



**Policy and Procedures  
Supervised Contact (Including  
Countywide Contact Team  
Procedures)**

## Scope

This policy applies to all situations where children are looked after and require supervised contact as part of their ongoing care plan arrangements during and following care proceedings. Cases where supervised contact is required as part of support plans associated with Adoption or Special Guardianship arrangements do not fall within the scope of this policy however when possible we will try to comply with requests.

## Statement of Purpose

Ofsted 2013 “Children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with family and friends and other people who are important to them”

The Children Act 1989 requires that local authorities promote and support contact between children who are looked after and their families if it is in the best interests of the child's welfare. The Children and Families Act 2014 changes the duty to promote contact to a duty to allow reasonable contact.

The Countywide Contact Team works in partnership with local authorities, Children and Family teams, CAFCASS, Children's centres and legal services to meet the needs of children and families in Gloucestershire.

Our specially-trained and experienced team of supervisors provide a flexible, reliable and professional service, which is tailored to individual case requirements. Detailed recordings based on EBP (evidence based practice) are sent to allocated social workers/legal teams. Contact can be a rich source of information that can be used to inform care planning, permanence planning, as well as provide material that could inform life story work with children. The contact supervisors will upload their recordings onto the Countywide Contact Team S drive within 7 days of contact taking place.

All aspects of contact can be accommodated, including:

- Monitoring
- Supervising
- Parenting skills assistance/modelling
- Observations

We take away the need for social workers to arrange/plan supervised contacts for children and their parents/families, by liaising with foster carers and guardians to plan times and venues in accordance with social worker and Court requirements. We aim to establish and use a range of different venues across the County that enable us to meet the needs of the families involved and minimise the need for excessive travelling for children.

We work flexible hours, after 5pm and at weekends to allow parents the opportunity to see their children outside of normal working hours. Weekend contact is available only when a case can be put forward to justify the need and is dependent on availability.

## 1. Countywide Contact Team Aims

**1.1** The Countywide Contact Team in accordance with Gloucestershire County Council will promote, encourage and facilitate contact between looked after children, their families of origin and others who have played an important part in their lives. Regular and consistent contact arrangements are also important in facilitating reunification. Contact (direct or indirect) between children and their families is important and will be promoted unless it is not consistent with their safety, best interests, or would jeopardise their chances of achieving a permanent placement (Permanence Policy, 2010).

**1.2** For the majority of children the aim from the outset will be to reunite them with their family, provided that it is safe and practical. Developing and maintaining close links between the child and their family are essential to this objective. Where children have to live apart from their family, sustainable and positive contact arrangements is seen to help the child to develop a proper understanding of their identity and origins.

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**1.4** Contact will only be refused when there is clear evidence that it prevents the authority from safeguarding the child's welfare and will then be discussed with the Social Worker.

**1.5** We aim to provide regular and consistent contact in a friendly relaxed child centred setting with age appropriate toys. In our experience, the more homely the setting the less distressing these contacts are for the children and the more we can observe of the reality of life for these children with their parents.

*At our two venues – Deep Street and Barnwood House:*

- *We have bathrooms which are used daily to enable new Mums to bathe their babies and use the equipment provided for them by the centre.*
- *Our kitchen is used for parents to cook meals for their children, bake cakes, and prepare babies meals and bottles. We have a wide range of child feeding equipment (steriliser, bottle warmer, baby feeding cups, bottles etc.)*
- *We have a large garden where parents have picnics with their families, play and enjoy the fresh air in a controlled environment.*
- *We offer a variety of books/toys and music CDs to accommodate all ages, a comfortable sofa, and a feel of home.*
- *We have a wide range of arts and crafts, games and puzzles.*

*We are unable to provide contact for siblings only, due to the shift in responsibilities. If a parent is there they are primarily responsible for the children during contact and a supervisor would only intervene if required. The Countywide Contact Team is primarily responsible to facilitate contact between parents and their children.*

**1.6** We aim to offer parenting advice/support and encouragement, supervise contacts at home, day trips, and outdoor activities when requested by the child's social worker or ordered in court.

Parents will be expected to fund activities during contact where appropriate. Transport costs that arise as a result of approved activities will be funded by parents in consultation with the social work team. If parents have financial difficulties and cannot afford the costs incurred then clear financial arrangements must be made with the social worker and endorsed and approved by the team manager. Any financial arrangements are to be time limited, good value and annually reviewed. They are to be recorded so it is clear what is being paid for, by whom and for how long. Value for money must underpin any arrangement.

