



Children & Families
Redcar & Cleveland
Borough Council

Family Time Service

Policy and Procedure

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1 INTRODUCTION

The interests of the majority of Children In Our Care (CIOC) are best served by sustaining or creating links with their birth families including wider family members. Consideration of Family Time is an essential element in the planning process. Managing Family Time can be very difficult for all parties involved, which is why there needs to be a clear understanding from the outset about the arrangements for Family Time and what is expected of the parents, carers, Social Workers and Family Time Officers (FTO).

The Family Time Service is responsible for coordinating all Family Time referrals for CIOC received only from designated Social Workers. The Directorate has a purpose built establishment for Family Time which is appropriately resourced to meet requirements. This is known as The Beach House and is situated at 35, Coatham Road Redcar. Other venues are used on occasions when it is deemed appropriate and safe to do so.

This guidance sets out the approach and the core principles that Redcar & Cleveland Children and Families Service will adhere to in relation to Family Time between children, their families and friends. It details the processes by which the Family Time arrangements for children and young people who are looked after should be planned and managed and provides information as to the legal context in which such arrangements must be made.

The procedure refers to the requirements of the Children Act 1989 Guidance, Volume 2: Care Planning Placement and Case Review 2010 revoked by the 2010 Regulations.

1.1 Definition

The term Family Time primarily refers to all links between children and young people who are looked after and their birth families, including wider family members. It also includes links to others of significance to them both before and after they became looked after such as a friend, a previous carer, or other person 'connected' with the child.

The means of Family Time will vary according to the assessed benefit to the child, their age and understanding and the motivation and understanding of those involved. When children become looked after continuity of relationships is important and attachments should be respected, sustained and developed. Face to face Family Time may be the most common and the most satisfactory way of maintaining relationships, but Family Time can also encompass other means of keeping family bonds and connections alive and meaningful. For example; letters/postcards, telephone calls, emails, text messages, virtual contact, DVD's and exchange of gifts and photographs.

Good quality Family Time is generally considered to be able to:

- Meet the psychological and emotional needs of children
- Aid their well being and self esteem
- Provide information about their ethnic, cultural, genetic, medical heritage and individuality ensuring services are anti discriminatory of income and social status
- Correct distorted perceptions of family relationships

- Meet the basic needs of children to feel and be safe during Family Time
- Provide children with the freedom to enjoy their relationships with family members

1.2 Guiding Principles

- Evidence from research and practice concludes that for most children who are separated from their parents, siblings, or other close relatives, it is in their best interests to have some form of contact with their family.
- There is a legal presumption (under Section 34 Children Act 1989) for reasonable contact between children in care and their families to take place.
- The Local Authority has a duty to promote Family Time unless it is not consistent with or is detrimental to the child's welfare.
- Even though there is a duty to promote Family Time, children have the right to be protected from harmful contact. For children subject to an Interim Care Order or a full Care Order, the Local Authority can suspend Family Time for a limited period (up to a maximum of 7 days) in an emergency. After that period of time, Family Time can only be prevented or curtailed by a court order (Section 34(4), Children Act 1989).
- Family Time should not be an afterthought; it is an integral part of care planning and must be considered at every stage of the process.
- Family Time should be compatible with the child's needs taking into account their age, ethnicity, culture, religion and disability.
- Children, young people and their family should be involved in all decisions relating to Family Time and their wishes and feelings taken into account.
- Family Time includes every method of maintaining links with members of the birth family and other significant people for a child. It includes visits, overnight stays, telephone calls, letters, and exchanges of information, photographs and indirect links through others.

Coram Family's definition of supervised contact from 'A Guide to Best Practice in Supervised Child Contact':

'Supervised contact aims to ensure safety from physical harm and emotional abuse and requires a high level of constant supervision from supervisors experienced and confident enough to intervene immediately and firmly if anything of concern arises. If safe contact is achieved supervision becomes therapeutic in the widest sense. The contact is managed so that the child is supported in resolving issues with the parent whom he or she needs to understand; or to provide opportunities for a parent to apologise or in other ways make amends; or to effect a planned and humane ending to contact. In supervised contact, the supervisor plays a role in guiding the parents to improve the quality of interactions and parenting; this may include 'mediating' to improve the quality of interactions between a child's parents or between parents and substitute carers.'

