

**What Makes The Difference?
TOOLS and RESOURCES**

NAME OF TOOL/RESOURCE: Contact Policy

NAME AND REGION OF AGENCY/ORGANISATION THAT DEVELOPED THIS TOOL/RESOURCE:

Tower Hamlets Leaving Care Service

Purpose and Brief Description of Tool/Resource:

This document is an example of a contact policy for a leaving care service. It sets out the expectations of contact for different groups of young people

Publication Date: not known

Contact details for further information about this tool/resource

Name and title: Jo Bird, Team Manager

Tel: 0207 364 1140

E: mail: jo.bird@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Evidence for the effectiveness/ impact of this tool/resource

Positive impact of this tool/resource:

1. This policy provides clear guidance to staff on expectations of levels of contact with young people.

LBTH / Leaving Care Service

Contact Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Leaving Care Service has a duty to promote contact with all care leavers aged 16-21 years old and up to 24 years old if they are in education.

1.2 Tower Hamlets Leaving Care Service will offer minimum contact on a four to six weekly basis. Deviation to this will only be agreed to either in supervision or within the young person's Pathway Planning process.

1.3 Attached to this policy is the 'Standards for communicating with looked after children and care leavers which was produced in consultation with managers and staff in the children's division and the RAP group – Jan 2003. This gives contact guidelines on the following areas:

- Telephone Calls
- Absence from work
- Social workers leaving
- Contact with social workers

2.0 Contact

2.1 It is Important that contact is at agreed, regular intervals. This allows the Personal Adviser & young person the opportunity to establish a close, trusting relationship. Within which the PA can provide advice, support & guidance based upon the wishes & needs of the young person.

2.2 Contact with a personal advisor can take many different forms:

- Face to face contact (may include office visits not including collecting monies)
- Telephone contact
- Letters
- 'e'-Mail, voice mail and text messaging

2.3 The frequency of 'face to face' contact will be at a minimum of every six weeks. This will be monitored via supervision, difficulties in achieving this will be recorded within supervision notes.

3.0 Standards of contact

3.1 Home Visits

It is important to visit a young person in their home environment to assess their living conditions. This includes:

- Health and Safety / Security
- Quality of furnishings, kitchen equipment etc
- Occupancy
- Observations of improvement or deterioration in living environment

3.2 Cancellation

- There should be agreement at all times with regard to cancellation of contact.
- Should either party be late they should telephone as soon as possible in advance.
- If Y/P does not make a contact in the first instance a telephone call should be made, followed by the P.A. writing a letter offering a new appointment.
- Cancelled appointments should be followed up immediately to ensure a new date and time is agreed.

3.3 No Response

- If above attempts prove to be unsuccessful then you must involve a third party, i.e. Line manager, Social worker, Probation worker, Health worker, Key worker etc.
- Failing all the above attempts then proceed with an unannounced visit.
- If no contact is made after unannounced visit and this is out of character, and if the y/p is considered vulnerable or under stress, then consideration should be given to reporting the young person as missing to the police.

4.0 Young People in Bed and Breakfast/Hostel accommodation

4.1 When a young person is placed in bed and breakfast or a hostel environment it is very important to assess the following:

- Health and Safety
- What if any cooking facilities are provided
- Laundry provisions
- Rules and regulations -does the young person have to sign in, fire drills/arrangements etc.
- Overall suitability of B&B or hostel

5.0 Young People with Disabilities

For young people with disabilities in residential homes or young people in children's homes contact will allow an assessment as to whether their needs are being met. The young persons' understanding of need should be respected.

5.1 Young People in Foster Care

In foster care settings it is important to ensure that the contact is focused around the young person, allowing the young person to have discussion away from other 'family' members.

6.0 Young Person 'on licence' to Leaving Care Service

Contact with young people held at Leaving Care on 'licence' must take place in accordance with Department of Health guidelines – every 6 weeks, within the young person's home, after which the Personal Adviser will complete a Statutory Visit form.

7.0 Health and Safety

For all workers individual safety is of paramount importance, the following policy documents and practice guidelines must inform all contact:

- The working alone policy
- Hazard status
- Use of mobile phones
- Risk assessment policy
- Completion of whereabouts sheets
- Office contact when on late visits

8.0 Monitoring and Recording of Contact

8.1 All contact with young people must be recorded on a 'Young Person Contact Recording Sheet' which will be kept at the front of the young person's file.

8.2 Contact will be monitored via supervision, file audits and at Pathway Plan Review meetings.

9.0 Minimum contact arrangements (by age / current circumstances)

9.1 Young People 16+

1 x 6 weekly minimum 'face to face' contact / visit. More frequent contact agreed in supervision / Pathway Plan review. This contact would be separate to the field work social worker's contact

9.2 Young People 17(+)'on Licence' to Leaving Care Service

A statutory visit must be undertaken at a minimum of every six weeks

9.3 Young People 18(+)'and settled'

Telephone contact on a 3 weekly basis, if there is no response from the young person, the PA will write, text or email

If there is still no response the PA will call & leave a card or note, further 'no contact' should result in immediate discussion with line manager.

Face to face meeting should take place every 6 weeks.

9.4 Young People 18(+)'and not settled

e.g Homeless, vulnerable, Child Protection issues

Separate contact arrangements will be agreed in supervision in accordance with the individual circumstances of the young person

9.5 Young Person in Higher Education (21 – 24 years)

Minimum of 6 weekly telephone contact, frequency of 'face to face' contact to be agreed with the young person

9.6 Young people in prison / YOI

1st visit will take place within the first 4 weeks of prison sentence / remand.

Subsequent visits by mutual arrangement, no less than 6 weekly.

Contact should also be maintained in writing.

9.7 Young People in any emergency / short-term accommodation

e.g B&B / Hotel

Accompany young person to B&B to settle them in (&)

1st visit within first week of placement

(i) To meet young person & ensure they are safe & well

(ii) To take opportunity to check living environment and relay concerns to Homeless Persons Unit if appropriate.

(iii) To agree future planned visit.

9.8 Section 24 Young People

If Personal Adviser service is being provided contact should be as '18(+) and settled young people, or 18(+) and not settled young people'.

If Personal Adviser service not needed, young person will be informed about how they can access future advice / assistance via duty system.

Contact maintained by birthday / seasonal card – sent via duty admin worker.

