

Family Time Policy and Procedure

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter applies to arrangements for children placed in foster and residential care to have family time with their parents, anyone with parental responsibility who is not a parent, siblings, any relative, friend or other person connected with the child.

For arrangements for social visits and overnight stays away with friends which staff/carers may agree, [Social Visits \(Including Overnight Stays\) Procedure](#).

For guidance regarding frequency of family time within the context of permanence, see [Securing Permanence Procedure](#).

NOTE: The responsible authority should review this policy (in particular the issue of sibling family time) with their local Children in Care Council and other Children in Care.

RELATED CHAPTER

[Decision to Look After and Care Planning Procedure](#)

RELEVANT GUIDANCE

[The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review](#)

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1. PRINCIPLES

- There is a presumption in law and practice that children who are Children in Care should have safe and fulfilling Family Time with their parents, sisters and brothers and other people connected with them unless it is not reasonably practical or consistent with the child's welfare;
- Family Time should always be made in the best interest of children and arrangements should be made that principally meet their needs;
- Children should be given opportunities to safely express their wishes about Family Time;
- Family Time should be for the benefit of children rather than the parent/relative or friend;
- Family Time should be delivered safely and where feasible with the minimum amount of interference and supervision from outside professionals. Family members wherever possible should be encouraged to facilitate their own Family Time;
- Where children have been moved on from care givers, Family Time should be maintained unless this is not in the child's best interests. Where placements have ended in an unplanned way there is often a need to repair damage or have a proper, positive ending;
- At Times Family Time can be lost with significant people consideration should always be made to seek to reconnect and re-establish Family Time;
- The aspiration is that Family Time should be positive and enjoyable experience for children;
- Family Time should where ever possible take place in the most convenient and natural setting possible;
- The distances and Time children are transported to and from Family Time should be kept to a minimum;
- Family Time should be set a reasonable level that is manageable for the child and does not unduly interfere with other areas of a child's life;
- Foster carers are often the people that children have the most trusting relationship with and they have as a consequence an important part to play in facilitating Family Time;
- Research and evidence based practice should be utilised to help inform how we organise and deliver Family Time;
- Recording of Family Time in supervised situations should be transparent, its purpose made clear, kept to a necessary minimum and shared with Family members;
- Closely monitored and highly supervised Family Time should only happen after thorough assessment and be deemed absolutely necessary to reduce identified risks;

- Family Time will only require supervision after assessment highlights that this is necessary to protect children from further harm or in circumstances where some level of supervision and observation is required to inform an assessment of the child/parent relationship;
- Even in situations where Family Time is supervised the expectation is that the facilitator can be supportive within Family Time and assist Family Time being a positive and fulfilling experience for children;
- Family Time arrangements should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to meet the child's needs. Family Time arrangements may need to change to reflect changed circumstances;
- Wherever possible the frequency, length and precise form of Family Time should be negotiated and agreed between Family members and the Social Worker taking into consideration the views and wishes of the children;
- The Local Authority needs in care proceedings to make in advance detailed and carefully considered proposals on the most appropriate Family Time arrangements based upon the principles outlined in this policy. Where appropriate, consultation should be undertaken with the Children's Guardian.

2. LEGAL CONTEXT

Section 34 of the Children Act 1989 outlines arrangements for Family Time where children are in the care of the local authority and states the following:

Parents, guardians and those with parental responsibility or with whom the child lived prior to coming into care are entitled to reasonable Family Time with the child as long as the local authority believes this will safeguard and promote the child's welfare;

The court can make an order relating to Family Time arrangements between the child and a named person on the application of:

- The local authority;
- The child;
- Parents, anyone with parental responsibility or anyone with whom the child was living prior to coming into care;
- Anyone else who has leave of the court to apply.

The local authority or the child can also apply to the court for an order terminating Family Time with a named person;

The court will scrutinise all Family Time arrangements during care proceedings and may make an order relating to Family Time when making the final care order;

When making an order the court may attach conditions to Family Time and may vary or discharge an order on the application of the local authority, the child or anyone else named in the order;

Any previous order relating to Family Time with the child made under section 8 of the Children Act 1989 will be discharged automatically once a care order is granted and new Family Time arrangements will need to be put in place.

