

IMPORTANT

- The information we provide on our rights4children website is for general guidance. It is not legal advice.
- If you need legal advice, please contact an independent advocate or a solicitor.
- Article 39 tries its best to make sure information is accurate and up-to-date. However, we cannot guarantee this. We'd appreciate you letting us know if you notice any errors or out-of-date information: info@article39.org.uk

Bedrooms, your private space and belongings

- ✦ Everybody has the right to feel safe and settled in their own space.



Unless you are living in a boarding school, you will normally have your own bedroom.

You will always be able to go to the toilet, and have a shower or bath in privacy – unless you need help or there are serious concerns about your safety.

There are many reasons why children and young people prefer to have their own rooms, including having space to think and be alone, being able get dressed and undressed in privacy and knowing your belongings are safe.

Being able to personalise your room can be very important, whether this is putting up photographs and posters, having your own duvet cover or arranging the furniture.

If you are staying in the same bedroom for a long time, we hope you will get the chance to decide how your room is decorated. You might want to choose the wall colour or your own wallpaper for example.

Unfortunately, if you are in hospital or locked up it's unlikely you will get the chance to decorate your room. But you should still be able to make it feel as homely as possible. Sometimes your bed and other furniture will be fixed to the floor, so it will be impossible to move things around. You'll hopefully still be able to make your room your own.

If you don't have your own room in hospital, you should be looked after in a ward with other people who are similar in age to you. You will be able to draw curtains around your bed for privacy.

If you are moving to a new place soon, please don't feel nervous about asking where you will sleep, and if you'll have your own room – if this is what you want.

Your rights – general

Your right to privacy, and to be treated with respect, applies to your bedroom and your personal belongings. It also applies to going to the toilet and having a bath or shower. There would have to be very serious reasons for you not having full privacy in these situations.

- + We'd expect staff and carers knock on your door before entering, and ask for permission before looking at or moving any of your things – unless they need to urgently act to keep you safe.
- + There would need to be a serious reason for staff and carers to go through your personal belongings without your permission.
- + Wherever you live, you should be able to wear your own clothes and underwear.
- + Sometimes in prisons, young people have to wear the same sweat shirts and trousers – **but you should have your own underwear.**
- + Sometimes children and young people are going through a very tough time, and they might use things in their bedroom to harm themselves. In these situations, the child or young person might be moved to a different room, or things may be taken out of their room. **This should be done with care and respect.**
- + Your belongings shouldn't be thrown out of your room, and they should never be broken deliberately.

Your rights – extra

This section gives you information about your extra rights in different places.

Words in “quotation marks” come from laws and legal rules. Laws and legal rules must be followed by the people who look after you.

Children's home

- + Your children's home is meant to feel homely.
- + You have the right to spend time away from other children and young people.
- + You must have your own private space, which will usually be your bedroom.
- + If you live in a children's home with a brother or sister, you may choose to share a bedroom with them.
- + You will **never** share a bedroom with an adult.
- + You should have a cupboard or wardrobe that you can lock your private things in.

- + You should be given a choice over how to decorate your bedroom.
- + Staff and carers should not enter your bedroom without your permission (though sometimes this may be necessary to keep you safe).
- + Your children’s home should have a regular cleaning routine, so you know when someone might be coming in to your room.
- + Sometimes a member of staff may need to check your room, if your own or another child’s safety is at risk.¹

Hospital or other health place

You should be staying in a ward that’s suitable for somebody your age. Children and young people should not usually be cared for on adult wards – unless this would be better for you.

You should have a radio and television, with headphones, next to your bed. You should not have to pay to use these.²

Immigration detention

The law says you and your family should be given accommodation suitable to your needs as a family. Your protection, safety and happiness are very important.³

The centre should have a family space which is separate from other parts of the building. You and your parents should have bedrooms next to each other.⁴

Prison

If you are in a **young offender institution**, you should have your own cell. This will have been checked to make sure its size, lighting, heating, ventilation and fittings are suitable for your health.

The law says when you are in your cell you should be able “to communicate at any time with an officer” – through having a buzzer in good working order, for example.⁵

If you are in a **secure training centre**, the law says you must have your own room. Girls and boys must be kept in separate areas and they must have their own toilets and bathing areas.⁶

School

Boarding schools and residential schools must follow rules (called standards).

Rules relating to your bedrooms, privacy and personal belongings are the same in boarding schools and residential special schools.

- + There must be separate sleeping areas for boys and girls over the age of 8 years old.
- + No matter how old you are, sleeping areas must be safe and well organised – you should have a private place to study for example.
- + You must be allowed to personalise your own sleeping area with posters or other things.
- + Toilets and bathrooms should be as close as possible to where you sleep. They should give you as much privacy as possible.
- + There must be separate toilet areas for girls and boys, unless it is a single toilet. You must be able to lock the toilet from the inside.
- + Your living and sleeping areas must be properly lit, heated, ventilated, cleaned and looked after. Your bedding must be clean and warm.
- + Your school must make changes if you have any difficulties walking or getting around – this is part of your equality rights.
- + Outside visitors to your school must never be given lots of time on their own.
- + If your school has CCTV cameras or other security arrangements, this must not unfairly intrude on your privacy.⁷

Secure children's home

- + Your children's home is meant to feel homely.
- + You have the right to spend time away from other children and young people.
- + You must have your own private space, which will usually be your bedroom.
- + You will **never** share a bedroom with an adult.
- + You should have a cupboard or wardrobe that you can lock your private things in.
- + You should be given a choice over how to decorate your bedroom. Staff and carers should not enter your bedroom without your permission (though sometimes this may be necessary to keep you safe).
- + Your children's home should have a regular cleaning routine, so you know when someone might be coming in to your room.
- + Sometimes a member of staff may need to check your room, if your own or another child's safety is at risk.⁸

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1 Department for Education (2015) Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards.

2 Department of Health (2003) Getting the right start: National service framework for children standard for hospital services.

3 Rule 11, The Detention Centre Rules 2001.

4 Detention Services Operating Standards manual for Immigration Service Removal Centres.

5 Rule 22, The Young Offender Institution Rules 2000.

6 Rule 18, The Secure Training Centre Rules 1998.

7 Department for Education (2015) Boarding schools. National minimum standards, standard 5;
Department for Education (2015) Residential special schools. National minimum standards, standard 5.

8 Department for Education (2015) Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards.