Supervised contact – how to plan for positive contact

Supervised contacts need to be carefully planned before it commences.

The child’s social worker and team will no doubt be under considerable pressure by the court to provide contact as soon as possible after a child becomes looked after. It is essential however that a contact agreement meeting takes place before contact commences, and careful consideration to the frequency, duration and location of contact has been given, to ensure that parents are clear about what is expected of them, and contact is predictable and positive for the child.

*Supervised contact should not commence until the contact agreement meeting has taken place and parents have signed the contact agreement; this is essential for the safety of all involved.*

- At the contact agreement meeting it can be agreed and explained to parents what the LA expects of parents during contact. What will they be expected to bring to contact? Snacks, drinks age appropriate toys? With older children will parents be expected to support school homework?
- The meeting will make clear to parents when they need to arrive, what will happen if they are late, and who to contact if they are delayed.
- The contact supervisor needs to know what support is required for the parents in the contacts; do you want supervisors to lead the first contacts? Would you like supervisors to model to parents how to care for / play with the child? With younger children is may be better to have a contact structure, small babies and toddlers like to have routine. e.g. cuddle at arrival, play time, nappy change / feed / snack, playtime and story / cuddle to end.
- The meeting can be used to set the dates when the Social Worker will be supervising contacts; it is expected that social workers will supervise a minimum of three contacts, to inform their ongoing assessments of parents’ capability, and child-parent attachment.
- With this information the SCT can then plan the contacts in accordance with the family’s needs.
- It is better for children to have less frequent, positive contact than poor quality, frequent contacts in which parents are struggling to focus on the child’s needs, don’t arrive on time or attend regularly – set the frequency at a level the parents are likely to manage.
- SCT recommends that all contacts for children subject to ICO’s should take place in a venue rather than in the community. This ensures that children are safe, and that inappropriate conversations don’t take place.
Process for arranging supervised contact.

- Make a contact referral via FWi (Liquid Logic).
- SCT will then contact you to discuss the contact. What are you looking for in the contact? How will child / parents cope with the contact?
- What frequency of contact has the Court directed?
- Arrange the pre-contact agreement meeting with the SCT.
- Contact will be allocated to a contact worker, and a start date given; this will usually be within 5 working days, dependant on parents’ availability for the contact agreement meeting.
- Contacts will always take place at the C&F Centre closest to where the child is placed. Parents are expected to make the longest journey for contact.
- Carers are expected to transport children to contact.
- Contact arrangements need to be reviewed at each LAC Review. SCT workers now complete a LAC Review contact template for IRO’s before the LAC Review takes place, so keeping the supervisor informed of the LAC dates is important.
- Care needs to be given to the frequency of contact proposed in final care plans. A discussion with the receiving LAC team and with SCT is crucial; if children and young people are to really settle with long-term carers, contact of around 6x per year is recommended.
- Contact arrangements for children in long term care need to be reviewed with SCT before any changes are made. Carers of the children in long term care need to be encouraged to take on the role of supervising contacts, this can only be good consistency for the children they care for.

Observations during contact

- Expectations in relation to parental behaviours are set out in the written agreement.
- The child -how does the child respond to parents in contact/ Is there demonstrable affection between them, do they have conversations, do parents set and enforce boundaries in relation to the children’s behaviour?
- Siblings – how do they play together, fight etc.?
- Parents – do they arrive on time, and stay for the whole contact?
- Are parents able to focus fully on their children?
- Greetings and goodbyes - at the beginning and ending of contacts. Do parents greet / say goodbye with hugs and kisses? How do the children respond to this?
- Do parents respond positively to advice to assist with parenting skills? Do they retain any advice given in contact and use it in following contacts?