3. FAMILY TIME FOR CHILDREN ACCOMMODATED UNDER SECTION 20

Family Time arrangements should be negotiated between Social Workers, parents and other significant people, and Social Workers should ensure that parents and others are aware that they can seek legal advice regarding Family Time. It should be noted that any current section 8 order will still be in force and will need to be included in any agreed Family Time arrangements;

Family Time must be set at a level that is reasonable, practicable and consistent with the child's welfare. If there is a need to set limits on Family Time, and a parent/person with parental responsibility is not happy with the level of Family Time set, legal advice should be sought. Legal advice should also be sought if there are concerns around the child's welfare during Family Time.

4. TYPES OF FAMILY TIME

Safe and fulfilling Family Time between children/young people in care with Family members and important adults should always be encouraged to sustain relations, build attachment and help children maintain and develop a sense of identity.

Family Time is not however a single or simple concept and has various meanings and interpretations based upon factors such as the legal context, the purpose of Family Time, safety issues.

An important initial distinction is between indirect and direct contact.

Indirect Family Time

Can involve letters, telephone calls, emails and social media.

Direct Family Time

Involves children meeting face to face with important people in their lives. Direct Family Time can however happen in a variety of different ways depending on the precise circumstances and context.

Non-facilitated Family Time

Involves children and young people meeting up with Family members and important other people in informal ways without the need for facilitation or supervision. This form of Family Time would be the ideal for most children in long term care.

Facilitated

Some Family Time will require the involvement of a third party to facilitate contact by assisting with the organisation and transportation but observation and supervision of the Family Time will be kept to a minimum. The third party role can be undertaken by a variety of people; Family members, Foster Carers, Family Support workers, Social Worker's. This form of Family Time would be the desirable plan in longer term Local Authority situations where there are few identified risks.

Supervised Family Time

Supervised Family Time would only be delivered and necessary in situations where assessment highlights an ongoing risk to children and it is necessary for a responsible third party to supervise Family Time to protect children from further harm.

Time-limited supervision and observation of Family Time may also be necessary as part of a wider assessment of the child/parent relationship. The reasons for Family Time being supervised and observed must be made transparently clear to all parties and the precise arrangements set out in a detailed Family Time planner.

Virtual Family Time

Careful consideration should be given to using video or phone calls to support ongoing Family Time, in particular when older children are requesting this.

Families could have a blended offer of virtual and face to face Family Time sessions. This will be set out in an agreement plan with all parties involved. This agreement and guidance that can be given to all parties involved can be viewed in [Warrington virtual family time practice guidance](#).

5. FAMILY TIME REFERRAL AND PROCESS

Prior to any Family Time taking place, an assessment and risk assessment should be completed by the Social Worker, which sits in the Family Time referral episode. (See *Appendix 1: Family Time Referral and Risk Assessment*).

The starting point of the assessment must be what is in the best interest of the child/young person. Please refer to (*Appendix 3: Guidance for Assessment of Contact / Family Time Arrangements and Appendix 4: A trauma model for planning, assessing and reviewing contact for looked-after children*), when assessing what Family Time should look like.

Family Time should be delivered in a manner consistent with the child's Care Plan and must take account of any Child Protection/ In Care Plan and/or in line with any decisions made by the Court. Family Time arrangements should focus on, and be shaped around, the child's needs and the wishes and feelings of parents and the child's care givers must be ascertained before a decision about Family Time arrangements is made or as far as it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Family Time must be based upon the individual needs of the child/young person but also takes into consideration the age and development of the child. When assessing Family Time for young babies and infants, workers should refer to the relevant research for instance: Long periods away from the primary caregiver where the infant is stressed and presenting as watchful or vigilant are likely to be harmful. (See *Appendix 3: Research (Advice by CAMHS) Contact Arrangements for Infants: A Guide for Practitioners*).

