

Future care

Children's advice on future care standards

A report by the Children's Rights Director for England

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

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About the Children's Rights Director



Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England

The law sets out my duties as Children's Rights Director for England. One of my main duties is to ask children and young people for their views about how children are looked after in England. This includes children living away from home and children getting any sort of help from council social care services.

As well as asking children for their views and publishing what they tell us, my team and I also give advice on children's views and on children's rights and welfare to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, and to the Government. We also have a duty to raise any issues we think are important about the rights and welfare of children living away from home or getting children's social care support. We do this both for individual children and for whole groups of children.

Like all my reports, this report is being published for everyone to read. You can find copies of all my reports on our website, www.rights4me.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Roger Morgan'.

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Summary of recommendations for the future standards, from children's views

The Government has set out the rules, or National Minimum Standards, that everyone running a service that looks after children (such as a children's home, boarding school, residential special school, residential further education college or fostering service) must keep to. Every so often the Government checks these rules to see if they need to be brought up to date, or changed. The Government is looking at the rules again at present, and for this report we asked children for their views about the future rules.

Based on the children's views in this report, we can summarise these recommendations from children for the future standards:

1. **Standards should be for use by children, parents, carers, inspectors, trainers, managers and people setting up a new service.**
2. **The standards should cover a wide range of issues, not just a few.**
3. **Buildings children live in should not be too small, should be safe, homely, in a good state, clean, have single bedrooms, have a garden area, provide good privacy and provide for children's activities.**
4. **Security cameras are acceptable, as long as they are for the children's safety and only cover areas outside the building.**
5. **Children should be able to call Ofsted about concerns they want an inspector to check.**
6. **Children should be given a children's guide to any new place well before they move there, together with the opportunity to ask any questions they want about their future placement.**
7. **Children's guides should cover who will be caring for the child, who else lives there, what the place is like, what rules the child will be expected to keep, what their bedroom will be like and whether they will share it, how they will be kept safe, where they will go to school, and the area and local facilities and activities nearby.**
8. **Children should be kept safe on the internet by blocking unsuitable sites and chatrooms, adult supervision of internet use, location of computers where their use can be supervised, and by teaching internet safety to young children.**
9. **Times when children think there are insufficient staff to look after them should be identified and taken into account in staffing homes and schools.**
10. **Additional staffing should be provided where there are children with disabilities, special needs or behaviour problems.**
11. **Staff should not be allowed to start working with children before their police checks are done.**

The children we consulted

This report sets out the views and advice of 686 children and young people who came to our 2008 national children's conference at Drayton Manor theme park in Staffordshire. At the conference, we asked children and young people to give us their views and advice by filling in a set of question cards we gave them, which they handed in to us at our 'bases' around the theme park during the day. In return for each card filled in and handed in, we gave a small thank you gift, and the children were able to enjoy the attractions of the theme park throughout the day.

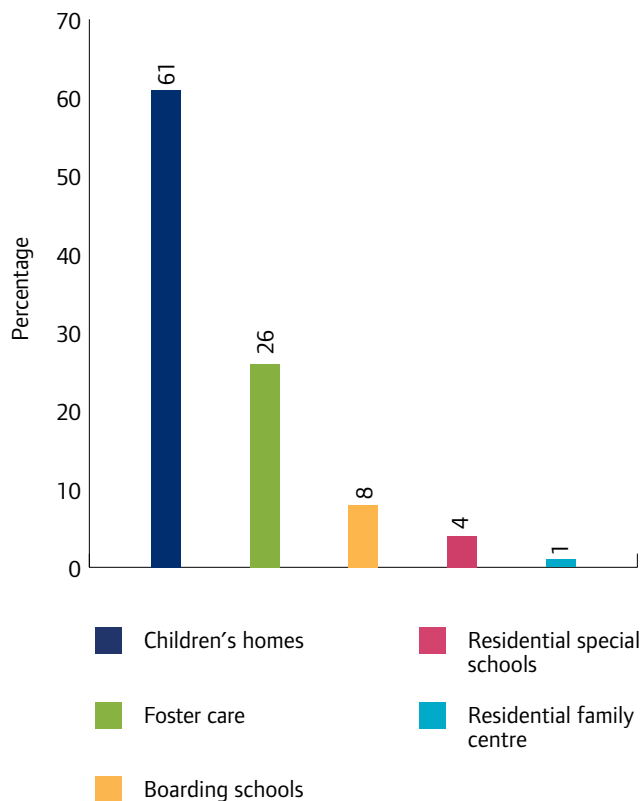
We gave out question cards to some children with our questions in Widgit symbols, so that children who could read these rather than words could give their views. After the conference, we visited a children's home for children with disabilities and got their views with the help of a member of staff who went through the Widgit cards with them, either by just sitting together or by using their computer. The children had come to the conference, but they told us this was the best way to make sure they could have their say.

