

Supporting children living in residential child care to build relationships with their friends

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Find out how you can support the children you care for to build relationships with their friends

Supporting safe and appropriate relationships

Relationships with friends can be a valuable support for young people who may not have had safe and stable family relationships.

The children you care for may find friendships challenging but it's important to remind them that all young people feel this way at times.

We've seen the [value of positive and meaningful relationships to children and young people](#) on the previous page. However, there are risks you should be aware of.

The vulnerability of some young people may lead them to establish risky or abusive friendships with friends. You should raise any concerns you have with your supervisor and communicate these to the local authority. You should also agree strategies to [manage and monitor such relationships](#).

Make sure your concerns are well-founded and not based on assumptions.

During adolescence, young people will start to explore [intimate relationships](#). You should recognise the importance of these relationships and provide emotional and practical support [where appropriate and where needed](#).

Creating a welcoming environment in the home

Many young people feel stigmatised and singled-out because they're in care or embarrassed that they live in a children's home.

Creating an environment in the home that's 'homely', warm and welcoming will encourage young people to invite friends home. You should try to give them some private space if appropriate.

Realistically, it can be difficult to facilitate visits to a home because of the needs of the other children and young people who live there. But you should make every effort to support the children you look after to have normal friendships.

Supporting relationships with friends in the home

Supporting relationships between children and young people who live in the home can be challenging at times and needs careful management. If you're involved in the process of matching and new children move into your home, you should consider the interaction of all the children carefully.

However, the home is a valuable opportunity for young people to develop positive relationships. You can help this by supporting shared interests between young people and working together on positive communication and resolving conflicts.

You should also support young people when their friends [move on from the home](#) and recognise that for some this may be the loss of a meaningful relationship. If it is wanted and safe, continuing to support any friendships when children have moved on is important.

Useful resources (supporting children living in residential care to build relationships with their friends)

[Our work to support children who are looked after](#)

[Our chosen or 'curated' research about the number who are looked after](#)

[It's not just about the adults!](#) – Judy Furnivall from the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children discusses how important it is for children in homes to develop the ability to navigate relationships with each other

We want your feedback

Help us to improve the Residential child care worker resource by telling us what you think about it in our short [four question survey](#).