The child's welfare is the paramount consideration at all Times and each child's wishes and needs for Family Time should be individually considered using advocacy and communication services, if necessary. Family Time can be very important in helping children develop their sense of identity and understand their lives.

Prior to completing your referral, when you have assessed what Family Time should look like, please contact one of the Family Time managers to discuss and see if the needs for the Family Time suggested can be met.

It is always worth considering if a Family member/foster carer could support/facilitate/supervise the Family Time arrangements for a child/young person. It is also recommended that the use of a Family Group Conference could be the ideal process to consider any potential Family member or Family friends given that this may be in the child's best interest.

A risk assessment should be undertaken in relation to safety planning and potentially putting in place additional resources/ recommendations that minimises/removes any potential risks or needs that have been assessed. (See *Appendix 1: Family Time Referral and Risk Assessment*).

Requesting and Setting up Family Time

Families first are to be contacted at the earliest opportunity when it has been identified that there is a possibility that a child is coming to care either through the issuing of Care Proceedings or the signing of a S20 Voluntary accommodation agreement. This contact may be a direct email or telephone call to the Families First Seniors workers and/or Team Manager.

The purpose of this discussion will be to support the social worker in identifying the most appropriate location for the child and where required, ensure all Children Centre booking forms are completed and provided to our Early Help service.

This discussion will also explore timescales for transition in to the Families First Family Time team. It is the role of the Local Authority to promote family time and it will be expectation that the social worker will supervise family time until a transition point is agreed by Families First. Families first will endeavour to fully supervise a Family Time within 2 weeks, where this is not possible the identified Family Time worker will attend a family time to introduce themselves to the child and family in addition to complete the Family Time Agreement (see point 6).

Following on from this discussion a family time referral is required from the social worker documenting the agreed Family Time set up and plan.

6. FAMILY TIME AGREEMENT

A Family Time initial agreement meeting will be held with the allocated Family Time worker, Social Worker, Foster carer or Residential home, Children if age appropriate and Parents or Family, before taking over Family Time supervision being held by the Social Work team. This agreement needs to be put in place with parents (or any other relevant party) prior to Family Time going ahead by the Family Time team,. This should be an agreement which is formed with parents about the plans and expectations that is both expectations of parents and of Children's Social Care. The role of undertaking the Family Time agreement is that of the allocated Family Time worker, but the child (rens) Social Worker must also be present. (*See Appendix 5 - Family Time Initial Agreement*).

The Family Time agreement should be based on the Family Time principles outlined and be clear about where the Family Time will take place and include consent to transport the child. Particular attention should be given to how Family Time is ended.

The agreement must detail the commitment of the social worker to supervise family time if the children are subject to Care Proceedings. This would include the dates that the social worker will be supervising and observing Family Time for the purpose of ongoing assessments for court at a minimum frequency of once per month.

A contingency plan might also be needed in the event that Family Time has to end prematurely.

7. VENUE FOR FAMILY TIME

The Family Time venue should be carefully considered as this can have a profound effect on the quality of Family Time and whether its stated purpose can be achieved. Venues should be capable of providing the correct structure for supervision and/or assessment of Family Time, but should also take into account the needs of the child, particularly disabled children.

Family Time may also be arranged around an activity rather than a location, which may be particularly useful where work is being carried out to enhance the child/parent attachment through therapeutic means, or where an assessment of parenting skills is being carried out prior to rehabilitation.

The following information provides some insight into the impact of venue on Family Time:

The parental home is the preferred option of most parents and children, and will be useful where there is a strong indication that the child will return home in a short Timescale. It could be the preferred option for older children where there is no history of abuse and risk assessment indicates it is a safe option.

The fostering or residential placement can be a safer option for those children where some degree of monitoring or oversight is required, though parents may find placements inhibiting.

Council offices are regarded as inhibiting and can create an artificial situation as participants are likely to feel that they are being "watched". This can seriously affect the outcome of any assessment of the Family Time being conducted, resulting in inaccurate observations.

