@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:lac@wirral.gov.uk)  
Telephone: **0151 678 1936**

# What is an Advocate?

An advocate is an independent person who provides support to children and young people who are looked after or care leavers, assisting them to express their views, wishes and feelings. They will listen to you and help you to understand your rights. They will enable you to explore your choices and options, help you to make informed decisions and make sure that your voice is heard.

An advocate can support you to participate in decisions and processes that involve you.

## Issues that an advocate could support you with:

- Your meetings and meetings about you
- Transition from children's services to adulthood
- Leaving care
- Problems with where you live
- Problems with your family time arrangements
- Help you make a complaint

## Who can have an Advocate?

If you are child looked after or care leaver from Wirral, you can request an advocate up to the age of 24. You can have an advocate if you are placed out of borough or in secure accommodation.

# How you can get an Advocate?

Your social worker, personal advisor and independent reviewing officer will talk to you about the advocacy service. You can also get details from the participation and engagement team or on their website:

[www.therightsideofcare.com](http://www.therightsideofcare.com)

## What you can expect from an Advocate?

An advocate will arrange a visit at a time and place that suits you. They will talk with you so you can decide how you would like to be supported to share your wishes and feelings with people making decisions about you.

An advocate will talk to you about if you want to attend your meetings. If you do, an advocate will meet with you beforehand to help prepare you with what you would like to say. They will also support you throughout the meeting.

If you don't want to attend your meetings, you can talk with your advocate to discuss and agree what information you want to be shared at the meeting and your advocate can then attend on your behalf.

Once the issues are resolved your advocate will talk to you to make sure you are happy with the outcome and check if you need any further advocacy support.

If you want to make a complaint, your advocate can help you to write the complaint and will support you until the complaint is resolved.

# Independent Visitor Service

## What is an Independent Visitor?

An independent visitor is a adult volunteer who comes to see you regularly. You can talk about anything you want or just ask for advice.

Independent visitors are there to build long-term relationships with, but they are not a social worker or carer they are there just for you.

They will spend time getting to know you and will do activities with you that you enjoy. You can also decide what type of person you'd like to have as your independent visitor.

The service works with children and young people aged from 6 to 21 years old, who are looked after by the local authority.

# What can I do with an Independent Visitor?

This all depends on what you would like to do!

You could do activities that you know you already enjoy or you could go to new places and find new activities or clubs that you might enjoy together.

## How can this help me?

- Someone to spend time with you
- Someone to listen to you
- Someone to have fun with
- Someone other than your carer or social worker to chat to about anything that is important to you
- Someone to talk to who won't judge you
- Someone to talk through problems with
- Someone to enjoy different activities with, like a hobby or interest

# Some useful contact numbers

## **Childline**

Tel: 0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## **Childrens Commissioner for England**

Tel: 020 7783 8330  
[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

## **Childrens and Young People's Participation and Engagement Team**

Tel: 0151 678 1936  
Mobile: 07799 861 764

## **Childrens Complaints Officer**

Tel: 0151 666 5677

## **Bullybusters**

Tel: 0800 169 6928  
[www.bullybusters.org.uk](http://www.bullybusters.org.uk)

## **Ofsted**

Tel: 0300 123 1231  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## **Wirral Council Central Advice and Duty Team (CADT)**

Tel: 0151 606 1008

## **Wirral Council Emergency Duty Team:**

Tel: 0151 677 6557