# Staying In Touch Policy

Controlled document

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| Author | David Abbott |
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## 1 Aim

The aim of this policy is to outline the principles, practice and procedure for Higher Hopes Ltd, staying in touch with children and young people who have left their residential services.

## 2 Statement

The principles of ‘staying in touch’ with children and young people who have been in residential care with a provider are well established in the sector. The ‘staying closer’ agenda put in place by the government in 2016 puts the children at the centre of their future plans and encourages residential provider to continue their well-established relationships and support after they have left placement. The continued relationship from the residential setting of significant adults leads to better outcomes and success for the child or young person.

Higher Hopes does not yet provide the full ‘staying closer’ services which essentially include a residential solution for the child or young person as well as on-going support.

However Higher Hopes does intend to ‘stay in touch’ with those children and young people who have been in residential services with them. Staying in Touch provides emotional support and by maintaining the relationships that have been made with the staff in the children’s homes

## 3 Leaving Residential Care

Leaving Residential Care can be very unsettling for children and young people. Children and Young People report that:

- Do not feel safe
- Are not ready to live independently
- Feel abandoned when they leave residential care
- Felt they went from people always being around them to being on their own, suffering from isolation and loneliness
- Want support to be available when they need it
- They need help enhancing practical skills such as budgeting, bill paying, cooking and washing clothes
- They need help to build their confidence to attend benefits appointments / meeting to support self-esteem / enrolling on VCS schemes / work experience schemes.
- They would like 24/7 contact - Crisis Support Offer (in the same way a parent/carer could be contacted in the event of an issue

It is the aim of Higher Hopes to ‘stay in touch’ with those children and young people who have been part of their residential services and contribute to enabling and supporting them to achieve a positive future.

## 4 Leaving Care

### 4.1 Pathway Planning

Please see Referral Admission and Discharge Policy and Care Plan Policy. Higher Hopes will liaise with Local Authority and Responsible Parents at least 6 months prior to discharge. They will collaborate and coordinate with the Local Authority to formulate the 'pathway plan' for those leaving care.

### 4.2 Independence and Moving on Plan

The Registered Manager will ensure that the Independence and Moving on Plan (see Referrals Admission and Discharge Policy) is completed by the keyworker of the child/young person and involves collaboration with the Social Worker and Child and reflects the goals and objectives.

The 'Independence and Moving on Plan' should detail the necessary learning and development required for the young person and direct the home staff into supporting the child/young person to develop those skills required for their next step.

As part of this plan the 'staying in touch' of the home care staff should be discussed.

## 5 Procedure for 'Staying in Touch'

### 5.1 Making everyone aware of 'staying in touch'

The Registered Manager should direct the service (Key-workers) to make the child/young person and Responsible Parents and Social Workers aware of this 'staying in touch' policy at the earliest opportunity within the 'Pathway Planning Process'.

The service should not presume that the child/young person and professionals e.g. Social Worker, feel that 'staying in touch will' be in the best interest of the child/young person. In most cases 'staying in touch' to some degree will be considered beneficial and the service needs to be clear of the scope of the support that can be offered.

### 5.2 Gaining Consent

See Higher Hopes 'Consent Policy'. It is critical that the Registered Manager gains consent for the Child/ Young Person and the Responsible Parent/Social Worker for 'staying in touch' services.

The child/young person' should always provide consent for Higher Hopes Services to 'stay in touch'. The consent form should be signed by them. The Responsible Parents, Social Worker, other professionals should also be aware and give consent to Higher Hopes 'staying in touch'. They should also sign the consent form.

In rare circumstances where regardless of 'age' the child/young person are not 'competent' to consent, then careful consideration should be given with the Social Work and other professionals as to whether it is in the child/young persons that

Higher Hopes staff remain in touch. Explicit consent should be provided from the responsible adults/guardian/parents in these instances.

In other rare circumstances where the child/young person consents to higher Hopes staying in touch but the Responsible Parents/Social Worker and other professionals do not consent then careful consideration should be given regarding 'competency' and the 'rights' of the child and young person before proceeding. Higher Hopes staff should consult senior management in these circumstances. The decision as to whether 'staying in touch' should be carefully documented.

### 5.3 Staying in touch plan

The Registered Manager should ensure that the 'staying in touch plan' is completed as part of the 'pathway planning meeting' and follow on from the 'Independence and Moving in Plan'. It should detail:

- The purpose of 'staying in touch' e.g., what the intended outcomes are.
- Who from Higher hopes will stay in touch – this might be one person or several/all members of the team. Typically, this will be the keyworker and associated keyworkers and or the Registered Manager.
- The format of staying in touch e.g., face to face and/or telephone or virtual contact.
- The frequency of 'staying in touch' e.g. weekly, bi weekly, monthly etc
- Whether the Child/Young Person can phone the children's home itself, when and how often (in these instances a note in the home log book should be made).
- The reporting and communication agreement – this should reflect what external professionals receive reports of the 'staying ion touch' contact. This should be stipulated on the consent forms. Careful consideration should be given to those children/young persons leaving care who are 18 yrs.
- Who to contact in an emergency – what the support arrangements are in the community for the child/young person and who should be contacted if Higher Hopes staff become aware of an emergency.
- Any agreed financial support
- Agreed visits back to the Residential Home – these can be arranged and facilitated but the parameters and all risks considered.
- Risk Assessments should be completed for all 'staying in touch arrangements' covering each aspect of the plans.
- The length of time the 'staying in touch' plan should be in place. There is no definitive time frame for this. Consent and collaboration of the young person should be revisited and reviewed frequently, at least every three months.

### 5.4 Review and monitoring

The Registered Manager will ensure that the 'staying in touch plan' is reviewed every three months. As part of the review the 'records and consents' will be revisited, reviewed and refreshed.

Where consent has been given by the child/young person for Responsible parents, social workers or other professionals, then the review should involve them where ever practicably possible.

## 6 Recording, Communication and Reporting

### 6.1 Recording

All contact in any format will be recorded within the Child/Young Persons case records using a 'staying closer contact sheet'.

### 6.2 Communication

The Registered Manager will ensure that the contact sheet records are communicated with the relevant persons within 48 hours of the contact happening, as outlined within the consent forms and the relevant plans.

### 6.3 Reporting

The service will report to Responsible Parents, Social Workers and other professionals following contact as indicated and deemed appropriate in the consent forms and in the relevant plans.

Reporting may occur where Safeguarding or criminal matters may have occurred. This may include involvement of emergency services or Child or Adult Social Care Services including LADO. (See Child or Adult Safeguarding Policy).

Higher Hopes staff should be mindful of the Adult Safeguarding Policy and that if the Young Person is 18yrs + then there are different legal parameters to what can be reported than to that of a child. Staff should always seek advice from on-call managers if in doubt.

## 7 Contact with Higher Hopes outside of the 'staying in touch' plan

Higher Hopes does not permit or support any contact of it's staff with Children or Young People outside of the 'staying in touch plan', which is not fully transparent with the service, overseen by the Registered Manager and has the involvement, if appropriate, of the Responsible parents or other professionals involved with the child/young person.

Higher Hopes does not permit or support staff having unagreed contact with Children, Young People who may even have become adults after they have left the service if the staff member is within our employment. This includes if a child initiates the contact with a staff member. If the child makes contact then the staff member is to report this.

All contact with children in any format, face to face, virtually e.g. via social media platforms, telephone or otherwise is to be reported to the service, the content of the contact recorded, and agreements as to a way forward with full consent of the Young Person and Responsible Parents and other professionals if relevant.

All contact should be placed within a ‘staying in touch plan’.

All areas of ‘gift giving’ to children/young people who may even be adults after they have left is also not permitted or supported outside of a transparent agreement with the service and contained within a ‘staying in touch plan’.

**Review**
This policy will be reviewed every three years