8. TRANSPORTING TO FAMILY TIME

Arrangements for children to be transported to and from Family Time must be agreed in advance. In line with Warrington's Family Time principles the distances children need to travel for Family Time must be minimised. It is considered most appropriate for the children to be transported to Family Time by their current carers. Were this is not possible alternative arrangements must be put in place by the Local Authority, so Family time is not impacted by travel arrangements.

In cases where placements are not local, planning need to consider the parents travelling to the children rather than excessive travelling for the children. This may mean using commissioning to support in sourcing Family Time arrangements and any costs being agreed by Heads of Service.

The use of the appropriate equipment is important and the Foster Carer/Residential Worker/Practitioner/Family Time supervisor needs the knowledge of how to fit the appropriate car seat and will need to consider weight, height and or the age of child.

If a child needs to travel in the front of the car in a rear facing baby carrier, then the passenger air bag needs to be turned off.

Children must normally use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135cm tall, whichever comes first. Only EU-approved child car seats can be used in the UK. These have a label showing a capital 'E' in a circle. Please refer to any current car seat regulations as appropriate.

The Foster Carer/Residential Worker/Practitioner/Family Time supervisor should also consider other factors such as the 'in car entertainment'; some children like predictability and like to listen to the same music/song etc.

9. RECORDING FAMILY TIME

Family Time should be recorded by the Practitioner on the MOSAIC child's file using the agreed template (*see Appendix 6: Family Time Recording Template*). This will be recorded within case notes on MOSAIC under the case note drop down 'Family Time Session' heading. Recording should be completed as soon as possible and within two working days. If there are any issues related to safeguarding concerns, the Practitioner should immediately inform the Social Worker or their Manager. For the most part, this template can be used for recording of cases in Care Proceedings when the recording might be used for evidence but also this template can be used for other contacts such as sibling family time etc.

Occasionally, the exception rather than the rule, a different way of recording might be required such as when there is a parenting assessment being completed by the Social Worker and more detailed recordings are required. In these circumstances, consider using relevant headings from the Parenting Assessment (i.e. basic care, stimulation etc.) to record information, the Social Worker will discuss with you what they require.

Practitioner's notes should be concise, succinct and factual. Sweeping statements should be avoided such as 'he was aggressive' or 'she was inappropriate in her behaviour' and record instead what he or she was doing which made it aggressive or inappropriate. Record the effect that any behaviour from a parent had on children either positive or negative.

Recording should be accurate with the time and date noted and always shared with family members.

Wherever possible, workers should try and refrain from spending Family Time sessions writing/typing notes within the sessions with children/young people and their families unless previously agreed. Recording is important and there are times when notes will need to be written during the Family Time sessions however for families, the practitioner recording every moment of Family Time can appear oppressive and not helpful. If notes are needed to be written in the Family Time session, consider writing bullet points and complete the fuller written account after the session has finished.

10. REVIEWING FAMILY TIME

The Family Time arrangements should be reviewed every 6 weeks to establish if the arrangements are appropriate and in line with the wishes and feelings of the child/young person and meeting their needs safely. The Review Family Time episode should be used to record this (*see Appendix 7: Family Time Review Agreement*).

The review should include the allocated Family Time worker, Social Worker, Foster carer or Residential home, Children if age appropriate and Parents or Family. For those cases in Care Proceedings, the Family Time arrangements will be agreed upon as part of the Court Care Plan and the Court process.

Reviewing of Family Time should always look at whether a family member, a family friend or the child's foster carer could appropriately supervise Family Time. The use of a Family Group Conference could be held to assist with this process.

It may be that the parents or adults involved in the child's life have made positive or changes since the child/young person has been a Child in Care for example: ending an abusive relationship and therefore risks might have reduced and consideration could be made to move to unsupervised/facilitated etc. It may be that there is insufficient confidence to move immediately to fully unsupervised, however a plan could be put in place that states what the concerns are that is shared with the parents/adults but also looks at what would need to happen to move to unsupervised/facilitated Family Time.

