

What Makes The Difference? TOOLS and RESOURCES

NAME OF TOOL/RESOURCE:
Keeping In Touch policy

NAME AND REGION OF AGENCY/ORGANISATION THAT DEVELOPED THIS TOOL/RESOURCE:
Rainer Surrey 16plus Service

Purpose and brief description of tool/resource:

Procedures to ensure the local authority fulfills its duty as a corporate parent by keeping in touch with care leavers until their 21st birthday (or beyond if in an agreed programme of education or training), as stipulated in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Includes legal requirements, guidance and process.

Publication Date:

Contact details for further information about this tool/resource

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Evidence for the effectiveness/ impact of this tool/resource

Positive impact of this tool/resource:

1. This policy ensures that PA's are clear on the procedure for Keeping in Touch and that management can maintain an overview of 'In Touch' cases and ensure legal obligations are carried out in accordance with the Children Leaving Care Act 2000.
- 2.
- 3.

16 Contact – Keeping in Touch

This procedure should be read in conjunction with LAC 1 ‘Looked After Children Guidelines – Introduction’

One of the central themes of the Children (Leaving Care) Act is that the local authority should fulfil its duty as a corporate parent by keeping in touch with care leavers until their 21st birthday (or beyond if in an agreed programme of education or training).

This should happen through:

- Statutory visits to Looked After young people 16 or 17 years old by their allocated case holder, will be made not less than once every 6 weeks. For young people 18+ the minimum requirement is not less than every 13 weeks.
- Regular contact with the young person by their Leaving Care Personal Adviser from the time of the writing of the Pathway Plan. Regular contact with the young person by the Leaving Care Personal Adviser must be maintained at the appropriate level to implement the Pathway Plan.

Thereafter, the level of contact should be determined through discussion at the review of the Pathway Plan. It should never fall below the stipulated contacts for Looked After 16 and 17 year olds or 18+ young people, unless this is clearly recorded as the young person’s wishes. Where this is the case, the specific wishes of the young person should be ascertained and recorded on the case file, and efforts made to negotiate an acceptable minimum level of contact for the young person. This might, for example, involve the sending of ‘a contact letter’, birthday and Christmas cards and Service newsletters.

Particular attention should be paid to keeping in touch with Relevant young people, those who have left care at 16 or 17 years. Such young people will have left care **because it is in accordance with their own wishes** and they may therefore resist ongoing contact with the team. Nevertheless, contact should be maintained wherever possible. Relevant young people will rely on the local authority for rent and maintenance payments (where they are not able to make their own arrangements) and this may enable a point of contact.

In circumstances where they lose touch the Leaving Care Team **must** immediately take reasonable steps to re-establish contact on behalf of the local authority and to continue doing so until they succeed in making contact.

Similar requirements apply to Former Relevant young people (those care leavers aged 18+ years). A proactive approach to maintaining contact should be adopted at all times. Personal Advisers should regularly up date the “In Touch” Recording Sheet”. (SCS943).

Where it is not possible to establish an understanding, the Leaving Care Personal Adviser will have to balance the risk of alienating the young person with the need to maintain contact.

Reviews of Pathway Plans will continue whether or not contact is maintained and should consider, in circumstances where there is no contact between the local authority and the young person, how contact might be resumed and what has been done to enable it.

The primary purpose of keeping in touch will be to meet the needs of the young person as identified in their Pathway Assessment and to ensure that the Pathway Plan’s objectives are met.