

# A better start for Children and Young People

'Every conversation starts with the child'



Social Workers must prepare for all statutory visits to ensure they are meaningful and effective.

## VISITS TO CHILDREN ON CHILD PROTECTION PLANS – STATUTORY VISITS

The purpose of the visit is to address the safeguarding concerns that are identified in the plan and ensure that the child is safe. The social worker must help the child and the parents understand what needs to change to end the plan and support them to make these changes, through direct work and intervention. The child's plan is to be discussed with the child (in an age appropriate manner), and parents. The progress the family are making is measured against the plan. Social workers should always be clear with families about the purpose of their visit.

Some visits should be unannounced and take place at various times of the day as this affords the opportunity to observe all aspects of the child's routine and enables the social worker to observe interactions between all members of the family in prepared and unprepared conditions. The names of all those present should be recorded.

Social Workers must ensure that the child's bedroom is seen at least once between each child protection conference. Where the concerns leading to registration are about neglect then the child's bedroom should be seen on each visit as should the kitchen and food preparation area, the bathroom and toilet.

Children should be seen and spoken to alone. Parental agreement is required for this and social workers should explain to the parents why this is an important part of the child protection plan. When English is not the child's first language active consideration must be given to using a non-family interpreter to ensure that the child's voice is heard.

When visiting a child on a child protection plan the following **MUST** be observed;

- The child must be seen alone
- Home conditions must be observed including the child's bedroom, with parental consent.
- SW must be assured that progress is being made in regard to the child protection plan and any barriers or increased risk is discussed immediately with a manager **and** the IRO
- Discussions regarding education arrangements should be undertaken (is the child in school)? If a child is not in school the SW should have a clear understanding of the rationale for this and be assured that this does not increase the risk to the child – this must be recorded on the child's file. Any concern that children are being kept.
- Recording of visits to a child who is subject to a Child protection plan must be completed within 3 working days.

The record should clearly state:

- Time and date of every home visit stating who was present, confirming the social worker spoke with the child alone or providing a clear reason why not;
- Any information gained or observations made during the visit relevant to the identified risks to the child.

- Progress made against the child protection plan. If the view about the risks has worsened greatly this should be discussed with a manager **and** the IRO as soon as possible.
- Any challenges made to the parent/carers regarding the home circumstances, risks and issues;
- Circumstances of all family members;
- Specific information about key subjects such as sleeping arrangements;
- Factual reports of the child's presentation and behaviour;
- The child's thoughts, wishes and feelings, including if they feel safe;
- Agreed next steps with parent/carer and the child;
- Any new incidents or injuries which must be subject to full Section 47 Enquiry.
- Direct work undertaken with the child

## VISITS TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE STATUTORY VISITS

The purpose of the statutory visit is to ensure that the child's welfare is both protected and promoted in their current placement, the placement is stable and that the standards in the placement, including the child's bedroom, are acceptable. You will need to ensure that the child has a clean and appropriate bedroom, furniture suitable for their needs and where necessary has privacy. For older children permission should be sought before going into their bedroom.

In particular:

- To give the child the opportunity to express their wishes, feelings and views;
- To advise, assist and befriend the child;
- To observe the child with the staff / foster carer / parent;
- To monitor the standard of care offered by the placement;
- To monitor how the contact arrangements are working;
- To provide support to the placement;
- To identify any areas where additional support is required;
- To evaluate whether the placement is helping to achieve the objectives of the child's Care Plan.
- To complete age appropriate relevant direct work and life story work with the child so they are able to understand the decisions that are made in relation to their care.

When visiting a child who is looked after child the following **MUST** be observed;

- The child is seen alone.
- The child's care plan is discussed with the child's carers and the SW is assured that the placement continues to meet the child's needs.
- The home environment and child's sleeping arrangements should be observed. This will be dependent on the last time the bedroom was seen and the care plan for the child including levels of risk and if it is not seen the rationale for this **MUST** be clearly recorded.
- What is it like for them living here?
- What can you observe from the child's behaviour and what might the meaning of this be?
- What is the quality of interaction / attachment relationship you can observe?
- Do carers speak about the child positively and with affection?
- What is the evidence of physical standards of care, e.g. dress, whether shoes fit?
- Recording of visits to a child who is looked after must be completed within 3 working days.

Issues to explore with the child, their views of the placement, for example:

- What is it like living here?
- Are you happy here?
- How do you get on with the others you are living with?
- Is there anything that is not OK here...or anywhere else?
- Leisure opportunities and hobbies – things they may want to do.
- Health – how they are feeling physically and emotionally.
- School / college / training / work – is it OK? Need for support?
- Views on the plan for them, including contact arrangements if appropriate.
- Ask the child if there is anything else they need you to know.

## VISITS TO CHILDREN IN NEED

The purpose of the visit is to work with the child and family to achieve the desired outcomes of the Child in Need plan and measure the progress being made against the plan. The social worker must be clear with families about the purpose of their visit and support children and families make the required changes to end the plan.

- Direct work is being undertaken with the child
- Conversation regarding the family's ongoing strengths
- Progress/barriers to developing the CIN plan
- Any escalation in risk – this must be discussed immediately with a manager
- Recording should be completed within 3 working days of the event. The record should clearly state:
  - Time and date of every home visit stating who was present, confirming the social worker spoke with the child alone or providing a clear reason why not;
  - Any information gained or observations made during the visit relevant to the identified risks to the child. If the view about the risks has worsened greatly this should be discussed with a manager as soon as possible;
  - Any challenges made to the parent/carers regarding the home circumstances, risks and issues;
  - Circumstances of all family members;
  - Specific information about key subjects such as sleeping arrangements;
  - Factual reports of the child's presentation and behaviour;
  - The child's thoughts, wishes and feelings, including if they feel safe;
  - Agreed next steps with parent/carer and the child