Any changes to Family Time should start with the child's needs and must be discussed with the child's Independent Reviewing Officer and Children's Guardian (where appropriate). Additionally, for those cases in the Care Proceedings or with Court Order in place, Legal advice would need to be sought and the matter returned to Court if required.

11. CANCELLATION, SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION OF FAMILY TIME

Family Time should never be cancelled unless there is a very good reason, e.g. it is deemed that it would not be safe for it to take place or the child/adult/sibling attending is too unwell for it to take place. Family Time should take place in accordance with the child's Care Plan, Court Order and any Court Directions. Wherever possible, the staff/carers or parents should consult the child's Social Worker in advance if they consider there is a good reason to cancel the Family Time.

If Family Time is cancelled, the Social worker or, if the Social Worker is not available, the staff/carers must ensure that the child and, as far as practicable, the parent or relevant adult is informed in advance and that the reason for the decision is explained. The Social Worker or staff/carers should arrange an alternative Family Time as soon as possible if this is relevant.

If Family Time does not take place and consultation has not been possible with the Social Worker, the staff/carers must inform the child's Social Worker's Duty Team worker, as soon as possible and confirm in writing the decision to cancel and the reason.

Any proposal to suspend or terminate the Family Time should be considered as part of the Child In Care Review, unless the circumstances require an urgent decision to be made, in which case the Social Worker must be consulted and legal advice should be obtained. Any such proposal should be made in the context of the overall aims and objectives of the Care Plan.

Even where it is not possible to hold a Child In Care Review because of the urgency of the situation, the reasons for the proposal must be explained to the parents and to the child, and their agreement obtained if possible.

Where the proposal is to suspend the Family Time, the length and purpose of the suspension together with the basis upon which Family Time will be reinstated must be made clear. An emergency Family Time Review meeting needs to be held by day 5 of the suspension, to try and resolve issues and reinstate Family Time. It may be that Family Time is reduced due to lack of attendance and the parents may feel more able to commit to less Family Time. Any changes made should be communicated to Legal, so they can update parties in Care Proceedings.

Where the child is the subject of an Emergency Protection Order, Interim Care Order or full Care Order, an application to the Court for authority to terminate the Family Time/Contact will always be necessary if Family Time/Contact is to be suspended for more than 7 days. As soon as such a decision is made, Legal Services should be contacted as a matter of urgency so that the necessary court action can be initiated.

Written confirmation of the decision made and, where relevant, the intended court application, together with the reasons, must be sent to the parents/relevant parties, child (depending on age) and any other relevant person (for example the child's advocate, an Independent Visitor or Children's Guardian). Staff/carers and other agencies involved with the child's care must also be informed.

12. PERMANENCE FAMILY TIME

Prior to Care Proceedings concluding and the proposed final care plan is for a child to remain as Child in Care then a Family Time review is to take place detailing the Family Time reduction plan with Family First worker, Social Worker, Foster carer or Residential home, Children if age appropriate and Parents or Family the within 2 weeks of the final evidence being filed, so everyone is aware of the proposed plan. Should the Local Authority be granted the proposed order then a further Family Time review should be held within 10 working dates of the final hearing, to confirm the plan and or make any court ordered amendments. It will then be the Families First worker role to ensure that the closure record is completed on Mosaic so that the new Family Time Permanence workflow commences.

Within 3 working days of the above review the Social Worker will complete the Families First referral request- 'Family Time Permanence' and attach the final Court Order detailing the ongoing Family Time as directed by the Courts.

Permanence Family Time reviews will be held regularly and at no less than at 6 monthly intervals and the frequency of reviews should be in accordance to the Care Plan meetings undertaken by the Social Worker for the child. It is the expectation that

this review includes the parents, child's social worker, Families First worker and any other appropriate professionals including foster carers.

The review will record the current family time duration, frequency, location, risks and the child's voice in relation to their Family Time including any specific areas supervision should concentrate on such as intimate care.

