

## Planning and Seeing our Children

### Practice Guide

This practice guide supports our planning and thinking to make sure when we see our children, we make a difference for them. It also supports building relationships with our children that will help us create and inspire positive change.

It is important that children are given the opportunity to make sure that their voice, wishes and feelings are heard, recognised and acted upon. The voice of the child refers not only to what children tell us but also enabling an understanding of their behaviours. As part of our planning, we need to think about how and when we see our children as well as making plans to see parents and carers without the child being present.

Where we see children should also be informed by what they think and what works for them. It is important that time is taken to ask children how they want to work with us and how they see this happening to make sure children feel valued and respected.

It is also important that we are building in time to talk to children about what is happening to influence our planning and how we will share information with them especially after a significant event has happened such as a court hearing, an important meeting. It is important that we let children know what has happened so that they have a clear understanding of what this means for them. Feedback from children tells us that they want to know as soon as possible when key decisions have been made about their lives. This also allows an opportunity to provide any additional support the child may need or understand what they think about the decisions that are being made to inform your work.

As part of your role, it is important that we also include planning when there is due to be a change of social worker – how will you say goodbye and introduce the new worker?

How often and when we see our children is set out in the Practice Standards – the below is a summary of the detail. This is the **minimum timescales** and plans to see children should be in line with their wishes and needs. At times it will be necessary to see children more often due to the change in their circumstances or the level of risk.

Early Help Assessment – Family Support Worker	Initial home visit within 10 working days. Under 5 and missing from school – at least every 3 weeks dependent upon needs and professional judgement.
Children in Need	Every 20 working days.
Child Protection	The statutory child protection visit should be every 15 working days however there is an expectation that children are also seen again within the month to complete direct work as a minimum. This means that children are seen twice a month. Some children may need to be visited more often dependant on the level of risk.
Child in Care – Care Proceedings	Minimum every 20 working days however there is an expectation that children are seen again during the month to complete direct work. This means that children are seen twice a month. Some children may need to be visited more often dependant on the level of need.
Child in Care	Within 1 week of the start of the placement, then at a minimum of 6 weeks.
Child in Care – matched long-term placement	Visit minimum of 12 weeks.
Children in Care – Placement with Parents	Interim Care Order – minimum every 20 working days however there is an expectation that children are seen again during the month to complete direct work. This means that children are seen twice a month. Some children may need to be visited more often dependant on the level of need  Care Order – every 6 weeks.
Care Leavers	Keeping in touch visit every 8 weeks.
Children living in Residential Homes	Every 6 weeks.
CCHDT	Children with stable care packages - every 12 weeks.
Private Fostering	Initial visit within 7 working days, then at a minimum of 6 weeks.
Children in Unregulated Fostering Placements where Reg 24 has not been approved or where	Every 10 days. Some children may need to be seen more often dependent on the level of risk and need.

children are placed under S38(6)	
Children in Unregulated Fostering Placements where Reg 24 / 25 has expired due to delays with checks	4 weekly as a minimum. Some children may need to be seen more often dependent on the level of risk and need.
Children in Unregulated Residential Placements	Minimum each week for duration of the arrangement.
Youth Justice	Prior to sentencing, children seen once as a minimum as part of preparing the pre-sentence report. Once an order is made, children are seen in line with the set frequency as well as need and level of risk.

### **Purpose of the visit**

Visits need to be informed by our Practice Approach and focus on spending time with children to understand what life is like for them and how we can work with everyone to make sure their situation is safe and improves.

Planning the visits is important and should include the following –

- Which direct work tools will you use to help build relationships – how are you getting to know the child and understand their views as well as what life is like for them?
- How does the child know you and why you are there?
- Does the child know how to contact you (and have the means to) if they want to see or speak to you?
- Does the child know when they will be seeing you next?
- Where does the child want to see you?
- What does the child think about you visiting them?
- How will you keep in touch with the child?
- How often will you see them?
- How are the visits being used to understand what changes the plan is making for the child in terms of their experiences?
- How is the child's voice and experience informing the plan of work?
- What will happen if you are not able to visit or are running late?
- How are the visits linked to understand what is important to the child?