*Social workers will need to provide risk assessments for each contact based on initial and historic evidence. The contact team will update risk assessment as new risks are identified.*

**1.7** We aim to always ensure that when transport is provided by foster carer or taxi, they remain with the child until the parents arrive, thus ensuring the child is not left alone with a supervisor.

*Supervisors will not transport new born babies or children up to the age of 5 /6 months unless there are exceptional circumstances. Depending on the needs of the child this will be assessed by the Contact team. It would be the expectation that the foster carer would transport a young baby so they are in the company of someone they know.*

**1.8** Service users are responsible for funding their own transport to and from contact in consultation with the social worker team. If families experience financial difficulties then arrangements will be made by their social worker to assist funding using the most economical mode of transport available (public transport & not Taxi's) . This will be approved by a manager and will be time limited and reviewed annually. Funding arrangements will be clearly recorded and contained in the contact plan. It is imperative that these are reviewed and that public funds are used wisely promoting value for money.

*Arrangements will be reviewed regularly with the social worker and contact team and at a minimum of annually. Arrangements will be fully recorded in the contact plan and expectations clarified with all parties.*

**1.9** We aim to accommodate the requests set out by the social worker in relation to the time and days of the contact. However due to demand of service and varying age ranges, we have to allocate the times depending on age of the child. For example children under the school age will be allocated times between 9 – 2.30 to allow the school age children contact time from 3pm onwards. Request for venue will also depend on the location of the child and specific circumstance of each individual case.

**2.** From the point of referral the Countywide Contact team will support supervised contact for a maximum period of 2years, or 18months post permanence plan. Following this, it will be the responsibility of the fostering/permanence/adoption/friends and family team to review long term arrangements.

*If necessary cases can be referred to the contact team for commissioned work.*

## **2 . Procedure for Parents missing contact.**

Children in care who are separated from their families require a consistent and predictable routine. For this reason the contact team to ensure that process of supervised contact establishes a routine that promotes the emotional needs of those receiving the service by avoiding disappointment of failed contacts or disruption to their daily routines.

For this reason, when parents refuse or fail to attend contact on more than three consecutive occasions the Countywide Contact Team will begin initiating the following procedure.

We will, in consultation with social workers advise the family that they will need to ring the contact team by 4pm the day before contact is due on the team mobile 07768552744 to confirm their attendance. If the parent fails to do this, the contact will be cancelled by the contact team and cannot be reinstated. In the event that parents ring in but then fail to attend, we will initiate a second ring in whereby parents need to ring in by 9am in the morning to confirm attendance.

If the parent fails to call in and confirm contact on three occasions, the Countywide Contact Team will look at a suspension in contact pending a review of the care plan.

If parents ring in, but cancel in the morning, or fail to arrive for their contact on 3 consecutive occasions, the contact team will ask social worker and legal teams for a reduction in contact or a suspension of contact for 7 days.

If parents are late coming to contact and live locally to the centre, we allow 10 minutes for them to arrive before cancelling contact. If they need to catch a bus or are some distance from the centre, we allow them 15 minutes before cancelling contact.

*Where concerns about cancellations or failed contacts for other reasons take place, we will bring this to the attention of social work teams at the earliest opportunity.*

## **3. High level/frequency contact**

Sen and Broadhurst, 2011 say Support for family contact is underpinned by theories of attachment and the need for continuity with the negative impact of separation. Contact can help a child maintain their sense of identity and come to terms with what has happened to them.

Schofield and Stevenson, 2009; Sen and Broadhurst, 2011 note that Children often worry about their birth family and contact can help reassure them by letting them see that their parents and siblings are all right. Contact also helps to keep children informed of important changes at home (if it is deemed that this information will not cause any detrimental affects). And for some, contact also plays a role in the assessment of whether return home will be safe

Although contact with birth families can be beneficial for children; it is also argued that contact can be problematic (Moyers et al, 2006; Neil et al, 2011) and in some cases harmful and the likely cause of enduring emotional and psychological damage, even when it appears to be going well (Loxtercamp, 2009).

Contact is also associated with placement breakdown and further abuse for some children when it is of poor quality or problematic (Moyers et al, 2006; Selwyn, 2004).