We invited children from many different sorts of establishment and social care service, and gave out places for the conference on a first come, first served basis. To make sure that the views we heard were as representative as possible, we sent invitations to all the establishments and services we could, and we did not choose which children to give places to – everyone who asked for a place got one until we were full up.

Out of the 667 children and young people who told us their age, the youngest was four and the oldest was a care leaver of 20. The 'middle' age was 14. Just under two thirds (64%) were boys and 36% were girls.

The chart shows the different places that the children and young people came from (589 of the children answered this question for us).

Where the children were living



We asked children to tell us the ethnic background they come from. We just asked them to tell us their ethnicity in their own words.

We had answers to the question from 595 children and young people. Over half (59%) told us they were white, and one in five (21%) said they were British. Four percent said they were black, another 4% that they were Asian, and 5% that they were of mixed race.

What the rules should be for

We know that the rules that go to make up the National Minimum Standards have a number of different uses. They are meant to be used by a number of different people. For example, inspectors use them as their guide to how children should be looked after when they do their inspections to check whether all is well. People looking after children use them as their guide to what they should be doing.

We listed a number of different people who might use the rules (standards), and some possible uses of the rules, and asked children to tell us who they thought should use them in the future. The 537 children who answered this question gave us these answers:

- **Children and young people, to know how they should be cared for**
(90% of children said yes to this)
- **Parents, to know how their children should be cared for**
(89% said yes to this)
- **Staff and carers, to know what they should be doing**
(89% said yes to this)
- **Inspectors, to know what to check**
(88% said yes to this)
- **To show what carers and staff need to be trained about**
(87% said yes to this)
- **Managers, to know what to check up on**
(86% said yes to this)
- **For people starting a new service to know what to do**
(86% said yes to this)

There were no big differences between children in children's homes and children in foster care in what they thought the rules should be for.¹ There were though some big differences in what children of different ages thought. Generally, **the younger the children were, the more they thought the rules should be used.** Children of different ages all put at the top of the list that the rules should be for children to know how they should be looked after. But younger children thought this was even more important than the older children did. Ninety-seven percent of children aged under 12 said the rules should be for this, compared with 89% of those aged 12 to 15, and 83% of those over 15. Younger children also thought the rules were more important to people starting up a new service than older children did.

The strong message from children is that **the new standards should be written for all these people to use: children, their parents, staff, carers, inspectors, trainers, managers and people setting up new services.** None of these people, or uses for the standards, is very much more, or less, important than the others. The standards are not just for people running services and people inspecting them. **Children are clear that both they, and their parents, should know the rules for looking after them in their placements.**

Possible rules

Before they arrived at the conference, we gave each child a list of rules that might possibly go into the new standards, and asked them to vote on which ones they wanted to be made into rules for how they should be looked after. There were 40 possible rules, so we have listed them in the appendix at the end of this report (p 20) rather than here. We listed rules that are already in the Standards that are in force now, and added others that we know have been suggested by various people (including children and young people) as possible new rules.

The children's votes added up to one big finding: **children want a full set of rules for how they are to be looked after, and do not want any of the rules to be left out.** Each of the suggested rules got a very positive vote from the children. The most popular rule was voted for by 97% of the children, but even the least popular one was voted for by 88%.

¹ In this report, we have counted a difference of 10 percentage points or more as a 'big difference'.

