Northamptonshire Children’s Trust

**Family Time Referral Process**

Please can you fill out current documentation which can be found via the following link: <https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/local_resources.html>

* Social Worker will need to complete the new referral form (Contact and Overnight Stays dropdown)
* Family Time Agreement signed by Parent and Social Worker

If these could then be sent to NCT ContactTeamNCC inbox from where an automated reply will be generated, and the coordinators will be able to log the request.

* All information needs to be filled in on the new Referral Form. Old forms will not be accepted by the Family Time Service and a request will be made to transfer the information on the new referral.
* The referral will be added to the Referral list. Timescale for allocation – no more than 10 working days unless held up by changes or paperwork not received
* This list will be processed weekly. Allocations depend on capacity of staff, room availability, and the area where the contact has been requested
* Saturday family time sessions are for those parents who are working or if there is limited time after school for a school-age child
* Pre-school children will generally be supervised in the mornings or lunchtime period due to children who attend school having the after-school slots which are extremely busy.
* Supervised contacts in parents’ homes will be risk assessed jointly by the Family Time Service and the Social Worker. The individual risk assessment will be completed by the Family Time Service and will be considered and signed by the Social Worker.
* Before being able to allocate ongoing in the team we will endeavour to support on an ad-hoc basis but this support is dependent on cancellations of other sessions/AL/sickness etc. and this needs to be requested by the Social Worker on a daily basis.

It is important that proposed changes of venues, times or dates are directed to the Family Time Co-ordinators. Family Time Supervisors are not able to make decisions about family time arrangements without the involvement of the Co-ordinators or Team Manager. Further changes requested once sessions have been put in place and allocated will not be implemented immediately therefore notice of at least 1 week is required.

Out of county requests will be looked at individually by the TM and a discussion held with the SW regarding the request. Time, mileage, best interest of the child and venue will be taken into account. Once a referral for an Out of County family time session has been received, the service will attempt to allocate a Family Time Supervisor and identify a suitable venue. If the Family Time Service are unable to provide a supervisor or venue for the request, the Family Time Service Business Support will support the SW to identify a venue. The SW needs to seek approval and commissioning of a local service to facilitate the sessions.

We have 4 F/T bridging supervisors based in the CIC teams, their role is to pick up referrals in the interim before being allocated to a Family Time Supervisor on a permanent basis. Amanda Miles TM in the North and Sarah Wesley and Judith Weston in the West are responsible for the allocations to the Family Time Supervisors who are based in their teams.

When there is a baby waiting to be born, please submit the referral at least 6 weeks before the EDD. This will ensure that we are aware of it and can process when the baby is born.

To manage cancellations and ensure that resources are distributed effectively, there needs to be a clear approach. If a parent cancels or does not attend two sessions in a row without a plausible reason provided to the Social Worker, the Family Time Service will liaise with the Social Work Team and sessions will be suspended for 7 days. There is an expectation that during these 7 days, the SW and Family Time Supervisor will be asked to have a meeting with the parents and the Family Time Agreement will be re-signed, which clearly indicates the importance of attending contact. If the meeting cannot take place within the seven days period, we will continue to not arrange any sessions until such time it has been completed. If the attendance does not improve and a further two contacts are missed in a row, without a genuine reason, there is an expectation that the Social Work Team take legal advice and explore if an application should be filed to court under Section 34.4 CA 1989.

The Family Time Service will where possible provide support with rehabilitation plans and assessments. This is dependent on the capacity of the Family Time Service and all requests need to be considered by the Team Manager of the Family Time Service.

The Family Time Service are committed to working in partnership with the Social Work Team. This includes discussing Care Plans and family time arrangements before Care Plans are submitted to the court.

The Family Time Service are not always able to provide sessions on specific/requested dates, times and venues. Comprehensive referrals and discussions about contact arrangements is essential.

The Family Time Service currently only have the use of 6 venues and 14 rooms within these centres. Due to limited venue availability the service is looking at other creative ways for face-to-face family time to be facilitated. This may mean exploring sessions in the community, sessions supervised by family members or carers. Please be open to have dialogue about the best way to provide safe child-friendly family time, for children and families.

Steve Tee

Children In Care Service Manager

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Sue Gamble

Family Time Service Team Manager 18/08/2022