



Oldham  
Partnership



# A YOUNG PERSON'S

## Guide to Contact

# WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT

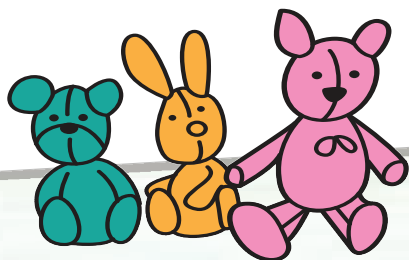
You should be encouraged and supported to maintain **Contact** with your parents, grandparents, relatives and half siblings. That's if you want it and it is safe to do so.

Your social worker should listen to the wishes and feelings of you and your parents before decisions about your contact arrangements are made.

The contact you have with your family and friends will be agreed by your social worker and written into your **Care Plan**.

It should be written in your care plan how often you have contact, where it is going to be and how often it is going to be reviewed. Consideration should be given to contact sessions outside of the **Contact Centres**.

If you go to stay with different foster carers for a short break, your foster carer must continue with your contact as agreed in your **Short Break Plan**.





Whether you have face to face or **Letter Box Contact**, these arrangements should be clearly recorded stating where and how often this will take place.

If you are a care leaver, contact arrangements will be agreed and clearly stated in your **Pathway Plan**, and regularly reviewed in your **Pathway Plan review**.

Support will be given to you to help you maintain contact with your family, relatives and friends. Therefore, if contact arrangements are not being maintained for whatever reason, you need to raise this with your **Post 16 After Care Worker**, **Independent Reviewing Officer** or **Children's Rights Officer**.

Before you have contact with your family and friends, your social worker will decide whether your contact needs to be supervised.

Where it is possible, the person who will supervise your contact will be known to you and your family.

Sometimes the person who supervises your contact will have to write down notes to record the outcome of your contact.



If it is safe to do so, and your contact is going well, the person who supervises your contact will write down their notes after the contact has finished.

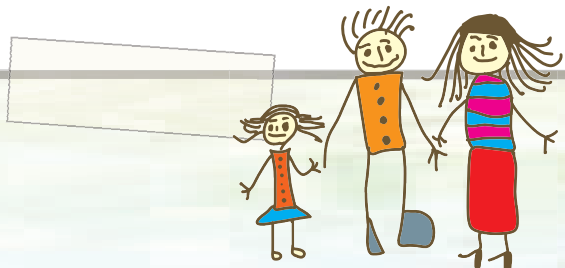
Contact should never be cancelled unless there is a very good reason to do so.

Your carer or member of staff should tell your social worker and arrange an alternative contact date.

Contact you have with your family and friends should be a positive thing. If before, during or after your contact anyone is worried about the way things affect you there might need to be a meeting to discuss what is causing it. This is so that contact can be managed safely so you or others don't get hurt or upset.

Your contact arrangements should be looked at every 6 months in your **Review Meeting** or sooner if things aren't going so well.

**REMEMBER: YOU SHOULD KNOW AND UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN YOUR LIFE. IF YOU DON'T OR YOU ARE NOT HAPPY WITH CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO COMPLAIN. YOU CAN SPEAK TO YOUR SOCIAL WORKER, INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER, OR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS OFFICER. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO EXPRESS HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR CONTACT, AN **ADVOCATE** WILL SPEAK ON YOUR BEHALF.**



# JARGON BUSTER



**Contact** – This is the word used to describe when and how you see your family and relatives (or talk to them on the telephone).

**Contact centre** - This is a place where children/young people can spend time with family members with whom they no longer live with.

**Letter box contact** – This is when you get a special letter from a family member, such as your brother or sister who has been adopted.


**What is my Care Plan** – All looked after children have a care plan. This is the document your social worker writes which has all the information about you, where you live and plans for your future. It should be updated regularly as you and your needs change.

