

Independent Visitor Scheme Information Sheet

North Yorkshire Youth Independent Visitors Scheme

North Yorkshire Youth is running an Independent Visitor scheme for children and young people who are looked after by North Yorkshire local authority and are likely to be living with foster carers or in a children's home.

Who will the scheme support?

Initially priority will be given to young people aged 10-17 who have little or no contact with family members. All Children who are looked after have the right to an Independent Visitor, if they request one and/or it is deemed in their best interest.

What does an Independent Visitor do?

The role of an Independent Visitor is to befriend a looked after young person to make a positive difference to their life. This provides the young person with the opportunity to develop a trusting, reliable and consistent relationship with an adult who will listen to them, offer one to one independent support and advice as well as supporting their involvement in fun social and leisure activities. The Independent Visitor can be a friend and/or mentor to the young person depending on their individual needs – most importantly the Independent Visitor is someone the young person can trust and enjoy spending time with. Independent Visitors visit a young person on a regular basis, and it is expected that this will be once a month. The visits can be for a couple of hours or for the whole day, depending on the planned activity.

Who can be an Independent Visitor?

Anyone over the age of 18 can apply to volunteer with the scheme. To ensure the independent role of visitors, we cannot accept applications from individuals currently working within North Yorkshire Local Authority Children's Social Care.

Independent Visitors do not need any formal qualifications but do need to be able to relate well to children and to have a genuine interest in the welfare of young people. You also need to commit to visiting a child or young person for at least two years. For some children, past relationships with adults have ended in disappointment so the establishment of a trusting relationship will form one of the main elements of the befriending role. This could be a slow process and will require patience and understanding. Most importantly, an Independent Visitor should be reliable and committed to visiting the child regularly.

Due to the current needs of the service, we are particularly keen to recruit male Independent Visitors. We are however happy to receive applications from anyone from any background if they feel they have something to offer a young person.

How do I apply?

The application process involves four stages. You need to successfully complete all stages to become an Independent Visitor. The stages are:

1. Complete the application form
2. Attend first interview
3. Attend two day training course
4. Attend final interview

A decision will then be made as to whether or not to appoint you subject to a clear DBS check and the receipt of two appropriate references.

If I am appointed as an Independent Visitor, what happens next?

During the application process we find out more about you as a way of helping to match your experience, skills and interests with the needs and interests of a young person. When we receive a referral which we think will be a good match for you, we will send you a brief written description of the young person and there will also be an opportunity to discuss their needs in more detail. If both you and the child are happy to go ahead, you will be guided throughout the matching up process by the scheme's co-ordinator. It can take some time to match Independent Visitors and therefore you do need to be prepared to wait until we receive a referral that is appropriate for you.

Who will support me?

The scheme's co-ordinator is there to offer support and answer any questions or queries you may have via telephone, email or face to face. They will maintain regular contact with you to ensure you receive appropriate support throughout your involvement with the scheme. In addition to this there are opportunities to receive regular training opportunities and networking opportunities with other Independent Visitors.

What does the training involve?

We are currently providing training over a period of four weeks. This includes some home study and one online training session per week. It covers the Independent Visitor role and responsibilities, maintaining boundaries and child protection and considers needs and possible issues affecting children and young people who are looked after.

What are the financial implications?

Volunteers are paid out of pocket expenses to cover mileage and any activities they do with the young person up to a value of £20.00 per visit.

For further details, please contact the Independent Visitor Coordinator on 07398 149496 email: bev@nyy.org.uk