

**The Child Protection Statutory Visit**

Statutory Child Protection visits should be purposeful, planned and reflect the concerns and risks recorded in the Child Protection Plan. The objective of the visit should be to assess the ongoing safety of the child and to assess the family’s progress against the Child Protection Plan. A distinction must be made between a planned visit to see the child and one that may be coincidental or an unplanned contact. A casual meeting or encounter, or seeing a child during a meeting, is not a 'visit'.

If a child/young person requires assistance to communicate, part of the planning must involve identifying who is the most appropriate person to assist with this. Consideration to the use of an interpreter for talking with children where English is not the first language should be addressed as part of the Child Protection Plan.

The statutory visit must always be carried out by a qualified social worker. Good practice means the child, where possible, should be seen alone and in the place where they are living. In circumstances where this has not been possible the reasons for this need to be recorded.

**Regularity of Statutory Visits**: The social worker should undertake statutory visits at intervals agreed in the Child Protection Plan and, at a minimum of every 28 days. The frequency of visits will be dependent upon the child’s circumstances; however most visits will be required to take place far more regularly than the statutory minimum of every 28 days.

**Recording of Statutory visits**: Statutory visits will be recorded in a Mosaic workflow held and this includes a written record of the child being seen and spoken to alone or reason recorded as to why not.

If there is a need for regular unannounced visits, then this should be clearly written into the Child Protection Plan.

Statutory Visits should include:

• **The child is seen alone**:

It is important to see the child alone and in the place where they are living to enable assessment of the suitability of the accommodation and the overall circumstances of the child’s living environment. The recording should include information about how the child responds to carers and their home environment overall. The child must be given the opportunity to say how they are feeling and for the social worker to assess and report on safety of the child, their health and other matters relevant to their living environment. To fully assess this it may be necessary, on occasions, to see the child outside of the home as observing children in different settings is an important part of assessment. These activities should be made alongside visits to the home, and not instead of. Whilst young children may not be able to verbalise their feelings, the recorded observations of their mobility, signs of injury, confidence in their environment, reaction to carers are all key to assessing their well-being. Where it has not been possible to see the child alone, the reason for this must be recorded.

• **The names of all those present are recorded**:

In order to understand the child’s environment, it is important to know who lives in the household and what part they play in the child’s life. Carers who are consistently absent at visits may indicate a difficulty for the child with that adult, certainly it is difficult to assess the child’s environment without seeing key carers with the child. In cases where a Child Protection Plan is in place, visitors or associates of the family may be key to the safeguarding aspects of the child’s home life or of the Child Protection Plan.

• **The child’s environment is assessed according to the issues of concern**:

This is particularly relevant in child protection. The home conditions should be investigated in accordance with the issues of concern, for example in neglect cases the food volume, clothing stock, dryness of beds, locks on doors etc should be the focus, whilst in alcohol abuse cases additional investigations of alcohol stocks, bins and cupboards will be helpful. It may be helpful to undertake some of these visits with other partners and to benchmark our assessments of poor home conditions on occasion, given that we may become desensitised to the conditions overtime.

• **The child’s sleeping arrangements are seen**:

Sleeping arrangements for children subject to Child Protection Plans should form part of the assessment. The standard of care in the home should be observed and recorded.

• **Parent refuses to allow worker to see the child**:

If the parents continue to refuse access to the child or will not consent to you seeing the child alone, management advice should immediately be sought as you may, depending on the complexity of the case and the level of risk, need to consider bringing the Child Protection Review Conference forward or in some situations consider taking legal advice.