**What is a Review meeting** - This is your meeting where your social worker and other professionals will talk to you and your family and see if anything has changed since they first made decisions that were written in your care plan. If things have changed then new agreements may be made. You will be fully involved in the review and it is **important that you have your say**.

**What is an Advocate** – This is someone who will help you to speak up for what you would like to happen in your life. The **Children's Rights Officers** will do this for you.





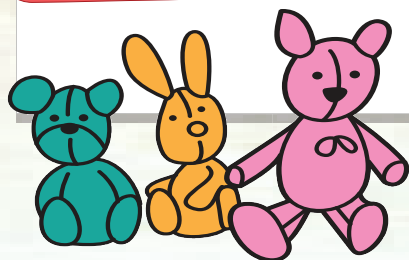


**What is a Pathway Plan** – From being 16 your Pathway Plan looks at the support you will need to live independently. It can help you think about what you already know and about what you need to learn. It is your plan for the future. It includes things like where you'll live, any education or training you might want, jobs, your money, any cultural or identity needs, your health and your lifestyle.

**Independent Reviewing Officer – IRO** – This person will 'chair' your review. This means they will make sure the right people are at your review, that everyone has a say and to make sure your plan is right for you. They should talk to you privately before each review.

**Post 16 After Care Worker** – this is a social worker who you will be linked to and will plan your transition into adult hood. They will help you complete your pathway plan, discuss accommodation, education and employment for the future.

**Short break plan** – Sometimes you might need a short break away from your carers, for a number of reasons.



# SOME EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE



Two foster carers meet up with the siblings since the parents contact had to be stopped.

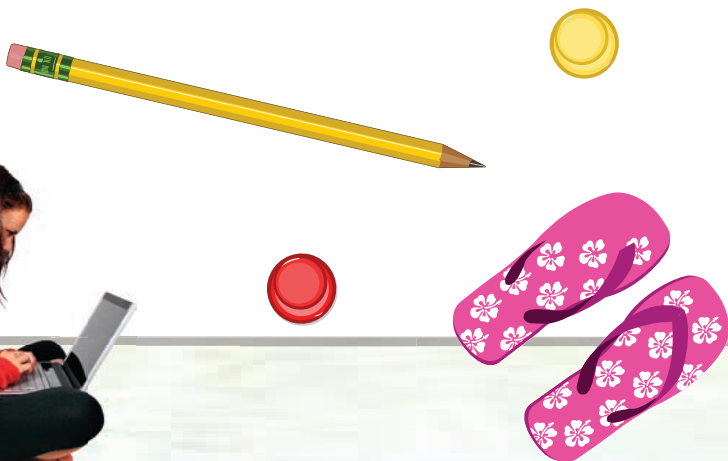
The contact supervisor writes her notes down after the contact has taken place. This makes me feel more relaxed because they are not sat with a pen and paper writing down what you're saying to your family. Doing this after the contact is over helps you to have better contact with your family and friends.

One IRO encourages carers to take the siblings out for additional contact on top of the contact they have with parents 6 times a year.

One sibling group has one child in foster placement, one in residential placement and others placed with extended family. The children and their carers regularly meet up for a meal together.

Two other foster carers allow the child in their care to have their sibling round for visits, meals and overnight stays.

Another carer lives near a father who has some siblings still living in the family home. Dad passes regularly and is welcome to call in for a brew. The carers put on a buffet on Boxing Day and the father and siblings are invited.



# IF YOU HAVE SIBLINGS WHO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED

If you have a sibling who has been adopted, the most likely arrangement which will have been set in place, will be something called a letterbox exchange, this is explained in your Jargon Buster.

This is a voluntary arrangement with your sibling's adopters. The adoption team try as much as possible to encourage everyone to stick to the plans made and act as a kind of post office for these special letters.

If this letterbox is setup, you will have the opportunity to write to brothers or sisters. Your social worker can support you to write this letter if you need any help.

You can also contact the adoption team for any advice.



Developed and designed by the **Oldham CICC.**

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