Here are the most important of the suggested rules, all voted for by 95% or more of the children:

- **Let children have privacy**
- **Respect children’s culture and background**
- **Children must be kept safe**
- **Help children to stay healthy**
- **Bullying must be kept down**
- **Treat all children fairly**
- **Children live in buildings that are good for them**
- **Give children the help they need**
- **Staff and carers are fully checked out**
- **Staff and carers get training**
- **Keep children in touch with their families**
- **Help children who don’t fit in**
- **Children can always get something to drink**

Here are the four rules that had the least votes – though even so, each of these was voted for by 88% of the children or more:

- **Stick to care plans**
- **Children are only ever locked up if they are in secure units**
- **Help children keep in touch with their social workers**
- **Older children can do their own washing**

Because none of the suggested rules were voted for by less than 88% of the children, we must be careful not to see these four rules as ones children did not want. Almost all the children did want even these. We can perhaps understand why a rule about doing washing was not top of the list; and from talking to children we can understand that rules about not being locked up, keeping in touch with social workers and care plans are not as relevant to some of the children as rules about having privacy, respect for one’s background, being safe and being healthy.

These messages from children in this report are being sent to the people working for the Government who will be deciding what rules to put in the future National Minimum Standards for how children are to be looked after.

Children’s advice about buildings

Standards always contain rules about what buildings should be like if children are going to live in them. We asked children and young people what would make a house or building a good one for children to live in, and what would make it a bad one.

The table lists the things children most often said would make a building a good one for children to live in (we have only included the things that at least one in 10 children told us).

- **Can do activities in it**
(from 29% of children)
- **It is safe**
(from 21% of children)
- **Children are looked after properly in it**
(from 20% of children)
- **It is homely**
(from 19% of children)
- **There is space and privacy**
(from 15% of children)
- **Each child has their own bedroom**
(from 13% of children)
- **It is clean and tidy**
(from 12 % of children)
- **It has a garden**
(from 11% of children)
- **There is lots of food**
(from 11% of children)
- **People are calm and happy**
(from 10% of children)

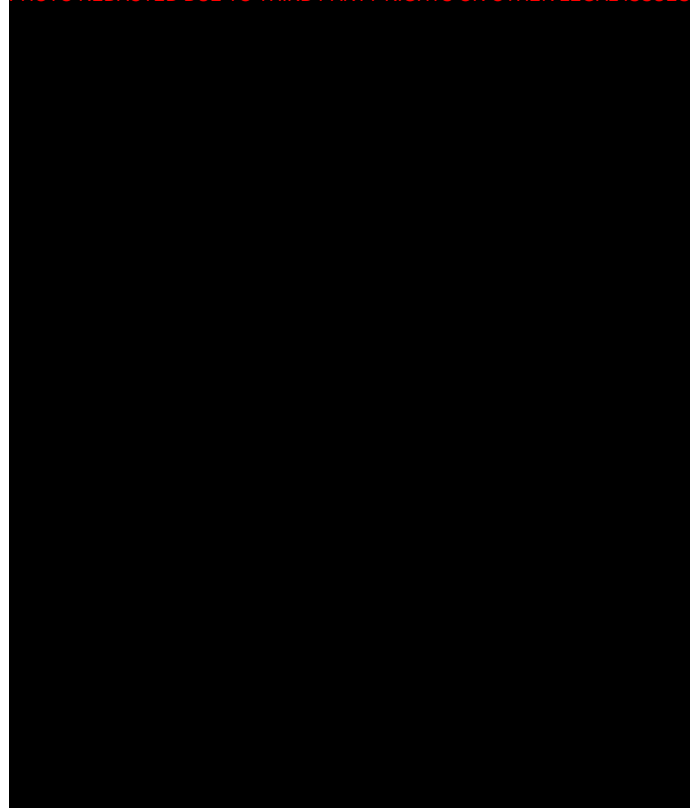
The next table gives the things children most often said would make a building a bad one for children to live in (again, we have only listed things that at least one in 10 children wrote).