Overtime we recognise that due to the child's age, development and parent's circumstances changes to Family Time will need to be made to ensure that this continues to be a positive experience for all. Changes that are to be made to the duration and frequency of family time need to be discussed in a Family Time Permanence review and supported by a relevant assessment such as a Child and Family Assessment. This is to ensure that any changes to the Court Order's initial Family Time plan are justified and recorded in accordance with the child's safety and voice around their Family Time.

Any increase in the duration and frequency of family time will need to be agreed by the Family Time supervisor prior to communicating this to the child and parents.

Where possible the Family Time worker will extend this on the arranged Family Time day however where this cannot be facilitated, due to other Family Time arrangements this may result in a change of day.

13. FINAL GOODBYE FAMILY TIME (PLANNING FOR THIS TO BE POSITIVE)

Key Principles

It is assumed that following the making of a Placement Order, which is permitting termination of Family Time that a substantial reduction in Family Time has occurred and that Family Finding has identified a permanent forever family.

It is important that this final Family Time occurs before any introductions to a new family and with sufficient time to elapse for the child/children to have some grieving time for the 'loss' of this relationship before they are asked to engage and make new relationships with their forever family.

Where parents show, by their inconsistent or non-attendance, their disengagement from their child/ren in Family Time it is important for there to be a final Family Time and consideration for this to be held earlier. This would be rather than Family Time ending by default.

Planning with Birth Parents

Discussion with the birth parents about the reduction and timing of the final Family Time should occur and plans confirmed in writing. With parents with a learning disability, the use of a printed calendar may help.

Parents should be consulted about how they might want to structure their Family Time with thoughts to the venue, content, activities and length. An assessment of how far their wishes are possible should take place alongside an assessment of the child/rens needs.

The usual venue does provide a familiar, comfortable and secure space, but in some situations an outing to a venue especially requested by a parent may be possible and provide a more relaxed and in the parent's view, appropriate setting.

Within the planning process you should also consider who birth parents want to support then before, during and after their final Family Time session and travel arrangements to and from the agreed venue.

Where there are known risks or identified increase of risks around the time of the final Family Time it may be appropriate to ensure that no other Family Time, group sessions and other children and families are present as it will be difficult to know how the emotions of the event will be expressed by the children and parents.

Given the emotion generated by such final Family Time, all necessary support should be provided to ensure the session does take place and that parents are supported before and afterwards. Remember this for all those involved this is a grief process and in particular the children involved need time and space to manage the process.

Planning with the Child

Children themselves need adequate notice and preparation and such Family Time need to be understood by them as not just another Family Time session. It will depend on the child's age how much prior notice is given to them for the final Family Time session.

It is easy for adequate and clear explanations not to be given to the children because of the emotion surrounding the session. Focusing on the 'moving on' that the child/ren must do following the Court decision for them to be adopted can be part of the conversations as will be some understanding of the post adoption Family Time session that will occur between parents and their adoptive family. In this way the child will know

that they and their birth parents will have information about each other in the future. Where parents are likely to be very distressed, some prior warning and discussion about this with the child should occur together with a discussion about their own feelings and how expression of their sadness and upset is likely and okay.

Planning the session

A Families First review should take place and should consider the points raised in the planning with parent and child discussions prior to any final Family time session takes place. The social worker, families first worker and another professionals should be considered to attend where appropriate to do so, including foster carers.

A decision should be made between the social worker and Families First worker as to whether the agreed length of time for the final Family Time session can be managed by all parties and it may sometimes be appropriate to foreshorten the time to manage the emotional impact surrounding the situation.

Other considerations should include:

- Who will be taking photographs
- Any tools to consider helping both parents and children acknowledge that the feelings of care/love for one another does not go even when they no longer see one another such as Loving and Caring Candles.
- Any special food requests
- Can any presents from other family members be given in the session? (This may detract from the farewell so careful consideration to be made)
- How much notice would parents like to signify time left at the end of the Family Time session
- Supervision of final Family Time would generally indicate two professionals- one as support for the child and one for the birth parent. Who will these be and detailed in the Families First Family Time review.

