

## **Quick Reference for SSWs reviewing contact arrangements including a return to face to face contact**

When reviewing contact arrangements for a Child Looked After the **Contact Review for direct and indirect contact** should be used to support and record decisions regarding the child's contact plan and when considering a return to face to face contact.

The full documents on Tri-x dated 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 including; **Guidance supporting Direct Contact, Risk Assessment, Risk Assessment Guidance and Words and Pictures must be read prior to the contact review meeting and a Risk Assessment completed.**

If carers cannot be present at the contact planning meeting SSWs need to have completed the questions on the risk assessment relevant to the carer and carer's household. Please see link to documents;

[https://www.proceduresonline.com/westsussex/cs/local\\_resources.html](https://www.proceduresonline.com/westsussex/cs/local_resources.html)

- **Note:** In considering what is 'reasonable' for each child will depend on a large number of factors relating to the child, birth family, and carers. Communication between Child's SW, SSW, Carer and Supervised Contact team will therefore be key to supporting safe arrangements.
- The supervised contact team will not be transporting children or able to physically intervene in contacts at this time
- Face to face contact will be limited to one per week for up to 45 minutes. Frequency needs to be negotiated where contact is less regular. This will be reviewed in line with government guidelines and easing of restrictions due to COVID-19 and should be reviewed in conjunction with virtual contact arrangements.
- Where a risk assessment is not supporting a return to face to face contact these arrangements will be reviewed **every 14 days** to see what is possible in accordance with the development of government guidelines.

### **Key things to consider:**

- **Will enforcing social distancing (necessary for face to face contact) be in the child's best interest? If not can contact continue virtually until social distancing is no longer required?**

- **The key conversation will be ; how can contact work well at a distance with the parent and carer's support to think this through.**

-**Note:** Is the carer comfortable that if the child does seek initial physical contact with their parent on arrival that this is acceptable or would this need to be prevented due to carer's concerns around Covid (i.e. vulnerable member of household). In these circumstances parents will be expected to encourage the child to socially distance for the remainder of the contact.

-Preparing for contact will need to include supporting children to understand how to socially distance and enjoy contact time by using toys/games the carers has brought and by using creative ways for contact to go ahead at a socially distance, use of bubbles etc

-Play mats can encourage interaction and allow for birth family to sing read and talk to a young baby/child with support from carer to assist in interactions or hold the baby if needed.

### **Parameters for Safe Contact**

**A key question to consider when completing the Contact Review Form will be;**

**Parameters for safe contact: This needs to include risks regarding the contact itself and also the risks related to COVID-19. This must be considered in line with Government Guidance and the current risk assessment.**

- Is the carer or anyone in carer or parent's household shielding or deemed medically vulnerable?
- Parents/birth family understanding and ability to adhere to social distancing?
- What is the carer's view on the child's understanding and capacity to socially distance?
- What do they think could support understanding of social distancing/ visual support, use of skipping rope on floor, words and pictures, etc?

**Consider in line with risk assessment;**

- *Can the carer be present during the contact if the child needs them for physical touch, toileting support etc during contact?*
- *If the carer is not needed during the contact can they be in a room close by to administer medication or support toileting if needed?*
- *Can the carer transport to and from contact?*
- *Can the carer supply toys, games for the child to take to contact and agree to clean afterwards?*
- *Can the carer provide snacks and drinks for the contact time*

**The links below are from Fostering Network;**

Social worker checklist by the fostering network: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/content/covid-19contactarrangementsocialworkerchecklist0207.pdf>

Foster carer checklist: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/content/covid-19contactarrangementsfostercarerchecklist0207.pdf>