- **It is not safe**
(from 22% of children)
- **It is messy**
(from 21% of children)
- **It is small**
(from 19% of children)
- **There is bullying**
(from 14% of children)
- **Children are not looked after properly in it**
(from 13% of children)
- **There are bad staff**
(from 11% of children)
- **It is not properly looked after**
(from 11% of children)
- **There is nothing to do**
(from 11% of children)

These lists show that when thinking about buildings, children and young people are concerned about three things. First, **the sort of building itself** (that it is safe, homely, has enough space and privacy, single bedrooms and a garden). Second, **the state the building is in** (that it is properly looked after, clean, tidy and not messy). Third, **whether a building is good or bad to live in depends on what happens in it as well as what it is like as a building** (that in the building, children have plenty to do, are looked after well, are not bullied, and are calm and happy). Often, children wrote about a good building feeling 'warm' to be in.

Some children summarised how these factors added up to a good building: 'if it was safe, with caring people, warm and friendly inside'; 'it is warm and welcoming and somewhere nice enough to call home'; 'warm friendly one, with a happy environment and lots to do', 'fun to be in'.

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There were no big differences between boys and girls in what they said made a good or bad building. Although they lived in very different sorts of buildings, **children from children's homes and children in foster care had much the same views about what made a building a good or bad place to live. But there was one big difference; children in foster care were more likely to say that being homely made somewhere good to live.**

There were some differences between children from children's homes and children from foster homes in the things that went on in a building that they thought would make it a good or bad place to live. Children in foster homes were more likely to say that if children were being looked after by staff then bad staff would make somewhere a bad place to live, while children from children's homes were more likely simply to say that somewhere was a bad building to live in if the children were not looked after properly there.

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Children of different ages had some different views about buildings. We compared the answers from children aged under 12, aged between 12 and 15, and aged over 15, to find any big differences between these age groups.

Younger children said it was especially important to them that they had their own bedroom and plenty to do, and those aged under 12 in particular didn't want buildings to be very small. These things were not quite so important to older children. **Older children said it was especially important for a building to be homely and safe.** These two things were not quite so important to younger children. **Children in the 12 to 15 age group were especially concerned that young people in a building should be properly looked after and that there should not be any bad staff in the building.**

Many children gave us examples of bad buildings they had lived in and why they thought they had been bad. Again, these were a mixture of points about the building itself, the state it was in, and what happened in it. Here is a selection of their experiences of bad buildings:

'dirty and rank'

'lots of floor tiles are broken and I can get hurt'

'it is out of control. No team work'

'it was cold and cramped with bad facilities'

'it was next to a motorway, too far away from town, not near cinemas'

'it was too small. No space or personal space'

'nails sticking out of everywhere'

'no wheelchair access'

'there was nowhere to play'

'you were being put down for reasons ie race'

'the roof leaked'

'the people looking after them didn't know what they were doing'

'there is bullies there'

'a scary house'

'big environments – more arguments'

'bullying. Fighting. Not safe'

'no more than 4 people should share a bathroom'.

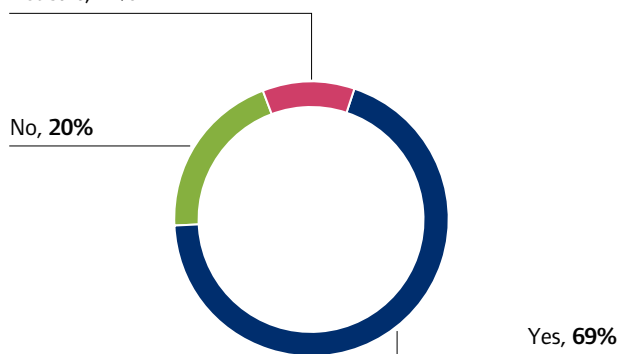
Children's advice about security cameras

There are some special issues that come into the National Minimum Standards, but up until now we have not known what the children themselves think about these. One is the use of security cameras around the buildings children live in. We asked the children at our conference whether it is, or is not, OK to use security cameras to keep a watch on the outside doors of buildings where children live.

Just over two thirds of the children thought it is OK to have security cameras to watch outside doors, but one in five thought it is not OK to do this. Just over one in 10 said that they weren't sure how to answer this question.