A poor and problematic contact can be for a number of reasons:

We are going to examine these 4 points in detail and in line with our current practice

1. Unreliable contacts - in that the parents did not turn up or are consistently late.
2. The level of contact can be inappropriate
3. There can be poor quality of interaction between child and birth relative
4. Children can experience re-traumatization

Humphrey and Kiraly's research looked at 119 infants under the age of 12 months who were in care; One third of these had high frequency family contact of (4–7 visits per week with family members). According to this study, contact between infants and their parents was often infrequent in spite of the high level of contact ordered yet only half of the parents, mainly mothers, attended for more than 75% of the contact visits.

Many mothers and fathers may also have been “set up to fail” by having contact regimes that were impossible for them to maintain when they were struggling with substance use, mental health and domestic violence problems

*(Sinclair, 2005) - .Between 40 and 50 per cent of looked after children have contact with a family member on a weekly basis (most commonly with their birth mother, often with siblings)*

*Ashley 2011 and Neil et al 2014 state that Fathers and Paternal families have less contact*

*(Schofield and Simmonds, 2011 - Young children who are removed from harm and provided with secure caregiving are able to form an attachment to their new carer. However, this attachment can be compromised if contact with the child's birth family is not sensitively handled*

It is the local authority's belief, backed up by substantial research evidence that high levels of contact can be very disruptive, particularly for very young children. It is important that young babies in particular, but also other infants, are afforded every opportunity to develop an attachment to a primary carer. With children separated from their families this will usually be with the foster carer. The importance of this attachment process cannot be overemphasised and will be critical to the success or otherwise of any plan for reunification. Moreover a child's ability to attach will be an over-riding determining factor relative to high levels of ongoing contact.

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. 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.

Biological parents have an abiding emotional significance for the majority of people, but for many children and young people it is the loss of their foster carers that has the greatest immediate impact when they are placed for adoption. Nearly three quarters of the 3,450 children adopted in England in previous years were aged between one and four. With cases lasting an average of 52 weeks, for many of these children the foster family is the only home they can remember. These carers are primary attachment figures. **‘Contact with foster families is given little attention’**

For some children, foster carers are the first safe, nurturing adults they have encountered. Leaving their care can arouse fears of a return to dangerous parenting, feelings of rejection and prolonged mourning. It can be hard for adults around the child to accept and recognise these feelings of loss and ambivalence, at a time of their own happiness and excitement.

For the reasons identified above we do not believe and will not facilitate levels of contact in excess of 2 hours a day for more than 3 days a week. Where specific circumstances suggest increased levels may be necessary, a business case should be made and presented to the Service Leader responsible for contact team line management.

### **Weekend Contact**

The contact team is primarily a service that provides contact services on weekdays between 9am & 7pm. While the team will do all it can be flexible about the services it provides, it does have a responsibility to use public resources responsibly and sensibly. While we would not dismiss out of hand the provision of weekend contact arrangements, these should very much be the exception and only used where the parent concerned is unable to attend contact during the week due to work commitments.

## **4. Powers and Duties informing practice**

### **4.1 Children Act 1989: Schedule 2 paragraph 15 (1)**

The Contact Team are aware that the Local Authority must, unless it is not reasonably practicable or consistent with his welfare, endeavour to promote and allow reasonable contact between the child and -

- his parents,
- any person who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him,
- any relative, friend or other person connected with him.

#### **4.2 Schedule 2 paragraph 15 (2) (a)**

The Local Authority must ensure that parents and those with parental responsibility know where a child who is being looked after is living, unless the authority has reasonable cause to believe that informing that person would prejudice the child's welfare.

#### **4.3 Schedule 2 paragraph (10) (b)**

The Local Authority shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable where any child within their area who is in need and whom they are not looking after is living apart from his family, and his family (e.g. children in health or similar establishments, and private foster placements).

## **5. GCC Procedures and Guidelines Informing Practice**

### **5.1 Approving and Planning**

Looked After children should be encouraged and supported to maintain contact with their parents, any person who holds **Parental Responsibility**, other significant family members (including grandparents and half siblings), **Connected Persons** and siblings in a manner consistent with the child's Care Plan; which, itself, must take account of any **Child Protection Plan** or **Contact Order** that may be in force.

Contact between children and their parents or siblings may only be permitted if previously agreed by the social worker and should be set out in the child's **Placement Information Record**.

The purpose of the contact and how it will be evaluated must be made clear in the Plan.