2 LEGAL CONTEXT

The Local Authority has the following duties to promote Family Time under the Children's Act 1989:

- Under section 34 where the child is in care, which means the subject of a care order or interim care order. It is a duty to promote reasonable Family Time. When considering Family Time under this section, the child's welfare must be the Court's paramount consideration and it must have regard to the welfare checklist. This includes taking account of the child's wishes and feelings, having regard to their age and understanding.
- Under schedule 2, paragraph 15 where the child is looked after but not in care. The duty is to promote Family Time unless it is not reasonably practicable or is not consistent with the welfare of the child.

In both cases, this is Family Time with the child's parents and others who have parental responsibility. The duty under section 34 also includes those who cared for a child under a Court Order immediately before the care order was made. The duty to Children In Our Care includes Family Time with relatives, friends and other connected persons.

Where a child in need is living apart from his/her family (but is not in care or looked after) the Local Authority has a general duty under schedule 2 paragraph 10. This is a duty to take reasonable steps to promote Family Time between the child and his/her family if it is considered necessary to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

2.1 Court directed Family Time and frequency of Family Time

It is now recognised in a growing body of research that a high level of Family Time between a Child In Our Care and their parents does not in itself promote the child's return to parental care, and nor does it provide the optimum conditions for attachment formation between child and parents. (See *Kenrick, 2009 and Humphries et al 2011*).

When considering levels of contact Social Workers must consider that the court will expect a reasonable level of contact to be offered. This will be determined on a case by case basis and needs to take into account a number of factors:

- The age of the child
- The quality of contact for the child
- The wishes and feelings of the child
- The commitment of the parents to contact

Humphreys and Kiraly (2010) in their research in Victoria, Australia found children's courts were ordering high-frequency contact, defined as 4-7 days per week, between infants and their parents while the baby was living with carers (foster or kinship), which meant having to travel away from the foster carer for significant periods of time.

When infants are in care, especially when there is parental violence and abuse, they need time to settle, attune to their caregiver and establish a predictable and safe routine otherwise they are left in an attachment vacuum. There are particular concerns for infants who move rapidly into a high-frequency contact regime before they have had time to settle and get to know their carer. Particularly for infants coming to the carer direct from hospital and for infants at the age of 5-8 months, when high levels of contact that involve the infant leaving their secure base and separation from a primary figure, can create particular anxiety and distress. Although infants between six months and three years may show the strongest signs of separation anxiety and stranger anxiety, measuring levels of the stress hormone cortisol shows that younger infants are also stressed by separation from their carer even when it is not always apparent.

The Kenrick (2009) study found that significant levels of infant distress were reported where high frequency contact took place and disruption to routines, extensive commuting and leaving their foster carer at significant points in their development all contributed to long lasting adverse effects. Where parental relationships are highly conflicted, particularly where one parent holds safety concerns for their child, high levels of parental contact are detrimental to children. Solomon and George's research (1999) into the effects of overnight contact for infants when parents were separated found that where there was a poor environment, little psychological support for the infant and high levels of conflict between the parents, attachment to both parents became insecure and disorganised.

Family Time needs to be regularly reviewed to reflect the child's needs. The Court will expect attempts to be made by the Local Authority to improve the quality of Family Time where there are issues and that there is evidence that support has been offered before any changes to Family time arrangements are agreed.

It is therefore essential that practitioners make clearly articulated arguments which promote the welfare of the child as the key consideration when considering what reasonable Family Time is.

2.2 The Human Rights Act, 1998

This is the primary legislation which incorporates the rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. The Local Authority is required to act in accordance with the act and promote the Human Rights of the child and his/her family. A parent or child may make an application to court for breach of their human rights if they feel that the Local Authority is being unfair in restricting contact.

Article 8 sets out the right to respect for privacy and family life. BUT this is not an absolute right; the state may interfere with family life provided that it is "necessary in a democratic society for the protection of health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedom of others" and that the interference is "proportionate" in the circumstances of the case (FRG, 2008). Article 8 is always considered by the courts in their Reasons. Practitioners should also reference in their evidence to court that they have given due consideration to this right and that they will evidence this through the welfare checklist, why the Local Authority is seeking to interfere in the parental right to family life.

2.3 Children's Rights

Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis without interference in so far as they do not run counter to the child's best interests.

Case law has established that where there is any conflict between the Human Rights of the child and their parents, the child's welfare takes precedence.

