The National Standards for Residential Care – for Children
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We have tried to make this book really easy to read, but we had to use a few special words.

The special words are explained in the middle of the book, on pages 25-32.

Thanks to the children of Creag Aran Centre for illustrations
My information page

You can write down the names, addresses and phone numbers of people you need to remember in case you need to contact them. You could ask your key worker to help you to fill in this page.

My name is ....................................................................................

I live in............................................................................................
...............................................................................................
...............................................................................................

The phone number is........................................................................

The manager is called......................................................................

My key worker is called...................................................................

My family lives at............................................................................

Their phone number is....................................................................

My social worker is called.............................................................

His/her phone number is..............................................................

The monitor for this area is called..................................................

His/her phone number is..............................................................

The inspector is called....................................................................

His/her phone number is..............................................................
The Social Services Inspectorate is at 94 St. Stephen’s Green, Third Floor, Dublin 2.

Their phone number is (01) 418 0588
Their website is www.issi.ie

The Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at 94 St. Stephen's Green, Third Floor, Dublin 2.

The phone number is (01) 475 7333
Their website is www.oco.ie
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The National Standards for Residential Care – for Children
Living in Care

If you are not able to stay at home with your own family, then you may have to go into care. This means that the health board must find a safe place for you and people to look after you.

Some children stay just a little while in care, while things get sorted out in their own family, and others stay longer.

You might be in care with a foster family (maybe with someone from your own family), or you might live in a house called a ‘children’s residential centre’.

The people who mind you when you live in a children’s residential centre are called the care staff. They look after you, instead of your mam and dad, while you are in care.

Even though you cannot live with your mam and dad while you are in care, the care staff and social workers should talk to your family and ask them what they think.
Your social worker
is a person outside the residential centre
who also helps to look after you.
Part of your social worker’s job
is to talk to you about
how your life in care is going.
Standards for Children’s Residential Centres

You might feel sad about leaving your own family and going into care, but the government wants you to be as happy as you can be while you are in care.

And so they have made some rules for the people who look after children in care, to make sure they do a good job of minding you.

These rules are called ‘standards for children’s residential centres’.

These standards are not rules for you to keep. They are rules for the staff. But the government thought that you should know about these rules too, so that you understand how things are supposed to be for you.

That’s why you have this book, written specially for kids in care, to explain the rules to you.
Residential centres should have leaflets about themselves

The first rule is that the people who are in charge of children’s residential centres must have a leaflet or a sheet of paper that explains all about the kind of place their centre is.

This might say that it is a small centre or a bigger one.

It might say that this is a centre for younger children or for teenagers.

Or it might explain that they have places for brothers and sisters to live together.

Then, when the social workers need to find a place for you, they can read all the things the different centres have written about themselves, and find out which would be the best place for you.
You and your family should get the leaflet about your centre so you can read all about it.
Every children’s residential centre should look after the children really well

The people who run children’s residential centres and the care staff of the centres need to be well trained and good with children.

There should always be enough care staff to look after all the kids properly and keep them safe.

The manager and staff need to write down all the important things that happen to the children in the centre, and tell the social workers about it, so everyone is able to look after the children properly.

Can I read all this stuff they write down?

The staff have to write down when children come to live at the centre and when they leave for a different placement or to go home, so everyone looking after the children knows where they are.

Yes, you can ask to see what the staff have written about you if you want to.
There should be a person who checks to make sure children’s residential centres are properly run.

There has to be a person who keeps a check on all the children’s residential centres in an area. This person is called a ‘monitor’.

Well, they do the same kind of job, but a monitor comes to the centre more often. The inspector only comes now and again.

Is a monitor the same as an inspector?

The monitor must visit the centres to make sure they are well run, and talk to the kids to see if you are safe and being well looked after.
People should listen to the children

All children need someone to talk to and who will listen to them.

You can talk to your family or your friends, but you should be able to talk to the care staff at your centre as well. You can tell them how you are feeling about things, and they should listen to you.

Every child in care has one particular member of staff whose job is to talk to them and find out how they are doing.

This person is called your key worker. Your key worker is a good person to talk to if anything is bothering you.

If you have a question, the staff or your key worker should answer it for you.

If you are not happy about something,
they should try and see if they can make things better for you.

If something is going to happen (like, if you were going to move to a new place, or get a new social worker, or have a visit from someone), the staff should tell you all about it before it happens, so that you are not scared or worried.

