**Guide to statutory visits to looked after children**

1. **Purpose of the Guide**

This guide is intended to be an easy to read reference tool for social workers on completing and recording looked after statutory visits. It is not intended to replace the social care practice standards and as such should be read in conjunction with the standards.

The aim of this guide is that it will lead to improved performance and once performance targets are achieved, maintain performance.

1. **Practice Standards – A Reminder**

All children should be visited by their social worker at an individually determined level agreed by the social worker and line manager through planning or supervision process which enables the effective delivery of services.

The child’s care plan, placement and looked after status should determine the minimum frequency at which the child is visited by his/her social worker and visits carried out at least in accordance with this minimum level. It is essential that children are seen and spoken to regularly by their social worker and this will often need to be more frequently than the minimum level outlined in the plan. Good social work practice will be guided by professional judgement based on the needs of the child. In order to safeguard children and ensure that minimum standards are in place, the service has determined minimum visiting standards as follows:

**Frequency**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **First placement and any new placements** | Within one week of any placement |
| **Visits thereafter** | Minimum of at least once every 6 weeks or more as agreed as part of care plan |
| **Visits where children have been approved as long term matched** | Visits are to continue at intervals of not more than three months |
| **Where a child is placed under regulation 24, or where an interim care order has been made in respect of that child under section 38 of the 1989 Act, and the child is still living with the parent** | The child must be visited at least weekly until the time of the first review.    Subsequently, visits must take place at intervals of not more than four weeks until the carer is approved under the 2002 Regulations or the final hearing has been completed in care proceedings |
| **Placement with Parents where a child is subject to care order** | The child must be visited within one week of theplacement and then at intervals of no more than six weeks |
| **Placement with Parents- child subject to interim care order (both reg 18 & reg 19)** | Weekly visit until first review  Minimum of at least once every 4 weeks |
| **Placement with connected person (Family & Friends) Interim approval (reg 24)** | Weekly until first review  Minimum of at least once every 4 weeks until approval by fostering panel, thereafter in line with statutory requirements for LAC. |
| **Placement in Secure** | Within first week of placement  Minimum of at least once every 6 weeks. |
| **Child subject to placement order and placed for adoption** | With first week of placement and weekly until first adoption plan review.  Frequency to be agreed at 1st Adoption Plan Review – minimum of at least once every 6 weeks. |

The responsible authority must also ensure that the social worker visits the child outside the statutory minimum intervals set out above when reasonably requested to do so by the child, the child’s carer or the person responsible for the child’s living arrangements

**4. What should be considered within the visit and recorded as part of the case note?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Children visited |  |
| Date of visit |  |
| Was this an announced or unannounced visit? |  |
| Did you see the child? |  |
| Did you see the siblings if placed together | If yes who? |
| Did you speak to the child alone? *(specify which children if more than one)* | Yes/No |
| If not, why not? |  |
| What were the child’s wishes and feelings? |  |
| Were other members of the household at home? | If yes who? |
| Did you see the child’s bedroom? | Yes/No |
| Summarise the standard of care |  |
| What was the observation of the child’s relationship with parent/carer? |  |
| What are the parent/cares/foster carer’s views? |  |
| Were there any issues of concern? *(CP, H&S....etc)* |  |
| Were there any issues with the placement? |  |
| Did you explain how any concerns would be addressed and with who they would be shared with? |  |
| Overall summary |  |

The recording does not have to be lengthy but needs to include salient information.

The recording will not be counted as having happened until the case note is finalised. You must finish, save, otherwise the visit remains open and will not show in the data collection and looks from a data collection perspective that a child has not been seen. You must also ensure that you tick whether the child was seen and seen alone otherwise again the visit will not be counted as a statutory visit requires the child to be seen.

1. **Protocol – recording statutory visits to looked after children**

Go to add case note

Under type of contact there are the following headings

Statutory visit looked after

You can add the children involved (those present at the stat visit)

You can tick whether they were interviewed, seen, seen alone, whether bedroom was seen.

You can add which adults were present

You can then add the reason for the visit (brief addition here)

You can then add detailed notes

You can then add an analysis

You can then add any actions.

There is also a case note for Statutory visit looked after failed where the family were not at home.

1. **Social Workers Top Tips**

These are list of top tips provided by social workers who consistently achieve compliance for statutory visits that is visiting and recording within required timescales.

* Stop phone calls and instead arrange visits and diaries for all service users.
* Make it “Meaningful every time”
* Prepare for the visit
* Don’t ever do back to back visits (snowball effect)
* Tell parents how often you will visit: every so many days and to prepare for unannounced visits.
* Put yourself a reminder in outlook (day before the due date)
* Don’t delay the low level work, move it towards closure
* Blend difficult with simple work – balance workload
* At the start of every week – write down the minimum of what needs to happen – to do list.
* Book admin time – sit somewhere else (focus space) – 2 x ½ or whole day every week, not when you are on ‘**duty’**
* Break administrative time down i.e. 2 hours emails/2 hours C&Fs/1 hour organising/½ day court report etc.
* Use outlook to organise i.e.;
* Visits – Yellow
* CP – Red - when achieved take out colour
* Type up meeting – Orange
* Others minutes – Blue

7. Management Requirements

Social workers must ensure robust arrangements are in place when they are on a planned break. This requires the social worker to identify a ‘buddy’ to undertake the visit on their behalf and inform their line managers of the arrangement. This should not be a duty task.

When a social worker needs to take unplanned, for example sick ness absence they must ensure they inform their manager of any statutory visits due that day. The manager is then responsible for ensuring alternative arrangements are made to ensure the visit is completed.

Allocated social workers remain the responsible social workers and must take responsibility for ensuring visits take place with the support of their managers. This includes checking on return to work that the visit has taken place.

Social workers to plan announced and unannounced visits taking due consideration to the needs and response of the specific family.

Social workers to seek management advice/approval if they deem a visit is going to go out of timescale. The manager must record the discussion on Protocol.

Managers to discuss statutory visiting requirements with social workers in supervision.

Social workers to use supervision to discuss cases where there are challenges to achieving compliance.

Social workers to ensure that they are ticking the seen/seen alone box.

Managers to ensure all new staff, including agency staff are provided with the practice standards and visiting frequency requirements and this guide.