Structuring the Family Time session and explaining this to the child and birth parent enables the time to be managed and the ending process known, such as time being allocated for photographs to be taken during this time. As birth parents may be permitted to bring their own camera/mobile phone in addition to the Family Time supervisor having a device to take photographs to send to parents following the Family Time session.

Managing the Session

As previously mentioned it is difficult to predict and know the emotions that will be expressed by the children and parents. It may be possible to support the parents/children in expressing their hopes and wishes for them in the future.

Sometimes the children will ask questions of their parents which the latter will need support and help to respond to such as 'why can't I go back home with you?' and sometimes the child/rens anger is upset is displayed in their play and needs appropriate boundaries with acknowledgement of the feelings being expressed.

Affirmation that the birth parents did their best, but weren't able to care well enough may be appropriate as may the fact not being able to care doesn't mean that they are not very much loved.

Ending the Family Time- Psychologically it feels more appropriate for the child to leave the venue first rather than the parent and consideration should be given as to who supports the child at this time.

14. FAMILY TIME CLOSURE

There are a number of circumstances in which a Family Time Closure is required and these are detailed below:

- Once a final adoption Family Time has taken place. The Families First Closure record will be the next action from the Families First review document that had been completed prior to the Family Time session taking place. Families' First will completed this closure.
- Once Care Proceedings have concluded and the final care plan is for a child to remain as child in care then a Family Time review is to take place detailing the Family Time reduction plan with the Families First worker. At this point the Social Worker will complete the Families First referral request- Family Time Permanence and attach the final Court Order detailing the ongoing Family Time as directed by the Courts.

Once the reduction plan has been delivered the closure record will be completed by the Families First worker.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Family Time Referral and Risk Assessment

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Appendix 2: Research (Advice by CAMHS) Contact Arrangements for Infants: A Guide for Practitioners).

FAMILY TIME /CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS FOR INFANTS: A GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS

INTRODUCTION

The period from conception to a child's 2nd birthday is vital in development of healthy brain circuits, relationships and stress responses. For infants who are looked after their experience of contact with their parents and carers is a crucial component of this important period of early life and will play a major part in long term outcomes

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Babies find out how relationships work from their experience of being cared for. They learn how to regulate their emotions and cope with stress by the way they are comforted and reassured by their caregivers when they are upset or anxious. They are predisposed to engage in social interactions from birth and the nature of these interactions will determine the way their brains develop and the security or otherwise of their attachment relationships. An infant who consistently receives sensitive, responsive and attuned care will develop of brain 'hard wired' with positive and healthy circuits, a blueprint for happy nurturing relationships, and a positive self-esteem.

STRESS AND CORTISOL

Babies get stressed! In fact, babies can be stressed even before they are born. Where mothers-to-be experience high levels of stress through pregnancy the cortisol (stress hormone) they produce will pass through the placenta to compromise the development of their baby's brain and prevent the early development of healthy stress responses. These babies will find it harder to cope with challenging and stressful situations after they are born. They are likely to be harder to care for than babies who haven't been stressed in utero. They may be 'jittery', tense, watchful and vigilant.

In many cases these babies will find their mother presence stressful for them; their mother's smell and the sound of her voice may cause a triggering of their stress response from association with the stress they experienced before birth; where this happens it will further traumatise them.

