



**Consultation on National Standards for independent and Semi-Independent provision looked after  
children and care leavers aged 16 and 17 yr old**

## **Introduction**

NIROMP represents IRO Managers and in providing information below to the consultation focuses on the areas of response rather than answers to the specific questions asked. Our response is based upon the focus of IRO quality assuring the plan to ensure that this is the place in equal balance depending on the assessed needs/care and pathway plan for the young person and the young person's individual needs.

The responses below are informed by seeking to support each young person in care with secure love and care appropriate to their individual needs.

## **The difference between care and support – are we using the right indicators? (Questions 1 to 2)**

Overall our consideration is that 16 and 17 yr olds living in independent and semi-independent provision, which requiring a support element also require a care element in their accommodation as “children in care”. We believe in this instance that care and support are not mutually exclusive, and care is an important element to the support provision.

The above is confirmed by the understanding that a significant number of children in care have limited or no family back up to moving into independent accommodation, and this back up is provided as a corporate parenting responsibility by social workers, it is therefore important that any supported accommodation for older children, is mindful that they are children and therefore require an element of care in the provision.

As we considered the issues and questions raised, generally we felt that the descriptors as presented were generally helpful and reasonable measures.

We noted that in the one about a sanctions policy – may want to focus on Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) as this consideration is considered within the DOLS framework.

With regard to specific measures we felt that consideration should be given to wifi/internet access and private workspace, as well as living space, for young people, which are critical to support young people moving towards independence.

In addition, measures should include, measures in respect of supporting equality issues, safe care, and, promotion of aspiration and achievement for young people. These are key to promoting best outcomes for children and young people.

The descriptors should look closely at how support for under 18s (or children/young people who are still in care) is provided and needs safeguarded when accommodation is provided for post 18 yrs, as

well as separating the matters of day to day operational care with the policy value base of the provider.

<b>1) To what extent do you believe that each of these indicators is helpful in determining whether a provider is delivering 'care' or 'support'?</b>
<i>Can young people go out of the establishment without staff's permission? - Helpful</i>
<i>Do young people have full control of their own finances? Neither Helpful or Unhelpful</i>
<i>Do young people have control over what they wear and the resources to buy clothes? - Unhelpful</i>
<i>Are young people in charge of meeting all of their health needs, including such things as arranging GP or specialist health care appointments? Are young people in full control of their medication? Do staff have any access to any medical records? - Helpful</i>
<i>Can young people choose to stay away overnight without first seeking permission? Unhelpful</i>
<i>Is there a sanctions policy that goes beyond house rules and legal sanctions that would be imposed on any adult? – This is a DOLS issue not a care/support issue</i>
<i>If the establishment accommodates both adults and young people, do those under 18 have any different supervision, support, facilities or restrictions? -Very Helpful</i>
<i>Are there regularly significant periods of time when young people are on the premises with no direct staff supervision? - Helpful</i>
<i>Do staff have any responsibility for aftercare once a young person has left? – should do? So Unhelpful</i>
<i>Does the establishment's literature promise the provision of care or relate to specific care support provided to all residents? – Unhelpful – should all provide care</i>
<i>Does the establishment provide or commission a specialist support service, which forms part of the main function of the establishment? - Helpful</i>

## **Defining ‘unregulated’ independent and semi-independent provision – should we call all of this provision ‘supported accommodation for older children’? – (Questions 3 -5)**

As detailed above our consideration is that 16 and 17 yr olds living in independent and semi-independent provision, which requiring a support element, also require a care element in their accommodation as “children in care”. We believe in this instance that care and support are not mutually exclusive, and care is an important element to the support provision.

The above is confirmed by the understanding that a significant number of children in care have limited or no family back up to moving into independent accommodation, and this back up is provided as a corporate parenting responsibility by social workers, it is therefore important that any supported accommodation for older children, is mindful that they are children and therefore require an element of care in the provision.

Based upon this we are of the view that the definition should have a support and care element in its wording and description

3) Do you agree that the Government should define all of this provision as ‘supported accommodation for older children’ in future? Yes / No / Not Sure

Alternatively – ***“Supported care provision equipping older children for future independence”***

The suggested naming above maintains a care element but also gives a clear steer as to why a young person should be living in independent or semi-independent accommodation

In addition we should be mindful of the supply of such accommodation and the above naming sets out clear what is being offered.