Is it OK to use security cameras to watch outside doors?

Not sure, 11%



Where children gave us reasons for their views, the one main reason for having security cameras was to keep children safe, especially from strangers. Some quotations from children summed up different views on this question. Some children were concerned about privacy and did not want staff using cameras to watch them: 'don't want staff looking at us like big brother'. But there was also a view that cameras should be used 'so they can keep an eye on people if they run away'. One young person said 'I don't agree about having security cameras in the garden. Unless there is a big reason to.'

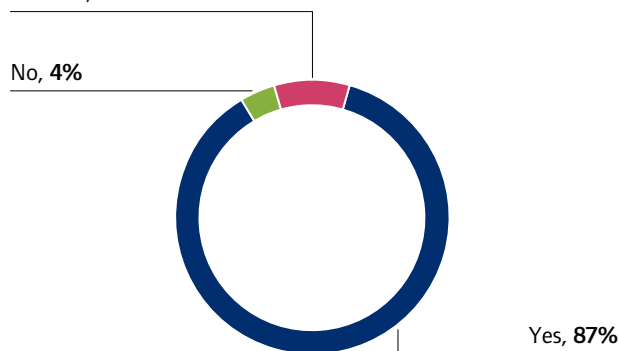
There were no big differences between boys and girls on the question of security cameras. Interestingly, there were no big differences between children living in children's homes and those living in foster homes either. **Children aged under 12 were more likely than older children and young people to say that it is OK to use security cameras.** Eight out of 10 (80%) of those aged under 12 thought it is OK and only one in 10 (10%) thought it is not OK to use cameras.

Calling Ofsted

We also asked children whether they thought all children should be able to call Ofsted if they want an inspector to check up on something where they live. The chart shows the answers.

Should children be able to call Ofsted to check on something where they live?

Not sure, 9%



Clearly, a very large majority of children say that they should be able to call Ofsted if they want an inspector to check on something where they live. Older children were more strongly in favour of this than younger ones, though still a large majority of younger children wanted to be able to call Ofsted. Just over three quarters (78%) of children aged under 12 thought they should be able to call Ofsted, compared with 89% of those aged 12 to 15 and 90% of those aged over 15.

Foster children were just as likely as children in children's homes to wish to be able to call Ofsted. There was no big difference between boys and girls in wanting to be able to call Ofsted.

Where children told us why they wanted to be able to call on Ofsted, most of their reasons can be summarised by saying that it would give children a way to get their worries across to someone who can help them and check whether there is something wrong.

What children wish to see in children's guides

Standards usually say that children and young people should be given a written guide to where they are going to live when they first move in. We asked children to give us their advice on what they would like to see in these guides in the future. We did not make any suggestions, so this is entirely the children's own advice.

The table lists the things that children told us they would want to see in a guide to tell them what it would be useful to know before they move into a place. We have included everything that came from at least one in 10 children.

- **Information about who else lives there**
(from 42% of children)
- **What the carers are like**
(from 40% of children)
- **What the rules are**
(from 28% of children)
- **Information about where it is**
(from 27% of children)
- **What the home is like**
(from 21% of children)
- **What the area and its activities are like**
(from 16% of children)
- **What their room is like and whether they will share**
(from 14% of children)
- **Are they going to be safe**
(from 13% of children)
- **Information about schools and education**
(from 10% of children)

The clear message to people writing National Minimum Standards, and writing children's guides in the future, is that whatever else they contain, **guides need to cover these nine things if they are to be useful to children themselves.** These are things children want to know before they move in, so that they know where they will be living, who with, and who will be looking after them. **They need a guide well before they move, not when they get there.**

Smaller numbers of children mentioned wanting to know whether the house is well looked after, which we have heard is important when thinking about what makes a building good or bad to live in, and whether they would be able to keep in touch with people they already know (like their family, friends and the people caring for them now). Eighteen children (4% of the 475 children who gave us their ideas on this question) said that, along with their guide, they would want to be told how long they were going to be living in their new place.