All About Me is a Tool developed by the Trust that will help build your relationship with the child as part of understanding what is important for the child. Appendix 1.

A variety of direct work tools should be used based on the needs of the child. Getting to know the child's wishes and feelings can be done through play, drawing, planned worksheets or any other activity that is suitable to the child's age and needs.

To ensure variety and to access specialist materials see [www.socialworkerstoolbox.com](http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com). Worksheets need to be uploaded to LCS and can be a photo is acceptable if children want to keep their work.

## **Statutory Visit**

Statutory visits provide an opportunity to see the child in their home environment with the people who care for them, to ensure that they are safe and that where they are living is meeting their needs. This will allow us to understand the child's lived experience in a wider context.

On a statutory visit, all children over 4 should be seen alone, and reasons recorded if not. Our planning should fit around the child's needs. Where parents are not in agreement for children to be seen alone on a statutory visit, this should be shared with the team manager so that we can understand and plan how to manage this.

Children should not be seen at school for the statutory visit and wherever possible school visits should be avoided as this takes children away from valuable learning time and can be stigmatising for children.

Seeing children alone means without their brothers and sisters, parents and other family members.

Please ensure tick boxes on the visit pro forma on LCS are completed to confirm whether children have been seen alone.

## **Recording a visit to the child on LCS**

To help understand how the visit was completed it is important that we capture this for the child on their record. This will help to reflect the work completed and how this information has been used to influence the plan and the changes needed and taking place.

All visits to children need to be recorded using the following headings –

### **Why am I visiting?**

- Explain why you are visiting?
- How is your visit linked to the work that is identified within the assessment or plan.

### **What we did and what we talked about**

- Give details of activities completed during the visit to understand what is happening for the child – record their views, their responses and the quality of their responses.
- Did the child understand why you were visiting?
- Observe their mood and how they present – what does this mean for your visit and any observations that you have made and know about what is happening for the child?
- Capture any information that is important for example, has something happened at school?

- When children are too young to engage in direct work or are non-verbal, how have observations been used to understand their experiences? What was their presentation and interaction with their caregivers / adults.
- With younger children including babies information should be captured regarding about their alertness, mobility, physical development and well-being, and attachment to carers.

#### **What is your view about what is happening for you?**

- What does the child think about how what is happening in their life and the plan of work that is in place?
- If there has been an incident, what does the child think about what has happened?
- Do they think that there has been any change in their life? If not, what can we do things differently?
- Capture the child's voice / own words in blue.

#### **What you think should happen next?**

- What was agreed for next steps and how does this relate to the plan / any incidents?
- How are children involved in decision making?

#### **Practitioner reflections on the visit**

- Has new information gathered today changed your assessment of the situation?
- Is the plan working? How is the plan helping the child and family? If not what do we need to do differently?
- Are there any outstanding risks we need to think about?
- If things are not changing, what do we need to do differently?
- Next steps?

***The case record should be completed within a maximum 48 hours of the visit. Significant events should be recorded immediately.***

### **Top Tips**

- Take care when recording a visit to multiple children to make sure that we accurately record who we have seen when there are brothers and sisters.
- Remember where possible use the child's own words to capture their experiences, wishes and feelings – keep interpretation and the child's actual own words separate.
- Think about what children maybe trying to communicate through their behaviour.
- It is ok for the session to be led by the child; if your planned work does not go ahead record why that did not happen and what it means for your work.

- Some children will have trusted relationships with other professionals – think about how this can help to build a more detailed picture of the child’s life and how they can support opportunities to engage with the child, help with communications or be an advocate for the child’s voice.
- When we are unable to capture the child’s voice, question what this is telling us in terms of safeguarding concerns or gaps in our understanding of their experiences?
- Think about any specialist communication support needed for children with disabilities or complex communication needs.
- **Risks / Safeguarding concerns** *should be completed in **Bold and RED***

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