Those interests could be argued to be an interest and right to family life with their primary caregiver including if this is the foster carer. *South Tyneside presented as a "Good Practice Model" within a regional Contact Conference held by Durham County Council. HH Judge Taylor stressed the importance of the Local Authority position needing to contain evidence of the child's life in foster care including the impact of the disruption to their life in foster care that a high level of contact may have. (Durham, 15.01.2012).*

2.4 Who should have Family Time?

Section 2 of this Policy outlines the Local Authority legal obligations in relation to the promotion of Family Time with parents and those with parental responsibility. The Local Authority also has a duty to promote the sibling Family Time for children who are not placed together, so far as is consistent with their welfare.

Wider relative or friends: The assessment of the child will identify those people who are important to the child or young person and with whom they wish to maintain Family Time. For some children Family Time with wider relatives and friends will be significant. However, Family Time with these significant others must be proportionate, and must meet the needs of the child.

Family Time should be viewed in its widest context; we should be creative in thinking of ways other than direct contact that children can maintain a relationship with people of significance to them.

On March 23rd 2020 the country went into Lockdown due to the Corona Virus Pandemic. As a result of this all face to face family time sessions were put on hold until it was deemed safe enough for them to resume. Local Authorities across the country worked hard to create positive alternative opportunities in which Family Time between children and their family members could be maintained. Various IT and social media apps were sought to enable virtual contact to be arranged. Whilst this is not be a permanent solution to Family Time arrangements it should also continue to be considered as part of any future Family Time arrangements.

A combination of virtual and face to face sessions should continue to be considered when arranging Family Time between all family members. Virtual contact can be highly beneficial when face to face sessions are not possible due to distance and time restrictions. For example, when a young person wishes to engage in extra-curricular activities after school but would also like to have face to face contact with an absent parent. A virtual contact could be arranged for after the activities so that the young person is able to do both. Although this is not to replace face to face sessions it is a compromise which, used well, will fulfil the needs of the child and the family member.

3 PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

3.1 Supervision of Family Time

Supervision is, in the context of Family Time arrangements, the observation, monitoring and if necessary, intervention, in face to face contact between a child and their family members. There is an expectation that Family Time is supervised when there are issues of safety assessment and identity as defined below:

Safety – This may be where there are concerns about a child's safety due to child protection issues.

Assessment / Reunification - for example, to consider parenting capacity, strength of attachment or viability of a Looked After Child returning home.

Identity- the need for the Local Authority to promote contact for Children In Our Care (CIOC), primarily in long term placements to help them understand their origins and positive sense of self.

There are different types of supervision of Family Time which are considered by the social worker when making the referral; Fully Supervised, Monitored and Virtual.

Fully Supervised – The family member will not be allowed any contact with the child without the presence of a Family Time Officer (FTO). The FTO will ensure they observe all interactions including conversations and the meeting of a child's basic needs, e.g toileting. The Family Time sessions will take place within the Beach House or other identified venue. If sessions are to occur in the community the social worker will advise as to alternative venues and whether swimming/visits to soft play centres are allowed.

Monitored – Initial oversight of the Family Time session will be completed by an FTO. They will observe the beginning and ending of the session and monitor throughout. This is usually at 15-20 minute intervals ensuring the child is happy and content with the interactions between them and the family member. The Family Time sessions will take place within the Beach House or other identified venue. If sessions are to occur in the community the social worker will advise as to alternative venues and whether swimming/visits to soft play centres are allowed.

Virtual – A positive outcome from the Covid 19 pandemic was the change in how contact could be offered to families and with the use of technology virtual calls were established. Redcar & Cleveland BC has the relevant systems in place for FTO's to arrange and oversee family time virtually. They can assist carers and family members to ensure they have access to apps such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and What's App to allow such calls to happen. The social worker and Family Time Service will liaise regarding which app is appropriate for use based on the risks and level of supervision. Where necessary the FTO can monitor the virtual Family Time session safely without being visible to family members therefore not distracting from the session. Confidentiality can be kept when invites to participate in virtual calls are issued. This ensures email addresses are not shared maintaining data protection regulations are adhered to. The FTO can end the session if needed so that family members are no longer able to communicate with the children and the FTO can offer support and advice to children and carers.

Wherever possible all other options should be pursued for friends and family to oversee Family Time. It is only when these options have been exhausted and it has been deemed to be unsafe or not in the best interests of the child that a referral should be made for the Local Authority to do so.