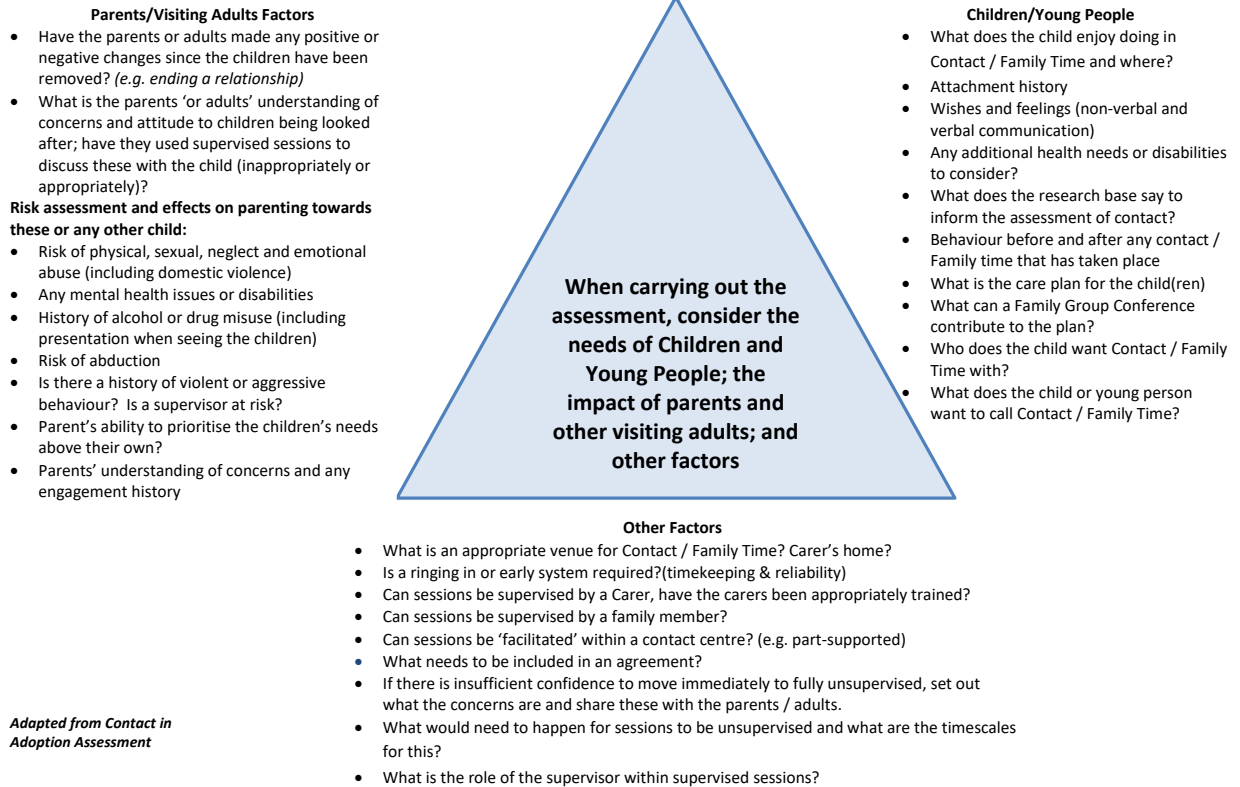
Babies who are chronically stressed and thus produce high levels of cortisol, will not be able to make good developmental progress, and may experience feeding and growth difficulties, sleep problems and poor emotional and behavioural regulation. Babies who have high levels of cortisol are unable to produce oxytocin, the hormone that makes them feel safe, secure and contributes to positive self-esteem.

QUALITY OF THE FAMILY TIME / CONTACT EXPERIENCE

It is important for infants that contact time with their parents and other family members is as positive and beneficial as possible; it is not acceptable that infants experience contact family time as frightening or acutely distressing. For young babies the very fact of being away from their primary caregiver (the foster carer) will be challenging and stressful for them. In order to optimise the likelihood of contact time being a positive experience babies need to experience contact as a safe, predictable and comfortable situation and their family caregivers as sensitive and responsive to their needs. The foster carer can play an important role in facilitating this by providing good quality information about what routines and strategies are helpful to the infant to support them and help

Appendix 3: Guidance for Assessment of Contact / Family Time Arrangements

Guidance for Assessment of Contact / Family Time Arrangements



Appendix 4: A trauma model for planning, assessing and reviewing contact for looked-after children

<https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjg7YzP0aj6AhULaMAKHbYbDC9kQFnoECAkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ccinform.co.uk%2Fpractice-guidance%2Ftrauma-model-planning-assessing-reviewing-contact-looked-children%2F&usq=AOvVaw1rHCLM3ly6mKltd41wq32>

Appendix 5: Family Time Initial Agreement

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Appendix 6: Family Time Recording Template

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Appendix 7: Family Time Review Agreement

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Appendix 8: Closure Summary

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