



Government  
of South Australia

Office of the Guardian  
for Children and  
Young People

# monitoring visits to residential care facilities

The Guardian has a statutory obligation to monitor the wellbeing of children and young people under guardianship or in the custody of the Minister. One way of doing this is for the Office's advocates to visit young people in their residential units.

This fact sheet has information about the purpose of the visits and how they are usually conducted. It will enable residential care workers to most effectively integrate the visits into the house routine, to understand what the advocates will be doing and to prepare young people for the visit.

## ***The nature of our visits***

Visits normally occur on week days in the late afternoon and early evening. Visits are scheduled in advance with each house or unit and we can negotiate on suitable dates.

Visits are informal in style and we try to engage the residents in conversation in settings that make them comfortable, such as joining in an activity or sharing a meal. We also record observations about the social and physical environment at the facility. Young people may express concerns about what is or is not happening for them and, with their consent, we can advocate on their behalf.

## ***How residential care workers can help***

We ask for your support to facilitate monitoring visits and to prepare the residents. *Prior* to the visit it would be valuable if you could:

- speak with the residents and advise them when we will be coming
- explain the purpose of our visit, including that we are an independent office and that their interaction with us is voluntary
- advise the residents that our visits are informal – that it is not like a formal meeting
- let the residents know that we are able to discuss individual issues with them in private or with a staff member present, depending on their preference
- consider scheduling activities in which we could participate with the residents
- ask the residents to think about anything they may wish to discuss with us and what they would like from the visit

### **During the visit we would like you to:**

- on our arrival tell us briefly about the residents and inform us of any sensitive matters that we may need to consider. Any tips on how to engage with residents can also be really useful.
- introduce the residents so that we can identify each of them by name
- help facilitate casual discussions with the residents about the purpose of our visit and invite or support them to raise any issues
- assist us to get involved in any activities
- encourage the residents to talk with us, together or individually
- encourage the residents to participate by raising concerns or asking questions

### **After the visit you can follow up by:**

- talking to and trying to answer the residents' questions about the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*
- providing positive encouragement and feedback to the residents about the monitoring visit
- reinforcing that residents can also raise their concerns with their allocated Families SA Social Worker, their Key Worker or by using the complaints process
- giving residents our contact details and encouraging them to take up issues with us
- contacting our office for advice or consultancy if you have any concerns

### **After the visit we will:**

- discuss our observations with agencies and work cooperatively to address issues and support improvements
- advocate for individual children as needed
- advocate for change and improvement in systems and services
- report to the community by way of papers and published articles and
- report periodically to the Minister for Families and Communities

### **The Monitoring Framework**

The Office's monitoring is based on the 12 statements of the Monitoring Framework which were distilled from the priorities of children as expressed by them in the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People*. See the *Monitoring Framework* fact sheet for the 12 statements and examples of what data is used to monitor.

### **Contacting the Guardian**

If you require any further information about monitoring visits, please contact our office.

Phone 1800 ASK OOG (for children and young people) or 08 8226 8570  
email [gcyp@gcyp.sa.gov.au](mailto:gcyp@gcyp.sa.gov.au)  
fax 08 8226 8577

Additional information on our monitoring role is available from our website  
[www.gcyp.sa.gov.au](http://www.gcyp.sa.gov.au)