3.2 Family Time Referrals

Please also refer to [Appendix 1 - Family Time, Families Together, Therapy Processes](#).

To ensure the service has capacity and can meet the needs of Family Time arrangements and prevent any failings on behalf of the Local Authority once an order has been agreed by the courts it is advisable for social workers to contact the Family Time Service to discuss their requirements and availability of resources within the Family Time Service.

Referrals ([Appendix 2 FTS Referral Form](#)), are made direct to the service by social workers and are to be submitted to the FamilyTimeService@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk. along with completed risk assessments for each family member attending sessions and transport request where necessary. If any other relevant documents are available these are to be indicated on the referral where they can be found on protocol e.g. Court Orders, Genogram, Words and Pictures.

Within 5 working days of receipt of referral a Family Time Officer (FTO) will arrange an Induction Meeting with the social worker and parent to agree the expectations for Family Time sessions.

During the meeting the following will also be included;

Establish any ground rules and go through the Family Time Agreement booklet, (see [Appendix 3](#)).

Have a tour of the building covering health and safety/fire escape etc. information.

Identify any red flags/bottom lines.

Discuss any concerns/areas of support, e.g parenting, support with cooking a meal/type of contact, fully supervised, community based.

Complete any extra risk assessments e.g Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) /Covid 19 risk assessment should they be required.

Family Time sessions will then be added to the planner (usually within 10 working days of receipt of referral) and a schedule with start date will be forwarded to the social worker to share with family and carers if not already completed during meeting. Where relevant arrangements can be made for children to visit and familiarise themselves with the venue.

Family Time will be reviewed and FTO's should be invited to CIOC reviews and other relevant meetings to review the progress of Family Time sessions. If unable to attend, a report is to be provided by FTO to social worker prior to meeting.

The Social Worker must ensure that:

- The Family Time Service referral is completed and signed off by a manager before being sent to the Family Time Service. A risk assessment will also be shared.
- The referral form will include the nature and purpose of the Family Time; any significant events connected to the contact; any observations of the suitability of the arrangements.
- Foster carers will wherever possible make the relevant arrangements to transport the child/ren to and from the venue.
- The views of the child/young person, their parents, others having contact and the carers on the Family Time arrangements are regularly and proactively sought by the Social Worker sharing relevant information which will promote positive Family Time sessions.

3.3 Referrals for Unborn Babies

When social workers are aware there are concerns for an unborn baby and there is a history of previous siblings coming into LA Care they must include the Family Time Service when planning for babies arrival. Where an UBB has been identified as being at risk they can be referred into children's services from 18 weeks gestation. The relevant assessments will be carried out and if deemed appropriate an Initial Child Protection Conference will be held to discuss the concerns and plan for baby's birth. It is at this stage that a referral should be considered to the Family Time Service if full supervision of family time is required. Referrals wherever possible should be made from 36 weeks gestation. This will enable the service to plan ahead should support be required immediately after baby's birth at the hospital. It would also enable a smooth transition to the Beach House and continuity of contact between mother and baby upon discharge and placement with foster carer.

Whilst the service acknowledges that some UBB's are often hidden until the later stages of pregnancy or other family members may be put forward as potential carers as baby is born it is felt that to pre-plan and have resources on standby is more beneficial.

3.4 Record of Arrangements and Recording Family Time sessions

All referrals and proceeding documents, Family Time schedule will be retained electronically in the child's electronic file on: S Drive – HSW – Edge of Care & Resources – Family Time Service – Working Documents 2018 – Referrals. A Family Time arrangements form, see [Appendix 5](#), will also be held in this electronic file which includes records of family and carer contact details and is updated to reflect current information. A copy of this form is also kept for the purposes of the Beach House Business Continuity Plan should it be required in cases of emergency as part of the vital records required.

Social Workers/ Social Work Team Clerks will share any schedules with family members and carers and upload the information to the Protocol/LMS data base in the child's records.

Family Time Officers (FTO's) will complete individual case notes uploading them onto Protocol for individual families. They will use the Case Note Proforma, [Appendix 6](#), to set out and detail the contents of the session. All observations are to be recorded fully with feedback given where appropriate to the family member at the end of the session.