Both direct and indirect contact arrangements should always be clearly detailed, setting out how contact will take place, the venue, the frequency and how the arrangements will be reviewed. The current levels of demand for contact make it difficult to identify a specified person to supervise every contact. However, the contact team manager will ensure that as a small a group of supervisors as possible are identified to work with each individual family.

Where contact is extended as part of a plan to gradually return the child to the parents' care, the **Placement with Parents Procedure** should be followed.

For foster carers providing short breaks, the foster carer must maintain contact as agreed in the short break plan.



## 5.2 Supervised contact

The need to supervise contact should be considered as part of the assessment and planning process by the social worker and his/her manager.

It is the responsibility of the Contact Team Manager to ensure that the person(s) supervising contact is/are appropriately skilled and experienced to do so.

The primary focus of the assessment of this issue will be the safety and welfare of the child.

Where supervised contact is deemed necessary, the reasons should be clearly recorded and the role of the supervisor or supervisors clearly defined.

A written risk assessment must be completed before supervised contacts begin.

This assessment must take account of all factors that could impact on the success of supervised contact and relevant safeguards including:

- Any history of abuse or threats of abuse to the child, carers or staff
- Previous incidents of disruption or threats to disrupt contact or failure to cooperate with conditions agreed for supervised contact
- Previous incidents or threats of abduction
- Previous incidents of coercion or inappropriate behaviour during contact
- The transient or unsettled lifestyle of the parents, as opposed to long-standing local connections
- The child's behaviour and needs, including medical needs.

Where any of the above features in the risk assessment, and supervised contact is to continue, the risk assessment must state the specific measures to be put in place to minimise risks. The assessment must then be approved and signed by the social worker's team manager.

In addition, there should be a written agreement with the parents and other parties having supervised contact, signed by them, which should state clearly any specific conditions relating to the contact and any expectations placed on the parents:

The Countywide contact team will ask parents to sign a Service user agreement which specifies what is and is not allowed during contact.

Contact must be regular and meaningful

- The agreement should be clear about where the contact must take place and whether any flexibility is allowed for activity or movements within or away from the agreed location
- It should also be clear about whether the person(s) having contact are permitted to give the child food, drinks, gifts or money during contact
- It should state clearly the circumstances in which contact will be terminated.

Social workers must make sure that locations chosen for contact can accommodate any restrictions set down. In more risky situations, those organising and supervising contact

might want to choose locations where early and easy contact can be made with other parties or agencies such as the Police.

In some cases prior contact with the Police should agree prearranged responses in the event of problems emerging.

- The agreement should state the adults who will be allowed to attend for supervised contact and supervisors should be asked to apply that strictly
- Particular attention should be given to when and how visits are ended. It is probably best that all “goodbyes” take place indoors with the visitors asked to leave before supervisors return children to their placements
- Significant changes to Care Plans, Court proceedings and/or decisions made about the frequency of future contact are all likely to be potential tension points so extra vigilance should apply at any contacts arranged around these times.

The staff/carers and any other person involved in the supervision of the contact should have copies of service user agreement with the parents.

In the event of problems emerging, the supervisors must be clear who to contact (including ‘reserve options’) and what details they will need to share.

The supervisor’s observations of the contact must be clearly recorded in the contact recording and will be available for the social worker to read within 7 days. Social worker will share with the parents as appropriate.

The supervisor must immediately report to the social worker any concerns about the parents’ conduct during the contact. The social worker in consultation with his/her manager should consider the need to review the risk assessment and/or the contact arrangements in light of the concerns expressed.

### **5.3 Suspension or Termination of Contact**

Emergency restrictions on contact can only be made to protect the child from significant risk and must be notified to the placing authority (child's social worker) within 24 hours.

Where it is considered that the child’s contact with the parents should be suspended or terminated, the social worker must be consulted and legal advice should be obtained.

Any proposal to suspend or terminate the contact should be considered as part of the child’s Looked After Review, unless the circumstances require an urgent decision to be made. Any such proposal should be made in the context of the overall aims and objectives of the **Care Plan**.

Even where it is not possible to hold a Looked After Review because of the urgency of the situation, the reasons for the proposal must be explained to the parents and to the child, and their agreement obtained if possible.

Where the proposal is to suspend the contact, the length and purpose of the suspension together with the basis upon which contact will be reinstated must be made clear.

The approval of the **Designated Manager (Contact with Parents)** should be obtained to any proposal to suspend or terminate contact.

