

Darlington Borough Council

Procedure for Failed Home Visits

What to do when a worker can't gain access to a property.

Any staff who work for DARLINGTON Children Services should make themselves familiar with this policy and adhere to it when it applies.

The purpose of the policy is to give clear advice to those who will be undertaking home visits whether statutory or non statutory on behalf of the Department. It is important that the advice is applied consistently across home visits to children regardless of legal status and level of involvement.

Unable to gain access to a property is defined as a planned or unplanned visit where the child/young person was expected to have been seen.

In most circumstances staff will have made a pre-arranged appointment to see children/young people at an agreed time and date.

If on a visit staff are unable to gain access, they should try to initiate a response by checking the rear of the property and try to establish any movement within the home. They should then contact the family via telephone or message services to try and gain a response.

If these are unsuccessful, staff in discussion with their manager should determine the level of risk/vulnerability. This should involve a discussion with any other agency who are involved with the family; health services and education are particularly useful, establishing when the child was last seen by a professional and any concerns noted and considered.

Before considering next steps:

The worker should ensure the address is correct on the file and the correct home was visited, by visiting the property again that day and leave a headed letter of the failure to be available for the visit, outlining the next steps and a timeframe for that person to contact or be available for the next visit. If no contact is forthcoming, then a discussion with the Team Manager and a detailed case note of actions or reasons for non-actions to be taken with a clear timescale.

HOWEVER If it is felt that the child may be at risk of significant harm, a discussion must be held with the Team Manager and consideration given to involving the Service Manager.

Should the concerns be so great then a discussion with the police should be considered. The unsuccessful visit should be recorded on the file noting the time and date and another agency that was contacted to determine next steps with a clear date and time for further contact.