The views of the child/young person, their parents, others having Family Time and the carer's on the Family Time arrangements are regularly and proactively sought by the FTO sharing and recording information which will promote positive Family Time sessions.

Case notes on Family Time sessions will be shared within legal proceedings. Confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with *Children, Adults and Families Policy*.

3.5 Family Time Officers (FTO's)

Family Time Officers (FTO's) should be appropriately trained for the role and be confident in managing the Family Time. Any new members of staff will have a full induction to the service and a period of shadowing colleagues. All FTO's need to be fully briefed on the circumstances of individual cases and know what the issues are, and the level of supervision required. All FTO's will have access to the relevant databases to access up to date

information pertaining to Family Time to ensure the safety of the family as well as themselves.

As far as possible, the same FTO's should consistently oversee Family Time for an individual family. This reduces the need for briefing different FTO's as well as ensuring less disruption for the child and family. It will also be of benefit to the child who may be anxious about Family Time; it will assist in them being able to develop a trust and confidence in the security of the Family Time arrangements.

It is also essential that Social Workers spend time supervising some Family Time sessions as part of their ongoing assessment work. This will be expected when the child is subject to legal proceedings as the Court will expect Social Workers to report this first hand. Some sessions may also be observed by expert witnesses and CAFCASS officers.

If Family Time takes place at the carer's home it must be clear as to whether carers are facilitating or supervising contact. Facilitating is simply providing the venue for the Family Time. Supervising implies a much more active monitoring role. It must be clear that the carer has sufficient training and experience for the role and is well supported.

Family Time Officers (FTO's) have access to the services database and planner which records any changes to the daily allocation of staff to individual families and arrangements for where sessions will take place including any transport arrangements etc. It is the responsibility of the FTO to check the planner on a daily basis for any amendments which may occur due to cancellations or staff sickness.

Family Time Officers (FTO's) are notified of their daily working hours 2 weeks in advance via the weekly workload. This outlines the approximate start and finish times and days expected to work for all staff. FTO's are allocated their working hours in line with service needs. A high level of flexibility is required by the FTO's. Once the weekly workload has been shared with staff any changes required to the daily working hours should be consulted directly with the individual member of staff it relates to. (Wherever possible FTO's will be allocated full working days however this cannot be guaranteed nor can set days of working). The service respectfully asks all staff to submit any requests for annual leave 3 weeks in advance to enable the weekly workload to be planned and to ensure limited disruption to service. Any last minute/emergency requests need to be discussed with the team manager or Senior Family Time Officer before confirmation is agreed.

3.6 Family Time Agreement booklet

Any Family Time arrangements must have good quality standards applied to the provision and delivery of sessions. The initial schedule and agreement must be in place prior to sessions taking place. The Family Time Agreement booklet sets out clear guidance and expectations of all parties to ensure positive family time sessions take place in a safe environment. It promotes a healthy lifestyle and positive interactions between family members.

See [Appendix 3, Family Time Agreement Booklet](#)

3.7 Behaviour In Family Time

Whilst it is acknowledged that the majority of family time sessions take place without any incident or cause for concern, on rare occasions staff are subjected to unacceptable behaviour.

Family Time Officers have a specific role to play when supervising sessions which is to safeguard the child from any possible harm, this includes any conversations which are not deemed appropriate, such as the child returning home or negative comments regarding other professionals. This is especially important when the Family Courts are still to finalise any outcomes. Visitors will be warned about their behaviours in the first instance and given the opportunity to reflect on the issues raised by the FTO before resuming a session. Any threats toward FTO's will be taken seriously and passed onto the relevant authorities where necessary. It is therefore an expectation of all visitors to respect the working practices of all Family Time Officers, complying with their requests and to speak directly to the social worker should they have any concerns regarding the content of family time sessions. If visitors continue to behave in a manner that is threatening, intimidating or aggressive towards staff then a letter, will be sent to them, their legal representatives (where applicable), and the social worker warning them this behaviour is not acceptable. If their behaviour continues then consideration will be given to the suspension/restriction of family time, see 3.10.

See [Appendix 4 Behaviour In Family Time Letter](#).

