

Good Communication Guidance for Professionals who work with Children and Young People in Care and those Leaving Care

Children in Care Council have consistently raised that good communication with their key workers, parents and carers is one of the most important ways to improve their care experience. Our recent surveys showed that poor communication was a big issue for them, alongside not feeling listened too, planning happening far too late, information not being given in a format they can easily understand and feeling anxious about what support they will receive once they cease to be looked after or leave care.

Top Tips from Children and Young People are:

- ▶ Ask the child or young person their preferred method of communication when you first meet them.
- ▶ Don't allow a young person to disappear off the radar, make courtesy calls often to check out how they are doing.
- ▶ Always call a child or young person back promptly when they call you. Respond, even if you say 'I can't talk now and will call later'.
- ▶ Ensure messages and any requests, are passed on to the relevant people quickly and follow up so they are actioned.
- ▶ If you are off sick or on leave, let your child or young people know and give them a contact name and number to contact whilst you are off.

"Need to feel like I'm not alone"

- ▶ Spend more quality time on visits, show an interest and inspire them to achieve their goals, hobbies and ambitions.
- ▶ Do special things other than 'work', give them birthday cards, well done cards, praise them for small steps.
- ▶ Ensure children and young people know how to make a complaint or a compliment, encourage them to do so and make sure they are aware of VIVA (Voluntary Independent Visiting and Advocacy).
- ▶ Make sure your child or young person knows who to contact if they don't feel safe, healthy or happy at home, in school/college, work or in their community.
- ▶ Make sure young people are aware of leaving care issues at an early age, so they are prepared, less anxious and resilient once they are ready to leave care.

"Just because I am doing well in life does not mean I am always okay"

- ▶ Remind children and young people of appointments, especially important ones, keep reminding them.
- ▶ Don't presume that a child or young person finds everyday tasks easy, such as making a phone call or booking an appointment. Make sure they are confident to do so, help them and offer an advocate when they find things challenging.
- ▶ Introduce children and young people to designated teachers and key workers.
- ▶ Share ideas and thoughts with all people involved in the child or young person's life, with their permission.
- ▶ Make all written information available in an easy to read format and ensure the young person understands it.
- ▶ Encourage them to 'speak out' confidently, tell them about their rights and responsibilities and about the Children in Care Council, a place where they can air their views and opinions, be listened too and be taken seriously.

"Keep trying!! Never give up and please don't make false promises"

Thank you from the Children in Care Council – 2016/7
James Collins - T: 07803287183 E: james.collins@oxfordshire.gov.uk