Where the child is the subject of an **Interim Care Order** or full **Care Order**, an application to the Court for authority to terminate the contact will always be necessary if contact is to be suspended for more than 7 days. Any decision to suspend contact should only be made after discussion between the contact centre manager (or their representative) and the child's social worker. As soon as such a decision is made, the child's social worker should contact Legal Services as a matter of urgency so that the necessary Court action can be initiated.

Written confirmation of the decision made and, where relevant, the intended Court application, together with the reasons, must be sent to the parents, child (depending on age) and any other relevant person (for example the child's advocate, an **Independent Visitor** or **Children's Guardian**). Staff/carers and other agencies involved with the child's care must also be informed

#### **5.4 Cancellation of contact**

Contact should never be cancelled unless there is a very good reason, for example it is deemed that it would not be safe for it to take place or the child is too unwell for it to take place. Contact should take place in accordance with the child's Care plan Court Order and any Court Directions.

Wherever possible, the staff/carer should consult the child's social worker in advance if they consider there is a good reason to cancel the contact.

If contact is cancelled, the social worker or, if the social worker is not available, the staff/carer must ensure that the child and, as far as practicable, the parent is informed in advance and that the reason for the decision is explained. The social worker or staff/carer should arrange an alternative contact.

If contact does not take place and consultation has not been possible with the social worker, the staff/carer must inform the child's social worker as soon as possible and confirm in writing the decision to cancel and the reason.

## **6. Guidance**

### **6.1 Social media**

*Does Social networking threaten the security of children in care and adopted children?*

*Birth parents and children are now able to make contact easily through social media sometimes after years of separation; this can often have devastating consequences*

Such sites as Facebook and Twitter are having an impact on confidentiality regarding foster placements. Most children have access to social media and it isn't too difficult to "find" people. It is evidenced that parents are uploading photographs to Facebook making it more difficult for social workers to monitor and it is likely that older children are communicating with their parents through Facebook.

There have been issues with parents arranging to meet their children via social media.

It is important to move with the time, and electronics and social media/internet makes it almost impossible not to be able to find a long lost relative, so in the context of contact being aware of social media and the far reaching effects, the whole issue needs to be delicately managed to include the child at the forefront of thinking.

## **6.2 Social siblings**

There is little research into post adoption contact (direct and indirect).

Letter box contact is common place and that in itself holds some issues. Direct contact is likely to become more frequent and possibly more difficult to manage given the sensitivity and the more open use of social media

Attachment to carers and other siblings within the home which include 'social siblings' need to be recognised as valued attachment figures. We appreciate that these relationships can be of huge significance in establishing secure attachments and a healthy development for the child. Following permanency plans consideration should be given to these relationships and to whether a form of contact whether direct or indirect, is deemed of value.

## **6.3 Foster to adopt**

In recent months the contact team has been involved in more and more cases involving foster to adopt placements. This has brought about many issues and we are currently looking at working more closely with both the fostering and adoption teams to see how we can address some of these issues.

Foster to adopters have come to the authority wanting a family, most have tried for years and been through multiple disappointments with regard to having children. They are approved as foster carers but they are driven by a wish to parent a child. As a result of this having a child placed with them is much more emotional than with regular foster carers, we need to be mindful of this dynamic.

Confidentiality – the children are placed in these types of placements as there is a high chance they will be adopted, it is imperative that workers manage contact so that adopters and birth families don't meet (unless it has been agreed) and that no reference to where the adopters live is made.

A lot of foster to adopters have never parented, they have all gained experience with children but this is very different from 24/7 care.

This may be the first time they have had full care of a child, it will be the first time they have liaised with a childcare social worker and contact is something that they have learnt about theoretically but they will not have experienced it.

The contact team will ensure that foster to adopt placements are given the confidentiality and security of keeping their identity secret. We will work alongside social worker and foster carer to deal with each situation individually.

#### **6.4 Special Guardianship Orders**

The contact team provide contact where the child will be living with a relative or guardian. However, the contact team cannot prioritise these contacts and would expect that a review of contact would be at 3 monthly intervals. The contact team would assist where possible initially, however, parents and guardians would be expected to look within family and friends to supervise contact long-term.

#### **6.5 The Child's Wishes**

Children of all ages need decisions to be made about contact that take into account their developmental and attachment needs, as well as the parents' rights (Schofield and Simmonds, 2011) and need to be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect any changes to the child and family's circumstances (DfE, 2012; Moyers et al, 2006).