Boys and girls wanted much the same information in a guide, with one big exception. **Boys were twice as interested as girls in being told about the area and what the local activities are like.** There were two big differences between what children told us they wanted to know before moving into a foster home and what they wanted to know before moving into a children's home. **Foster children were more likely than children going to a children's home to want to know what the house is like before they get there, but children going into a children's home were more likely to want to know what their bedroom will be like, and whether they will be sharing it.**

Some things were more important to some age groups. **Children under 12 were less likely to want to know about who else lives in the place, but more likely to want to know what their carers would be like. Young people over 15 were more likely to want to know what the rules are and what the area and its activities are like.**

Some children told us that as well as having a guide, they would want to be able to **visit any new place** before they moved there, to find out about it and get to know the people there. Some said that **a guide should have photographs** in it, showing the place and the people.

Children described how they want to know about the people they will be living with (especially other children there), and the people who will be their carers: ‘about the carers, sons and daughters’; ‘so they have any children, are they married or single?’; ‘to know what other kids are like’; ‘do they have pets?’; ‘if they had fostered someone before’; ‘or what their ethnic background is.’

Children also gave us many examples of details they would want to know about their new place and about the rules they would be expected to keep there that were important to them. Here is a selection of their examples: ‘are you allowed to smoke?’; ‘bedtime’; ‘can I have chocolate?’; ‘can I have visitors?’; ‘can I keep doing my hobbies?’; ‘can I stay at the same school?’; ‘can they meet my needs?’; ‘can we have pets?’; ‘do you have a PC?’; ‘how big is the house?’; ‘what kind of toys there are’; ‘if I am allowed TV’; ‘if they have their own private space’; ‘is it close to school?’ ‘what food they eat’; ‘what time do I have to be in?’

These are all important questions for individual children – and it is clear from the very different things that children told us they would want to know that, as well as having a guide, **each child should have the chance to ask their own detailed questions about things that are important to them well before they move in.**

As well as these many particular things, **some children wanted to be reassured that the place was in their best interests before they moved there:** ‘is the place run in the interest of the young person?’; will they ‘respect my culture?’; ‘what changes will be made to your life?’; ‘am I going to be OK?’

Children’s advice on keeping safe on the internet

How to keep children safe when they use the internet is one of the things most people raise when they talk about whether any new things need to go into the standards in the future. We asked the children at our conference for their advice on this. Again, we did not give them any of our own ideas or suggestions.

Here are the top ideas from the 500 children at our conference who advised us on this (as usual, we have listed everything that came from at least one in 10 children):

- **Block or filter internet sites such as porn and chatrooms**
(from 306 children: 61%)
- **Supervise young people using the internet**
(from 227 children: 45%)
- **Teach children about internet safety**
(from 119 children: 24%)
- **Limit children to safe and age-appropriate sites**
(from 79 children: 16%)
- **Adults should check which sites young people are visiting**
(from 56 children: 11%)
- **Use a password that stops children using the internet without adults**
(from 51 children: 10%)

There are three very clear messages from children and young people about internet safety that need to be taken into account in the future standards. One is that **unsuitable or dangerous sites and chatrooms should, if possible, be blocked so that children cannot get on to them;** another is that **the best way of keeping children safe on the internet is for adults to supervise how they are using it;** and the last is that **children, especially younger children, need to be taught the basics about internet safety and how to keep themselves safe.**

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Most children advised that there should be blocks to stop access to porn or risky websites or chatrooms. 'Block pornography'; 'child locks'; 'parental lock'; 'web nanny – website restriction programme'; 'not to be able to get onto dodgy sites'. We also heard from a few children that because of the dangers of people getting hold of pictures of children, there should be 'no webcam', and you 'shouldn't be able to put pictures up of yourself'. A few young people were against blocking of sites and wanted to be trusted more in how they used the internet: 'no site blocking systems – children should be their own judges of safety'. Some thought that blocking should happen only if there was a particular risk at the time: 'sites should be blocked only if reports of abuse'. A few agreed with site blocking but wanted us to know that it usually restricted things other than dangerous sites as well: 'safety is important, but it restricts access to some things I like doing such as games'.