3.8 What the Service is able to offer

Sessions can be arranged at the Beach House between the hours of 9.30am and 5pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 3pm on a Saturday. However, where necessary some sessions may need to start earlier or finish later than these times. Most morning sessions will begin at approximately 9.30am. For those children who attend nurseery or a child-care setting, sessions can be arranged for lunch time, between 11.30am and 2.30pm. Sessions for babies and young children aged up to 4 years old can be offered for up to 2 hours per day 3-4 times per week. After school sessions are offered between 3pm and 5pm with the majority starting at 3.30pm to allow for travel to the venue from school. Up to 3 sessions after school can be offered per week. Where carers are unable to oversee Family Time with siblings the service will also cover these sessions.

Saturdays - Priority is given to families who live out of area or unable to take leave from work to have sessions scheduled on a Saturday. Children who are in long term placements and see their family members 6-8 times per year but for more than 2 hours will also have their sessions scheduled on a Saturday or during school holidays.

Wherever possible carers transport children to and from sessions however in exceptional circumstances the FTO will complete any transport requirements. The service does not have a budget which covers transport therefore any hours undertaken by FTO's to transport need to be incorporated within their working day.

Support - The Family Time Service can offer a variety of support options. Sessions can take place in the community or family home if it is safe to do so. Where reunification has been

agreed this can be overseen by FTO's and advice and support offered to family members for them to safely take over the supervision of Family Time. As part of the transition to reunification arrangements can be made for early morning drop ins and pre bedtime visits to ensure routines are in place.

Parenting - FTO's work alongside the Parenting Group Facilitators to support parents learning and understanding during sessions. FTO's can support parents with planning a family meal with the Beach House having the facilities to cook a meal. It also has the facilities to support parents with bathing their child or toilet training where appropriate. FTO's can oversee final sessions and can contribute to the life stories of those children who are to be adopted.

All children will have their own electronic file where FTO's can save any photographs taken during family time sessions or information recording a particular activity that the family have engaged in during their sessions. These memories can be shared with social workers, carers and family members where relevant to do so. Most importantly they can play a part in any life story work that is to be completed with the child and become a part of their memory box.

3.9 Changes to the Family Time Arrangements

Any changes to the Family Time arrangements must be communicated by the Social Worker to the Family Time Service as soon as possible. It is recognised that there may sometimes be subtle variations to a Family Time session, for example changes to venue. This will allow the service sufficient time to make the relevant changes and provide written notification to the social worker so they can inform of the amendments within seven days to the following:

- The child/young person, if s/he is of sufficient understanding.
- The child/young person's parents.
- Any guardian of the child/young person.

(This is set out in Regulation 8 of the 2010 Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations).

Late arrivals - Family members who do not attend for their session within 15 minutes of the start time nor contact the service to advise they will be late will have their session cancelled and the child will be returned to his/her carer. If family members contact the service to advise they are going to be late due to exceptional circumstances every effort will be made to ensure the session goes ahead when they arrive.

If the service is responsible for the transportation of a child and they arrive late for the session the service will make the relevant arrangements for the time owing to be offered either at the end of the session or on an alternative date suitable to all parties.

Unreliable attendance - Where attendance by family members is unreliable the service will request agreement from the social worker to implement a 'Confirmation of Attendance' time. This means family members will need to contact the service either by text, phone, email or in person to indicate they intend to arrive on time for their session prior to the session starting. If family members do not confirm attendance by the agreed time the carer will be notified, and the child will not be transported to the session.

When a parent misses 3 consecutive Family Time sessions with no contact or reason as to why they could not attend the social worker will be notified. The service will place the sessions on hold until the social worker has established contact with the parent to confirm their commitment to attend. The sessions will be reinstated as soon as this has been verified at the earliest opportunity. This will prevent the child from any unnecessary journeys or upset when family members do not attend.

3.10 Suspension/Restriction of Family Time

Please also refer to Suspension of Family Time flowchart in [Appendix 7](#).

Where there are serious concerns about existing Family Time sessions and these sessions are detrimental to the welfare of the child, the Local Authority must review and take action if necessary. This may involve seeking legal advice and taking legal action through Section 34(4) Children's Act 1989 – permission to refuse contact with a child in care.

Such situations may include consistent failure of family members to attend Family Time resulting in undue distress and disruption to the child, or family members who pose a risk to their child or others including Social Workers and Family Time Officers.

In circumstances where the Social Worker reaches a view that the agreed arrangements for Family Time for the looked after child/young person are no longer in the child or young person's best interests and all efforts to improve contact have failed, the Social Worker should consult with their Team Manager and liaise with the Family Time Service regarding any further action.