

# National minimum standards presentation



The new National Minimum Standards came into force on the 1st April 2011. All inspections which Offset undertake from that date will be underpinned by the new standards as well as the new Children's Homes regulations in their overall judgment of the home's performance within the updated Children's Homes Inspection Framework.

As all inspections are unannounced it is imperative that all members of staff are aware of the new standards to ensure consistent best practice and ensure that they provide the best possible care for children and young people in their home. The new National Minimum Standards now includes a specific section on the 'Values' which should underpin the work done by staff to ensure they provide the best outcomes for children and young people and ensure the standards and regulations are met fully.

Although these values are largely an amalgamation of previous government's policies and statutory legislation, it is helpful for staff to be able to have these summarized on an AY sheet. This could then be displayed as a daily reminder of the principles underpinning their role within the home. Some of the main ones include: The child's welfare, safety and needs should be at the centre of their care. Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account. Children in residential care should be given the opportunity for as full an experience of a supportive homely environment as possible.

None of these values should come as a surprise to people working within children's services. Since the previous version of the National Minimum Standards, there has been a number of legislative and Government policy

changes which have occurred and the new National Minimum Standards has been substantially reorganized and rewritten to reflect this. The new MANS now has 25 Standards whereas the previous version had 17. I will now cover some of the changes which have come into force with the changes to the National Minimum Standards, as well as ways in which these changes might be implemented within a care home setting.

**STANDARD 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them.** Further to the 1989 Children Act and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child Article 12 there is now a specific requirement that children, not only do they now have their rights to advocacy, but they also have the contact details for the Children's Rights Director. This could be included as part of the induction to the home, perhaps having a list of contacts in a Young Person's Induction booklet which the young person can then keep.

This then provides a means of promoting their independence in that they do not have to ask staff for numbers if they have any issues they feel they cannot talk to staff about. Alongside this is the requirement that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is kept up to date with a child's progress at regular intervals. This requirement could be met by having scheduled contact times in the young person's care file in order that there is a consistent, regularity of contact. It is important to ensure that all team members were aware of this and to keep up to date systems in place to ensure this is being carried out.

Also that staff have easy access to the name and number of the IRE for each child in order to carry out this requirement. STANDARD 3 - Promoting positive behavior and relationships. This has been revised to reflect the changes which have occurred within Regulation 17, Behavior Management and Discipline which replaces Behavior Management, Discipline and Restraint. It also states that any searches relating to an individual child, a child's room or a child's possessions should follow the guidance set out by the home.

As the entire Regulation 17 has been replaced, it is essential that senior managers compile new policies to reflect the changes and ensure that staff have adequate time to read these. Part of this could be done through supervision and team meetings to ensure that all staff are aware of the new policies and how they would impact the day to day management of behavior. It may also be useful to provide a refresher course of training on the use of behavior management techniques which can incorporate the new Regulation.

There is a responsibility to ensure that training is organized, and records kept of the priority of staff to attend these courses and ensure there is adequate cover for the home. A separate policy on the procedure for searching should be implemented to replace any already on file and staff should be made aware of this. STANDARD 4 - Safeguarding Children has also been amended in that there is now a clear requirement for a Designated Child Protection manager within the home to co- ordinate all Child Protection matters.

As well as their being a need for a more ordinate role with the placing local authority and local police systems in place with regard to missing children. There has also been a change to Regulation 28 in that electronic records can now be kept " provided the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in a legible form. " The Children's Homes (Amendment) Regulations 2011. This will affect all recordings within the homes including the recording of any instances in which behavior management techniques were used.

A good practice when dealing with sensitive information, especially that being transferred electronically (e. G. N email regarding a child to the social worker) is to ensure that it is password protected and these passwords are kept securely and emails encrypted. STANDARD 9 - Promoting and supporting contact There has been an expansion on the provision of contact from the previous standards. There is a requirement to notify the Local Authority within 24 hours if emergency restrictions are placed on contact in order to protect the child from significant harm.

Risk assessments will need to be completed on each individual child to ensure that any areas where there may be issues with contact are identified ND procedures put in place to reduce the risk or contact being suspended. STANDARD 11 - Preparation for a placement This includes new clauses which relate to the movement of children between homes. As previously stated, there is an expectation that Iris's are also notified in these cases and a review is held before a child moves. In order to provide the best outcomes for children, any moves should be planned and staff available to attend the review, ideally the child's key worker or a manager.

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All paperwork relating to a young person should be kept up to date and placement plans within the home reviewed regularly. This is just an overview of a few of the changes to the National Minimum Standards and not all of the changes which have been implemented. WAYS TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES: As you can see, there are a variety of ways in which the changes in the National Minimum Standards can be implemented to ensure the best outcomes for Children and Young People within the care home system.

Within this, it is important to liaise with other statutory organizations to ensure a consistent approach when accommodating children, and reviewing placements, paying particular attention to the requirements of when other bodies need to be informed, who needs to have access to names and contact details and the time scales. Sharing paperwork used by each agency and the purpose for this will help ensure effective communication between agencies and lead to effective multi agency working which can only benefit the young people being looked after.

Northern Care needs to ensure that their company policies reflect the changes within the National Minimum Standards and the individual home needs to ensure that its practice reflects the amended policies and has procedures in place accordingly. One of the main issues with any change in policies is to ensure that staff are aware of the changes and understand how they will impact on the home. This could involve discussions in team meetings, individual supervision sessions as well as in-house and outside training sessions.

It will also be important to liaise with the young people on any changes, especially those where their input will be beneficial to implementation. Ongoing monitoring of individual and team practice to ensure the changes are implemented long term and that staff are aware and prepared at any given time for an unannounced inspection. Research by Offset has found that although there are few consistently outstanding reforming Children's Homes, the all have similar factors which both the staff and young people see as critical to the success.

One of these is effective leadership. It is therefore important to lead by example of implementing the changes to the National Minimum Standards. This report also recommended liaison with other homes on how they have implemented the changes in order to share best practice. CONCLUSION: As you have seen, many of the changes which have occurred are amendments to the previous standards in place prior to April 2011. While I have given a brief overview, these are by no means the only Standards to have changed.