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**Good Communications Guidance for Professionals who work with Children & Young People in Oxfordshire**

Children in Care Council (CiCC) members said that having ‘good communication’ with their key workers, parents and carers helps improve their experience of being cared for.

The CiCC developed this guidance to provide practitioners with good practice tips for effectively communicating so children and young people feel less anxious about being cared for and prepared for leaving care. This guidance can however be used by all practitioners, working with all children and young people in Oxfordshire.

**Top Tips are:**

Ask the child or young person their preferred name, pronoun, and method of communication when you first meet them.

Don’t allow a young person to disappear off the radar, call them often to check 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 person 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’, e.g. birthday cards, well done cards, praise them for small steps.

Ensure children and young people know how to make a complaint or a compliment and encourage them to do so, making sure they are aware of National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).

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/university/work or in their community.

Make sure young people are aware of the upcoming changes early on, e.g., when leaving care, moving schools, so they are prepared, less anxious and more resilient to manage these changes.

**“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. Help them feel confident and offer an advocate if 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. Promote Mind of My Own (MOMO), where available, an app which enables them to feed into their reviews.

Support children and young people to share their views, think through difficult choices, and help them to make informed decisions on their own.

Encourage them to ‘speak out’ confidently, tell them about their rights and responsibilities and about the Children in Care Council and Voice of Oxfordshire Youth (VOXY), where they can air their views, be listened to and be taken seriously.

**“Keep trying!! Never give up and please don’t make false promises”**

**Thank you from the Children in Care Council**

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