If you are very unhappy about something that has happened and you want to make a complaint, the care staff should help you to do that.

Sometimes the staff might think there is something you shouldn’t see until you are a bit older, but you can usually read most of your file if you just ask.

If you want to read what the staff have written in your file about you, you can ask to see it. Your key worker should show it to you and talk to you about it and explain it all to you.
Every child in care should have a care plan

Your social worker should talk to you and your family about the kind of care you need, and find out what everyone thinks.

Then the social worker writes down what is agreed between you and your family and your carers about what is going to happen about your care.

This agreement is called your care plan, and it has everything in it about your care. It goes with you wherever you go to live while you are in care, so that everyone who is minding you knows what is happening and understands what you need.

The care plan should say who your social worker is.

It should say if you have brothers and sisters that you would like to live with (though you might not be able to).
If you would like to see your mam or dad or anyone in your family, the social workers and staff should arrange for this, as long as it is safe for you, and this should be in your care plan too.

If you are sick or have a disability or if you need special medicines or special food, that should all be in your care plan. That way, everyone who is minding you knows about it and the care staff can make sure you get what you need.

If you need any special help at school, that should be in your care plan as well.

Your care plan should also say what things you are good at and what you like doing so everyone minding you remembers things like your football practice or your swimming lessons or whatever is important for you.
Every now and then, you and your family and your social worker and the care staff should get together for a chat about your care plan, to see how things are going.

These chats are called ‘review meetings’.

Usually your social worker decides when it is time for a review meeting, but you or your family can ask for a special review meeting if you want to talk about something.
Children in care should be able to live like other children

When you are living in care, you should be able to have a life like other kids of your age.

Your centre should be a happy place to live and you should be able to have birthday parties, like other kids. You should be able to play sport or do whatever your hobby is, and have your friends over to play sometimes.
The kids and staff should have their meals together, so everyone can join in. You should get nice, healthy food that you like and that is good for you.

The care staff should not be too hard on you if you don’t do as you are told. They should explain to you why you are not allowed to do certain things, and try to help you to be good, instead of being cross with you. If you do get into trouble, you should still be treated fairly.

Nobody should ever slap you or hurt you or make you feel very bad about yourself.

If anything like that happens, you should make a complaint about it.

You can read about complaints on page 26.
Children’s residential centres should be safe places

Children’s residential centres must be places where children are completely safe and where there is no danger to them.

The staff who work in residential centres have to be checked out, to make sure they are OK to work with kids.

If any of the care staff ever does anything that worries you or makes you feel bad, you should tell another grown-up about it, and they should make sure that you are kept safe.
Your key worker or the manager of the centre are good people to talk to if anything is worrying you, but if you would like to talk to somebody outside the centre, you should ask to see your social worker or another grown-up that you trust.

Your social worker should arrange to meet you by yourself, so you can talk in private.

Remember, you will not get into trouble for telling if something is bothering you.
Children in care should go to school

While you are in care, you should go to school, the same as you would if you were at home. It's a good idea if you can stay on at your old school, instead of having to change schools when you go into care.

Your care staff should have a good attitude to school, and encourage you to do your best and enjoy school.

They should help you with your homework, and they should go to school meetings and talk to your teachers, especially if you are having problems at school.
They should talk to your parents too, and they should ask them if they would like to come to school meetings as well.

If you need any special help at school, the care staff should talk to the teachers about it, and make sure you get whatever help you need.
Children in care should get the kind of health care they need

Children’s residential centres should be healthy places. There should be good food and no smoking.

If you have anything the matter with you, you should get everything you need to make you better and keep you well.

Staff should take you to the doctor if you are not well, and they should try to make sure you go to the same doctor you are used to going to.

If you need to get glasses or to go to the dentist, care staff should make sure you do.
If you have medicine to take, they should make sure you get it at the right time every day. They should write down all the medicines you have to take, so that other people who are minding you will know what you need and what you have taken.

If you have to go to hospital, the care staff should tell your mam and dad what has happened, and where you are and how you are doing.

Your mam or dad might have to sign a form if you need an operation, and they need to know if you are sick or having treatment.
Residential centres should be nice places

A children’s residential centre should be like an ordinary house. It should be a nice, safe, warm, comfortable, clean place, with enough space for everyone who lives there.

You should have your own bedroom.

You should have a place to play with the other children and a quiet place to do your homework in.
There should be somewhere where you can have visits from your family or your social worker in private.

The staff in the centre should know all about fire safety and some of them should be able to do first aid, in case any of the kids has an accident or gets sick.
Explanations

The hard words in this book, or words that have a special meaning, are explained here.

**care plan**
Your care plan is like a storybook that is all about you and about what is going to happen while you are in care.

Your social worker first talks to you and your family about what is the best way to look after you, and then writes the care plan down.

The care plan says things like what sort of care you need and what kind of school is best for you and when you get to see your family.

It gets changed as you go along and things change in your life.

You can read it if you like, or ask your key worker or your social worker to read it to you.

**care staff**
The people who look after the children in a children’s residential centre
are called the care staff. Their job is to look after you, and to make sure you get your meals and go to school and have clean clothes and see the doctor when you need to. They do the things your mam or dad would be doing for you if you were at home.

**children's residential centre**
The house where you live while you are in care and where you are looked after by care staff is called a ‘children’s residential centre’. Some people might call it a children’s home. It’s usually very much like an ordinary family house. The word ‘residential’ just means that people live there.

**complaint**
You can make a complaint if you are unhappy or annoyed about anything that happens while you are in care of if something bad happens to you or if a grown-up hurts or upsets you while you are in care.
The first thing to do is tell the care staff or your key worker or the manager of your centre or your social worker about the problem.

They might be able to help to fix it, but if they can’t do that, they should help you to make your complaint.

That means, they will write down what you tell them, and show it to people who can help to make things better for you.

If one of the care staff has been nasty to you, you should tell the manager of the centre about it, or you could tell your key worker or your social worker. If the problem is with your social worker, then you should tell one of the care staff that you trust about it.

It is part of their job to help you with your complaint.

file
A file is another word for a folder, where grown-ups keep pieces of paper that they want to be careful not to lose.
All the pieces of paper that have to do with you and your time in care are kept in your file. This file has information in it such as your name and age, your parents’ names and address, when you came into care and why, where you have been in care before, who your social worker is, and so on.

This information is private, and nobody is allowed to read it unless it is part of their job and they need to know this stuff so they can help you.

You can read it if you like. You can ask your social worker and he or she will show you your file and explain what is in it and help you to read it.

But sometimes your social worker might not let you read part of your file until you are older, because it might be upsetting for you.

**health board**

Health boards are the people whose job it is to make sure that people are healthy and safe in the area in which they live.
A health board has to give every child in care a social worker.

**inspector**
An inspector is a person who works for the government or the health board and whose job is to make sure all the centres are keeping the rules and that the children are safe and happy.

After the inspector visits a centre they write a report about it, which says all the good things about the centre. The report also says if there are things that need to be made better for the children who live there.

**key worker**
There are usually different people working in a children’s residential centre, and they come and go at different times. There is always someone there to mind you, and that is the main thing. But it is also important to have one person who is specially in charge of you and knows you very well, and that you feel you can talk to about things. This person is called your key worker. Your key worker takes special care of you, and makes sure you get everything you need.
Your key worker talks to your social worker about how you are getting on.

**monitor**
Every children’s residential centre needs to be checked out every so often by a person who works for the health board. This person is called a ‘monitor’, and their job is to make sure the centre is up to standard and that the children are being properly looked after.

You can talk to the monitor when he or she visits, and tell them what you think about the centre.

**ombudsman for children**
This is a person who works for the government. His or her job is to help children who have problems that they can’t get solved in any other way.

**review meeting**
Every now and then, your social worker and your key worker will meet you and your parents to talk about how your care is going and how you feel about things. These meetings are called review meetings.
Changes can be made to your care plan at these meetings.
If you would like to talk about something to do with your care, you can ask for a special review meeting to be held.

**social services inspectorate**
The people who work for the Social Services Inspectorate are in charge of making sure that the social workers and the residential centres that are run by the health boards are doing a good job looking after the children.

**social worker**
Your social worker is the person that the health board has asked to make sure you are properly looked after while you are in care. The social worker does not live in the residential centre, like the care staff, but comes to visit. You can talk to your social worker about anything that is worrying you and he or she will try to help you to understand.
standards for residential care

The national standards for residential care are rules that the government has made for the right way to look after children who are in care. These standards or rules are explained in this book, in a children’s version and in a version for teenagers. There is also a grown-ups’ version of the standards, which you can ask to see if you like.
Notes: