

A monthly visit carried out by an Independent Person, under Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. The legislation does not prescribe or describe how to meet the requirements of the task, which is to 'form an opinion to whether children accommodated at the children's home are effectively safeguarded, the conduct of the children's home promotes the wellbeing of the children accommodated there, and to inspect the premises, records and recording'. In essence, safeguarding and the quality of care are at the core of the Regulation 44 task as the aim is to make sure that children live somewhere safe, in a healthy, happy environment they can thrive in.

Why is it important?

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 stipulates that the registered provider must have quality assurance arrangements in place. The registered manager at the children's home must ensure that an *independent person*, often known as the *independent visitor*, visits the home at least once each month. The Independent Visitor is a person separate from the line management of the home and care planning of the children who produces a report for Ofsted. This report covers leadership, resources, and staff skills in meeting the needs of each child. A typical report would include the following sections:

- How well the children and young people are helped and protected.
- The overall experiences and progress of children and young people.
- The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers.
- Any recommendations.

How do we do it?

This service is commissioned and is independent of Portsmouth City Council.

The visits are either announced or unannounced and involve discussions with the children and young people, as well as the staff. A verification process occurs through additional contact with parents and other key people such as IROs, social workers or other partnership agencies involved.

Records such as logs on daily routines, sanctions and restraint should be viewed by the independent visitor. This should help create a picture of how the home is being run and whether the children are safe. Issues to take into consideration include:

- Sanctions imposed and whether they are appropriate to the recorded incident
- Physical intervention
- Fights/incidents between residents
- Physical/mental health of children and young people
- Incidents of self-harm
- Incidents of children missing from care without authority/information from return home interviews
- Ensuring that young people who are placed away from home have the opportunity to maintain relationships with parents, friends and relatives
- Substance misuse issues
- Police attendance at the residential children's home
- Involvement with gangs

In terms of children running away from care, independent visitors should check if there are patterns and try and ascertain whether the child is at risk of exploitation and whether measures are in place to support the young person.



One Minute Guide Reg 44 Visit



They will also consider if the home is ensuring that a young person's religious, cultural and dietary requirements are respected.

The independent person may want to ensure health and dental checks of the young people are up to date and that healthy eating and exercise is promoted and that there is support in place to meet their emotional needs. Furthermore, the independent person may want to ensure that the young people are being encouraged and supported to engage in regular education, training or employment.

Finally, the independent person may wish to ascertain what practical measures are in place to support young people about to transition from care and whether they are appropriately supported for this change.

Following the visit, the independent person will need to formulate a report and state whether children are being kept safe and their well-being is being promoted and file this with the appropriate authorities. This will be shared with the homes, the responsible individual (the deputy director) and also Ofsted.

The registered manager of the home and the responsible individual will respond to the report and any recommendations.

For more information:

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 -
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/regulation/44/made>

Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide>