

London Borough of Barnet
2 Bristol Avenue,
Colindale,
London, NW9 4EW
6 June 2022
Our ref: 8268329

Thank you for your request received on 10 May 2022, for the following information:

I am conducting research (post pandemic) exploring advancements made by local authorities in policy and practice due to the increased use of digital/online contact arrangements. The research objectives are to collate evidence and examples of local authority policy, guidance, and training. The research aims to compare and disseminate recent developments highlighting examples of good practice.

I am submitting the following 4 FOI questions to 152 LA's across England.

1. Please could you confirm whether your local authority has formal policies and/or formal guidance in place to support digital or online contact arrangements specifically? (Y/N). If yes, please could you answer the following questions.

0. Do you have formal policies and or guidance do you have in place to guide practitioners and professionals regarding digital contact? Yes/No

1. Do you have formal policies/guidance supporting kinship carers, foster carers, special guardians, or other carers regarding digital contact? Yes/No

2. Do you have formal policies/guidance supporting birth parents of children who are being cared for or have been adopted regarding digital contact?

Yes/No

3. Do you have formal policies/guidance supporting children and young people who are being cared for or have been adopted regarding digital contact?

Yes/No

4. Other Yes/No Please specify

2. If your LA answered YES to any of the above (1a-1e), please may I have a copy(ies) and if they are now included in your publication scheme or otherwise publicly available please could you direct me to relevant links with titles of documents.

3. Do you provide any training or training course(s) to equip the digital literacy/competence in support of online/digital contact arrangements for any of the following groups:

0. children and young people in care? Yes/No

1. birth parents of children and young people in care? Yes/No

2. carers including kinship, foster, special guardians, and other carers?
Yes/No
3. practitioners and professionals involved with digital contact arrangements.
Yes/No
4. siblings, grand parents or other family members involved with digital contact arrangements? Yes/No
5. other Yes/No (please specify)

4. If your LA provides training programmes for any of the above groups in support of digital/online contact arrangements, please can you provide any information and signpost me to any links or online advertising, or supply any other leaflets, or course content relating to questions (3a-3f).

This research is part of a PhD ESRC funded project exploring developments in digital/online contact arrangements. . The working title of this study chapter is: How local authorities are managing digital/online contact arrangements for children and young people experiencing care. And the study is inspired by recent social distancing which necessitated an increased use of digital/online contact arrangements for children and young people experiencing care during the pandemic. Research indicates that some local authorities have developed guidance and policies based on recent intensified learning and experiences. This research takes the opportunity to reflect upon these developments, with the aim of collating and disseminating best practice for managing and supporting digital/online contact arrangements.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need further clarification, and in the meantime very many thanks in advance.

We have processed this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Response

The council holds the information requested and it is attached/ the answers to your questions are below

1. Please could you confirm whether your local authority has formal policies and/or formal guidance in place to support digital or online contact arrangements specifically? (Y/N).

No, LBB does not have any formal policies or guidance relating to this. Supervised contact which is held over video messaging is subject to the same Contact Agreement that parents adhere to for all contact. Contact Centre staff have access to guidance published by the National Association of Child Contact Centres.

If yes, please could you answer the following questions.

0. Do you have formal policies and or guidance do you have in place to guide practitioners and professionals regarding digital contact? Yes/No

1. Do you have formal policies/guidance supporting kinship carers, foster carers, special guardians, or other carers regarding digital contact? Yes/No

2. Do you have formal policies/guidance supporting birth parents of children

who are being cared for or have been adopted regarding digital contact?

Yes/No

3. Do you have formal policies/guidance supporting children and young people who are being cared for or have been adopted regarding digital contact?

Yes/No

4. Other Yes/No Please specify

Not Applicable

2. If your LA answered YES to any of the above (1a-1e), please may I have a copy(ies) and if they are now included in your publication scheme or otherwise publicly available please could you direct me to relevant links with titles of documents.

Not Applicable

3. Do you provide any training or training course(s) to equip the digital literacy/competence in support of online/digital contact arrangements for any of the following groups:

0. children and young people in care? Yes/No

No

1. birth parents of children and young people in care? Yes/No

No

2. carers including kinship, foster, special guardians, and other carers?

Yes/No

No

3. practitioners and professionals involved with digital contact arrangements.

Yes/No

LBB staff have access to general training and guidance on using digital platforms which is provided by the IT department.

4. siblings, grand parents or other family members involved with digital contact arrangements? Yes/No

No

5. other Yes/No (please specify)

Support around accessing virtual contacts is provided on a case by case basis as and when the need arises either by the contact centre or allocated social worker for the child.

4. If your LA provides training programmes for any of the above groups in support of digital/online contact arrangements, please can you provide any information and signpost me to any links or online advertising, or supply any other leaflets, or course content relating to questions (3a-3f).

Not Applicable

Further information

If you are interested in the data that the council holds you may wish to visit Open Barnet, the council's data portal. This brings together all our published datasets and other information of interest on one searchable database for anyone, anywhere to access. <http://open.barnet.gov.uk/>

Advice and Assistance : Direct Marketing

If you are a company that intends to use the names and contact details of council officers (or other officers) provided in this response for direct marketing, you need to be registered with the Information Commissioner to process personal data for this purpose. You must also check that the individual (whom you wish to contact for direct marketing purposes) is not registered with one of the Preference Services to prevent Direct Marketing. If they are you must adhere to this preference.

You must also ensure you comply with the Privacy Electronic and Communications Regulations (PECR). For more information follow this Link www.ico.org.uk

For the avoidance of doubt the provision of council (and other) officer names and contact details under FOI does not give consent to receive direct marketing via any media and expressly does not constitute a 'soft opt-in' under PECR.

Your rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review within the next 40 working days by writing to the Information Management Team at: foi@barnet.gov.uk. Or by post to Records & Information Management Service, Assurance Group, London Borough of Barnet, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

If, having exhausted our review procedure, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you will have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF (telephone: 0303 123 1113; website www.ico.org.uk). There is no charge for making an appeal.