The Countywide contact team will arrange a Child Champion Meeting which should wherever possible take place prior to the first contact taking place. Within this meeting, the child will be spoken to separately to ascertain their views, anxieties and wishes about their contact and what they should expect. They will know when contact will take place each week and where. The carer will also be given written information on this and a point of contact.

Due consideration must always be given to the child's wishes and feelings, having regard to his level of understanding. Children will usually want to see their parents, other members of their family and family friends. However, children may be unwilling to see certain family members and may be distressed at the prospect. If this is the case it will be necessary to consider whether there is previously undisclosed evidence of past ill treatment.

The Social Worker, with the help of the child's carers, must attempt to understand the source of these feelings. They may arise from factors which can be changed or which the child can be helped to understand. The Social Worker and carers should also make real efforts to help the child to understand the implications of their view.

No child should be expected to persist unwillingly or unhappily in contact with a parent or other persons. In such a case legal advice should be sought. A child's stated wish or refusal to have contact with his parents or others should be recorded in full noting the reasons given and the factors which have contributed to the child reaching this decision.

The Countywide contact team will be reviewing all contact within 12 weeks in line with the permanency planning time scales.

Social workers need to consider the purpose of contact in the context of each child's well-being, development and care plan and the team suggest that it is of importance they are involved in the care plan arrangements where contact is recommended.

A Participation Champion in our team and as discussed above, we introduced CCM's to ensure that the child's voice is taken into account.

## 6.6 Equality Issues

Contact arrangements must be made with the understanding that no child will be disadvantaged as a result of their race, gender, religious belief or disability.

Where appropriate these issues should also be taken into account in discussions and in making plans with the child's family.

## 6.7 Review of Contact arrangements

The social worker and his/her manager should keep contact arrangements, including the continuing need for supervision, under regular review. The contact team will make a review date at the point of referral acceptance. Cases will be reviewed at 12 weeks and 24 weeks in line with the Permanency plan

Any significant reactions that the child has to contact should be reported to the child's social worker by those observing contact arrangements, for example foster carers, residential staff and/or supervisors of contact.

The contact arrangements should also be reviewed in any Placement Planning Meeting and at the child's **Looked After Review**.

Any contact arrangements which are agreed as a result of new friendships formed during the child's placement should be included in the care plan. The risk assessment in relation to the arrangements for supervising contact must be reviewed at least every six months, or sooner, if any incident or report identifies concerns.

Where the child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan, the contact arrangements should also be reviewed as required in the Child Protection Plan.

Where a Contact Order is in force and it is considered that the contact arrangements set out in the Order should be altered, the agreement of the child and the parents should be sought and legal advice should be obtained as to the need to seek a variation of the Court Order.

## 7. Key Roles and Responsibilities

### 7.1 Requirements of the Supervisor

- Supervisor is there to observe and record what is happening. We are not there to assist in duties that should be carried out by parents/ grandparents/ family.
- To prevent harm or injury when and where necessary. i.e. if one child needs the toilet, mum/ grandparent should do this but we should accompany and if necessary bring other siblings along.
- Supervisor to arrive at least 10 minutes before the client is due. Longer on the first visit to familiarise themselves with building, fire exits and venue rules and policies
- Supervisor to be aware and assess that the parent or family member is in a fit state to have contact. If we suspect for any reason that the family member/parent is under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances, the contact must be stopped immediately.

- Supervisor should be aware of the food and drink given to the children by the family member. Supervisor should stop excessive feeding, particularly preventing parents from feeding unhealthy snacks and fizzy drinks during contact
- Supervisor to be aware of who is allowed to attend contact; the level of risk and support needed. This information will be on the “arrangements” form with in the child’s file and held on the Countywide contact team S drive. Supervisor to have mobile phone on their person and have all the telephone numbers they are likely to need.
- Supervisors should go through a Initial service meeting at the 1<sup>st</sup> contact and provide service users with a copy of the written and signed agreement, a standard and a Contact team Leaflet
- Supervisors should advise family that others use the building. Control noise levels and keep the family in the allocated room.
- Supervisor to stay within sight and earshot of the family at all times. Plan ahead if they want outside toys and get the keys in advance so the family are not left alone.
- Supervisors to encourage families to tidy the room and gardens before the end of the contact so that the next users can use the room immediately.
- Supervisor to wear appropriate clothing
- If issues are raised by centre staff, supervisors must report directly to the office manager. Or directly to the social worker and Contact team manager
- To ensure that the safety and welfare of the child / children remains paramount.
- To assist / enable parents to respond to the needs of their children.
- Enable parents to engage in activities which are designed to meet developmental needs of their children.
- To ensure that contact is positive and meaningful to the child/ren
- To be aware of Health & Safety matters as they affect you and service users. And to report an issues immediately to the Contact team manager
- Contribute to risk assessments.
- To represent the service at meetings as required.
- To work within Gloucestershire County Council’s policies and procedures.
- Undertake other appropriate tasks as may be required of the post holder from time to time.
- To attend all training that is appropriate to the service with the permission of the Team manager
- To ensure that the Contact environment is appropriate to needs of children and families.
- To provide written information that may be required to contribute to assessment, review meetings, court and others.
- To ensure that children and adults have the opportunity to comment on the process and organisation of service provision.
- Contact centre staff may in certain circumstance need to attend court as part of the care proceedings where questions about contact arise.
- To attend Court as and when needed.