Many children were very clear about how adults could supervise and check on how children and young people were using the internet: 'keep an eye on them'; 'sit with young people while they are using the internet to monitor what it is they are viewing'; 'they should be supervised at all times'; 'staff should be able to monitor internet access remotely'; 'keep a profile of what they have been on'; 'if children caught on sites where they have been told not to go on be banned from the PC'; 'keep a secure password to prevent bullying'. One said 'things should be monitored but not too much'.

Some told us how important it is to **put the computer somewhere where adults know how children are using it**: 'do it downstairs so carers know what we're going on'; 'have the computer in a family room NOT tucked away in the back room'. A few told us that computers shouldn't be in children's bedrooms where they are away from adult supervision. Some children pointed out that all this is not just about adults keeping an eye on children, but **children themselves need to use their carers to keep themselves safe**. To do this a child can 'make sure your carer knows what site your on'; 'talk about keeping safe – who you are talking to etc'; and 'be able to talk to staff about any problems they have'.

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Many children told us that all **children need to know about how to stay safe on the internet**: ‘they should know how to use it’; ‘explain to them the dangers of chatting to stranger on line so they understand’; ‘they are given advice about how to approach certain internet situations eg paedophilia’. Children suggested many rules for staying safe on the internet that they thought adults should teach them when young. Many thought it was then up to them as young people to keep to these rules. Here is a list of some of the rules:

‘don’t put your real address on the internet’

‘rules of what you can/can’t go on’

‘not to click on spam adverts’

‘no info about yourself’

‘no downloading’

‘no chat room for under 14s’

‘chat room not safe’

‘don’t give people personal contact such as the phone no, mobile no, address’

‘don’t go on inappropriate websites’

‘don’t show pictures’

‘don’t talk or send anything when you may think is dodgy’

‘don’t talk to stranger on the PC’.

There were no big differences between boys and girls in the advice they gave. Children and young people in children’s homes and foster care gave much the same advice, with one exception. Those in children’s homes were more likely to say that they should only be able to get onto safe and age-appropriate web sites.

Comparing the advice from children and young people in different age groups gave us some important messages. **Children aged under 12 were more likely to advise blocking or filtering chatrooms or porn sites than older young people were. Younger children were more likely than older children and young people to advise that children should be taught about keeping themselves safe on the internet. But the big message that adults should supervise and check how children and young people use the internet was the same from all age groups.** Almost exactly the same percentages of children under 12, of young people aged 12 to 15, and of those over 15 gave this advice.

One young person raised the question of helping keep children safe by punishing people who use the internet to abuse children: ‘give a jail sentence for people who do these sort of things’.

About staff

Standards always contain rules about staff, and we therefore asked at our conference for the children's advice on some key staffing issues. First, we asked them about those times when there might be too few staff around in a school or home to look after them. This is one of the issues in the standards in force now. We didn't suggest any answers to the children. Second, we asked them which sorts of children needed extra help from staff and so would need more staff around. Again, we didn't suggest any answers. Finally, we asked whether children thought it is ever all right for staff to start working with them before their police checks have been done. This is also something there are rules about in most sets of standards.

The majority of the 364 children who answered this question told us about various times when they thought there weren't enough staff around. One in 20 children (5%) told us they thought there weren't enough staff looking after them at any time. Just under half (45%) of the children told us that there were no particular times when they felt there weren't enough staff looking after them.

Girls were more likely than boys to say that there were times when there weren't enough staff around. Older young people were also more likely than younger children to tell us there were times when there weren't enough staff around.

There was **no one particular time that came out as being one when there was usually not enough staff.** No specific time was mentioned by more than 10% of children. Some children mentioned evenings and night time, some mentioned weekends, and others told us they thought there weren't enough staff during some activities or outings. Some told us that sometimes there weren't enough staff to cope when individual children needed extra staff support or supervision, for instance when there is trouble between children, bullying, or when a child needs one-to-one support or talking time with a staff member.