## **What does the best of this provision look like? (Questions 5 – 7)**

NIROMP is not specifically in a position to comment on the type of provision. IROs would routinely consider if the accommodation meets the young person’s needs and requirements for care and support

This provision should be distinguished from independent accommodation that a care leaver would move to, this can be defined as tenancy or accommodation whereby the young person is the sole tenant of the accommodation.

Most provision for care and support for older children, is multi person household, and as such the accommodation provider is offering less directed accommodation to the young person in care than they would routinely expect in residential care or foster care, or indeed living at home with parents.

The accommodation should provide

- Safe and secure accommodation, including a private room
- Reasonable accommodation management, which ensures equipment in the accommodation is in a good quality of repair, and where equipment and furniture are not working, or broken, these are routinely replaced with suitable equipment
- Staff presence and support to develop skills and get to know the local area, including places to shop, access to public transport
- Clearly defined statements from the accommodation of what they will do to care for, and support, the young person
- Provide personal support and supervision commiserate with the young person's assessed need
- Activity supported by the accommodation to support a young person's pathway plan for their future.
- Be mindful of, and respond positively to address discrimination, with regard to the young person's cultural, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and disability needs

### **Introducing national standards for independent and semi-independent provision that accommodates 16 and 17 year old looked-after children and care leavers (Questions 8 -11)**

The standards as set out in the consultation are suitable and we would support the elements to these as stated

- Leadership and Management Standard – including the stated purpose and intent, so that young people can have confidence in the organisation and the people who run the accommodation
- We would suggest that some consideration is added to physical and mental health, to the accommodation providing support to young people who have experienced care and the reasons why they are in care and trauma informed impact of this to support emotional wellbeing
- A clear sense of accountability and roles of staff in the organisation to be available to young people
- Consideration of managing and leading equality issues for young people
- The Protection Standard – required and agree
- Workforce Plan – required and agree
- Location Assessments – It should be stated that this is relevant to the locality knowledge of young person – and what support will be given if in a new location to them – and consideration linked to safeguarding from contextual harm made relevant to each resident young person

- Accommodation Standard – need for private space, access to internet/wifi, - agree will all other statements required
- Support Standard – clarity about what is meant by young people taking the lead in support required – and this is not used to avoid care and support required by the young person – agree in principle with standards set out

NIROMP will make no comment in respect of the questions for providers of costs impacting from the standards.

## **Introducing Ofsted-led registration and inspection of independent and semi-independent provision (Questions 12 – 16)**

Having considered the options suggested, we would be supportive of a settings-based registration and inspection regime

This would enable the Accommodation and Support standards, and location assessments including the workings of wider standards and the local setting leadership and management to be inspected, this will provide specific and detailed inspection of accommodation for the young people

A provider led registration and inspection model, would miss the day to day and routine care and support for young people , which makes such an inspection and registration regime appropriate.

The settings led registration and inspection will for each individual setting need to be clear about the provider direction, ethos, aspirations and quality of care and support, but the key reason for inspection is the provision to young people and this can only be effectively done at setting level.

The setting level inspections will provide sight of the provider, and enable some consideration for other setting registration and inspections run by that provider, and so Ofsted would need to link these (similar to how they link across children's Homes run by the same provider)

In a setting-based inspection and registration system the emphasis will be on the lived experience of the young person, which would not be apparent, or even missed completely at provider based registration and experience

The provider leadership can be analysis within a setting based registration and inspection.

The model of settings-based registration and inspection is the model best used for children's home providers, school as part of MATS, and fostering agencies, which inform best the young person's lived experience

NIROMP favours a settings based registration and inspection regime (Model 1)

### **How often should Ofsted inspect settings and/or providers? (Question 17)**

In consultation it advises due to vulnerabilities and complexities, that Children's Homes are inspected annually, compared with fostering agencies 3 yrly.

We would suggest that the level of vulnerability for children in care placed in independent and semi-independent accommodation may be high given social and emotional needs and the additional stress associated with setting off on independence, without the backup of family.

In addition these young people will likely be more transient and in many cases move to, and from, semi-independent and independent accommodation quickly. To do a settings based inspection this ought to be annually, to support close inspection based on the young person's lived experience.