## **7.2 Skills**

- To be able to communicate clearly using written and verbal skills
- Observation Skill
- Assessment skills
- Ability to assist carers/parents in acquiring skills necessary to care for children during the contact.
- Demonstrate an effective understanding of how aspects of gender, sexuality, effect service users
- Effective understanding of how 'separation & loss' affect service users, contact planning and assessment
- Basic IT skills

## **7.3 Knowledge**

- A comprehensive knowledge / understanding of children's needs and development.
- Knowledge of Children Act 1989 / 2004 and other relevant legislation
- Knowledge of Child Protection
- Knowledge of the needs of vulnerable children and their carers and the communities in which they live.
- Knowledge of Disability & Discrimination Act
- Knowledge of Group / Family dynamics
- Knowledge of Risk Assessment
- Knowledge of child development and attachment.

## **8. Rules for the Contact Venue**

### **The Child Contact Venue's are:**

- safe, neutral places where children can begin or continue their relationship with their non-resident parent or other extended family members
- staffed by trained paid employees
- designed to be used as a stepping-stone to a more permanent arrangement or when they can return home.

### **8.1 Code of Practice**

- The Child Contact Venue is child-focused
- The Child Contact Venue is safe, neutral venues
- The Child Contact Venue recognises the statement in the Children 1989 that it is the responsibility of parents after separation and divorce "to maintain personal relations and direct contact with the child on a regular basis"
- The Child Contact Venue staff adhere to procedures and policies, including Child Protection and Confidentiality

### **8.2 Rules of the contact venue**



### **Rules of the venue should be adhered to at all times.**

- Parents and supervisor (depending on the type of contact) are responsible for the safety and supervision of the child/ren at all times.
- No child should be left unsupervised whilst in the venue.
- A child may only be taken from the venue during the visit if this has been stated at point of referral, or with the written consent of both parents.
- Relatives and friends can only attend contact if they are named on the referral form.
- There must be no arguing in front of children, abusive or aggressive behaviour and racist or offensive remarks will not be tolerated. Any visitor acting in such a way will be asked to leave immediately.
- No smoking is permitted in or around the venue.
- No taking photo's or filming is permitted unless given prior permission.
- Alcohol, drugs or anyone under the influence of these will not be allowed onto the premises and contact will not go ahead.
- Rooms are to be kept clean and tidy at all times.
- Any breakages must be reported to venue staff.
- Consideration should be given to other service users who may also be having contact in another room.
- Although the venue has a confidentiality policy if there is risk or harm to a child then this will be disclosed to the manager.

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### **8.3 Policies and Procedures.**

Policies adhered to are as follows but are subject to continual updating online with GCC guidelines (Tri X):

- Child Protection/Safe Guarding
- Confidentiality
- Health and Safety
- Complaints
- Equal Opportunities
- Domestic Violence
- Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures
- Staff Policy
- Supervised Contact Policy
- Data protection Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Permanence Policy

## REFERENCES

Children Act 1989, Part IV, Section 34 Fostering Regulations, National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, 2002 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Family Placements (Volume 3 Chapter 6 (6.5 to 6.9) Definition of Independent Visitors (Children) Regulations 1991 Statutory Instruments 1991 No 892

[www.proceduresonline.com/gloucestershire/childcare](http://www.proceduresonline.com/gloucestershire/childcare) (for GCC Policy and procedures pages 6 – 9 of document)

Gloucestershire County Council Permanence Policy Planning for Permanence and Stability for Children and Young People receiving Social Care Services

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