'When an argument starts with other kids'; 'when I get wound up and no one is there to calm me down'; 'when I have been bullied'; 'when I hurt myself or feel sick'; 'when I need to talk to someone'. Others told us that there weren't enough staff with the children during staff handovers, meetings or training days. A few told us that in very small homes there were often not enough staff to begin with: 'if you are in a place with 2 or less adults'. Sometimes there are not enough staff for children to choose to do different things, rather than all do the same thing as a group.

Clearly, many children think there are definitely times when there are not enough staff around, and can identify what times these are, but the times are different in different schools or homes.

Altogether, 411 children told us which sorts of young people need extra help from staff. By far the most usual answer was that **children with disabilities or other special needs are the ones who need more staff to look after them.** This answer came from nearly two thirds of the children (62%). The only other answer to come from more than 10% children was that **children with behaviour problems need more staff** to look after them. Young people aged over 15 were more likely than children under 12 to say that people with disabilities need more staff to look after them.

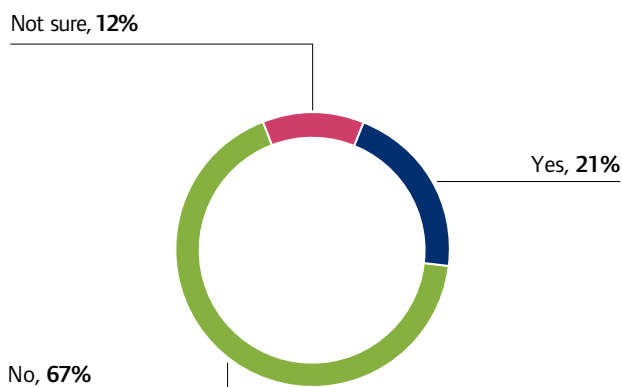
Here are some quotations about the children many thought need extra staff to look after them: ‘down syndrome, children in wheelchairs, children with learning difficulties’; ‘children more disabled than me – can’t walk/see/hear’; ‘them who need physical help’; ‘aggressive and violent people’; ‘upset, disabled, self harmers, anger management and slow learners’.

Some children thought that it was not so much that particular groups of children needed more staff all the time, but that **most children can need extra staff around to help them at particular times**: ‘all at different times’; ‘everyone can need extra help’. One child wrote ‘kids with behavioural, learning, social and emotional difficulties. Basically all kids’. Another simply wrote ‘Me’.

Our last question was to find out whether children and young people think that, if there aren’t enough staff or carers, it is all right for one or two new staff to start looking after them before their police checks have been done. The chart shows the answers we had from the 429 children who answered this question.

The large majority of children (67%) did not think it is all right for new staff to start looking after children before their police checks are done, even if there aren’t enough staff or carers. Only around one in five children (21%) thought this should be allowed. There were no big differences between girls and boys, children in foster care or in children’s homes, or between children and young people of different ages. This is a clear message for those writing any future standards.

Should staff be allowed to start looking after children before their police checks are done?



Appendix

Here is the full list of 40 possible rules for the new National Minimum Standards that we gave to children to vote on:

- Let children have privacy
- Respect children's culture and background
- Children must be kept safe
- Help children to stay healthy
- Bullying must be kept down
- Treat all children fairly
- Children live in buildings that are good for them
- Give children the help they need
- Staff and carers are fully checked out
- Staff and carers get training
- Keep children in touch with their families
- Help children who don't fit in
- Children can always get something to drink
- Ask children when making decisions about them
- Prepare children for when they leave care
- Children have enough staff and carers
- Children can have their own money and possessions
- Help children have their own hobbies
- Children get treatment when they need it
- Children are helped to behave well
- Help children with their education
- Keep information about children confidential
- Children get good food
- There are enough toilets and showers
- Keep brothers and sisters together if you can
- Give children plenty of information
- Punishments mustn't go too far
- Children and carers or staff should all get on well
- There is an official complaints procedure
- Restraint is only used to stop harm or damage
- Children should be helped to help others
- Ask children how well the service is running
- Rooms should only be searched if there is a danger
- Children should be kept safe on the internet
- Children can be alone when they want
- Sort out problems that make children run away
- Stick to care plans
- Children aren't locked up (unless in secure units)
- Help children keep in touch with their social workers
- Older children can do their own washing

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