**Home Visiting - children in need, child subject to a child protection plan and children in our care**

**(including statutory compliance & responsibilities)**

This guidance provides standards and expectations and promotes best practice for home visiting (including statutory compliance) to all children and young people in Gloucestershire. The purpose of all our work is:-

**“***To have authentic, close relationships with children of the kind where we see, hear and touch the truth of their experience and are able to act on it*”

*Harry Ferguson, (2011) Child Protection Practice*

# What are our Guiding Principles and Good Practice Standards:

There may be a number of reasons that Social Workers are visiting children at a frequency significantly more than ‘minimum requirements’, this will include (but not be limited to):

* Developing a new relationship with a child
* Sustaining a relationship with a child
* Safeguarding concerns
* Direct Work with children, e.g. Life Story Work
* Support around therapeutic interventions with a child

As with all interventions with children; their views will need to be taken into account when discussing, negotiating and agreeing the visiting frequency with them.

There are a number of underlying assumptions that all Social Workers will need to take into account when carrying out a Statutory Visit to a child, these are:

* All children, notwithstanding their age, will be seen and spoken to in the place where they are living, (including alone when appropriate and when this is refused or not possible, management advice must be sought)
* Ensure all children in the family are seen. Keep in mind **sibling groups and how each child may experience home life** **differently** and the impact of this on individual children within the family.
* The child’s personal physical surroundings, e.g. bedroom/play areas must be seen on a regular and appropriate basis and routines known and understood in terms of impact on the child
* In accordance with age and understanding, the child must know and agree in advance when a visit is to be completed (unless unannounced)
* Social Workers should ensure that they are not late and only in very exceptional circumstances should visits be cancelled
* The Social Worker must manage their time to allow the visit to be planned, meaningful, dynamic and creative
* If the allocated worker is going to be on leave when a visit is due, agree a plan of visiting is in place during this time period with the Team Manager & inform the family accordingly & if appropriate

**Take time to know the young person you are working with, what they enjoy, what are their concerns and what are their ambitions and aspirations**

“Spending time with children, talking to them, and making sure that you are actively listening and taking seriously what they say is an essential safeguarding activity.”

NCB Communicating with Children 2006

1. **Why is it important to visit children and young people in their home?**

* Part of the practitioner’s central role is to build a relationship with the child. This relationship is crucial to ensuring that assessment & planning for children, and practice, is centred on the child’s needs, and takes account of their views and their understanding of their lived experience & world.
* Most children, for whom we have responsibility, have had damaging experiences and need support from practitioners to regain their confidence and trust in adults.
* Research shows that children want to be listened to and to be treated respectfully.
* Building a relationship with a child requires regular contact, not only in times of crisis but also at times when the child’s life is relatively calm and undisturbed

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# What do I need to do before I undertake a home visit / visit to child?

* Before an announced visit takes place, the practitioner must arrange the visit with the family / carers and plan the purpose of the visit
* Before an unannounced visit takes place, the practitioner must schedule the time/who will be attending and discuss with manager and plan the purpose of the visit

# Understand the purpose of the visit

* Safeguard the child
* Ensure the welfare of the child
* Meet statutory responsibilities & compliance
* Address & discuss specific issues
* To understand the family dynamics and who is part of the family unit (remembering to keep the father in mind)
* Undertake direct work/intervention with child and/or family
* Assess the home environment
* Inform planning for the child/ young person

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# What do I need to do during a visit to the home?

**During all** visits and statutory visits the practitioner must:

* See the child / see the child alone where appropriate
* Explore with the child how they feel and their views about their life (using direct work skills and tools)
* Observe relationships & undertake “intimate depth” of practice in the home environment (Ferguson 2011)
* Assess and critically think about holistic needs of the child and how they are being met at home
* Communicate with children and carer about planned next steps
* Consider how to capture the child’s contributions and feelings
* Note any significant events / changes to the plan
* Undertake direct work / planned interventions

1. **What is a statutory CP visit?**

A statutory CP Visit is a visit made to a child who is a subject of a child protection plan at their home, or the household where s/he is living. Therefore, a visit made to the same child at their school or elsewhere is **not** a statutory CP visit.

A statutory CP visit will only be deemed to have taken place if the child has been **seen** at their home or the household where they are living.

Any **failed** statutory CP visit, (that is one where the child was not seen) must be brought to the attention of the Team Manager immediately and a further statutory CP visit attempted within 48 working hours of the last failed visit. Repeat or continued failed visits must be discussed with the Team Manager and a course of action agreed to ensure the child is seen and that s/he is safe and well.

All statutory CP visits should be a combination of announced and unannounced visits.

# What is a Statutory Children in Care Visit?

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 set out common requirements for the visiting of all children in care.

On each visit, the social worker must speak to the child in private unless he/she is unable to do so, considers it inappropriate or the child (being of sufficient age and understanding) refuses. The views and wishes of the child or young person in respect of their care must always be sought.

Children should be visited more frequently when a new social worker is allocated in order to build up a relationship with the child.

# What is the frequency of visits?

**Child in need plans**

The frequency of visits must be:

• Agreed with the team manager on a case-by-case basis

• At least once every **20 working days**

• Or more frequently if indicated in the CIN plan

It must be sufficient for a credible review of the local authority intervention to be made. Contact with children in need may be delegated to other professionals working on behalf of the social worker if discussed and agreed.

# Child protection plans

A child subject to a child protection plan must be seen:

• At least every **10 working days**

• Or more frequently if indicated in the child protection plan

The visit must be recorded on ICS within 24 hours of the child protection visit having taken place

The lead worker should be a qualified and suitably experienced social worker.

# Children in Our Care (statutory minimum requirements).

The general requirements which apply to all placements are that:

**The Social Worker must visit:**

1. Within one week of the start of any placement;
2. At intervals of not more than 6 weeks for the first year of any placement;

c. Thereafter, at intervals of not more than 6 weeks (3 months if the placement

is intended to last until the child is 18).

In addition, The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments)

(England) Regulations 2015 state in regulation 28 (3A) Where -

If the child is in a long term foster placement (see definition) and has been in that placement for at least one year, and the child being of sufficient age and understanding, agrees to be visited less frequently than required by paragraph (2)(c), the responsible authority must ensure visits at intervals of no more than 6 months.”

Any decision to extend the frequency of visits as outlined above must be agreed by the IRO at a CIC review.

**And finally, think about your case recording** [**http://gloucestershirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/**](http://gloucestershirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/)

# *Further Reading & Websites:*

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

Child Protection Practice, Harry Ferguson 2011

Tri-X Policy & Procedure Manual

Research in Practice & CC Inform

Sarah Holtom

PSW

May 2017