**West Sussex – Practice Guidance**

IROs are qualified social workers with at least five years’ experience, and who have acquired the right skills to carry out this role.

**Locking doors**

* WSCC children’s homes support a wide variety of children and young people with different abilities and levels of understanding. Within this group, a significant proportion of children have limited understanding of risk or danger and need to rely on others to keep them safe.
* Children receiving support from children’s homes, either living there full time, or accessing short breaks, need to be kept safe at all times. High staffing ratios and levels of supervision will reflect the additional needs of some children and young people but there are times when risk is increased or staffing cover is necessarily reduced (night times).
* At these times, children may be at risk of leaving the home unsupervised, either intentionally or through limited awareness of hazards. Therefore, some children’s homes operate a policy to lock the front door to the home in order to maintain a safe environment.
* This procedure also ensures that the home remains a safe haven for the children living there by eliminating the possibility of other people entering the home who are not known to staff.
* In the event of a fire, doors are designed to release electronically to ensure all residents can safely leave the building.

**Freedom of Movement and Deprivation of Liberty**

* Where young people **who are 16 and over** have been assessed as being safe to leave and enter the home unaccompanied by staff, they will be free to do so, in line with their Support Plans and the homes’ routines and guidelines.

* However, where a young person who is 16 or over lacks capacity (ie are not able to make an informed decision) and is assessed as requiring supervision, staff are legally permitted to restrict or deprive them of their liberty to leave the premises unaccompanied as long as it is regarded as being in the young person’s best interests. In these circumstances, all exterior doors will be locked.
* When there is a mix of young people in the home, some of whom are assessed as being able to leave and enter independently, young people will either be provided with an access key or code, or staff will open the door for them where appropriate.

**Consent to lock doors**

* It is WSCC’s practice to acquire written consent from children themselves, their primary carers/parents or those with parental responsibility to lock the doors of all children’s homes. This consent forms part of the Universal Consent form used in children’s homes and is available to view on request.

**Links to related documents:**

Universal consent form