

Visiting Children and Young People in Need of Our Support or Protection

Children's Social Care

Implemented: July 2019

Revised: N/A

Review by: July 2020

Purpose of Policy

- I.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the frequency, purpose, and means in which social workers visit children and young people they are working with who are being supported through a child protection or child in need plan.
- I.2 Visits by a social worker are an opportunity to obtain the wishes, views, and feelings of children and young people we work with and support. It is also an opportunity to speak and work with parents, carers, and family members and to observe the child's living arrangements in order to inform assessments and ongoing support work and safety planning. To be meaningful, it requires a social worker to be skilled at building trust and a good rapport with children and families to the greatest extent possible. For this reason, it is important that visits are not seen as just a task in order to meet timescales or minimum requirements. Rather, visits are part of an ongoing process aimed at building relationships that help create the most meaningful ways of helping improve the lives and safety of the children and young people we support.
- I.3 It is important to understand that regardless of any abuse or neglect a child or young person may be experiencing at home, they will still likely have close attachments and relationships with the parents, carers and family members they are living with and have a key role in their lives. Therefore, a social worker must be mindful of this and be skilled at striking a good balance of developing strong working relationships with families to the greatest extent possible, whilst remaining focused on what is in the best interest of the children they are supporting and not compromising their safety or wellbeing in the process.
- I.4 Children who have disabilities and are supported by the Children with Disabilities team for short breaks or review only situations may have different requirements in relation to frequency and planning of visits. These will be covered through the [Short Breaks Policy](#) on TriX.

Frequency

- I.5 The allocated social worker must see all children and young people who are being supported through a child protection plan at least once every 10 working days.
- I.6 The allocated social worker must see all children and young people who are being supported through a child in need plan at least once every 20 working days.
- I.7 The frequency of visits to children and young people are minimum requirements. There may be situations where it is necessary to visit a child more frequently. These will include:
 - i) Where a child or young person requests to see their social worker sooner;
 - ii) Where a complaint or concern is made regarding the safe care or treatment of a child;
 - iii) Where the ongoing worries for a child's safety or vulnerability require more frequent visits;
 - iv) Where a child's protection plan outlines more frequent visits;
 - v) Where directed to do so by order of the court.
- I.8 When visiting a child or young person, the social worker should always see the child on their own at least on every other visit. Children under the age of five must be seen awake at every visit and observations of the child/parent interaction must be undertaken.
- I.9 When visiting a child or young person, the social worker should also see the child's home environment and bedroom at least on every other visit.

- I.10 Not seeing the child or a brief observation will not be considered a successful visit. It is therefore unacceptable to wait a further period of 10-20 working days to visit the child in these circumstances. It is expected the social worker will attempt a further visit within the next 1-2 working days.
- I.11 Where a social worker is unable to visit a child at the scheduled date/time, this will be recorded on the child's record and an attempt to reschedule or visit the child will occur within the next 1-2 working days. If there are ongoing concerns about the social worker being able to visit the child within timescales, the social worker will discuss these immediately with their manager in order to consider what the next steps will be.
- I.12 Where the family may go away on a planned holiday, the social worker will need to discuss, assess, and plan for this and explore what means of contact will be possible while the child is away or out of the country. This should include:
- a) Contacting the comparable child protection agencies in another country to visit the child during the holiday (children on protection plans only);
 - b) Making video contact (ie: Skype) with the child;
 - c) Having the parent/carer's contact and address details of where they will be staying;
 - d) Having contact details of other family members or friends whom they may be visiting or are accompanying them;
- I.13 Contact with children or young people who are away on holiday will take place at least at the same frequency (or greater) as would apply in sections 1.5 and 1.6 of this policy.

Planning

- I.14 Before a social worker visits a child and their family, they should always plan for what work and support they intend to undertake during the visit. At minimum this will include:
- i) What aspects of the child or young person's plan will be discussed and how support will be offered;
 - ii) What aspects of any assessments will be discussed and explored;
 - iii) How the social worker will obtain the child's wishes, views and feelings, including what direct work tools will be used (see Signs of Safety Knowledge Bank <https://knowledgebank.signsofsafety.net/>);
 - iv) Cultural considerations of the child and their family (ie: religious observances, customs, values);
 - v) Any additional needs to support the ability of the child and their family to understand and participate meaningfully (ie: visual impairment, learning delay, need for interpreter);
 - vi) The child's age and ability to understand;
 - vii) Any safety considerations and planning for the social worker, the child, and others in the home (ie: domestic violence or abuse, honour based violence, threats or coercion, delivering difficult news).
- I.15 A key part of any visit will be the social worker's ability to obtain evidence that helps to inform any assessments and ongoing planning of support for children and their families. Observations are important, especially where children are very young or are not able to fully express their views, wishes and feelings. How children present and interact with their family members and within their environment, along with the routines, rules and expectations in their home, can provide valuable insight for the social worker to understand the child's lived experience.

Recording

- I.16 Following all visits to a child or young person and to their family, it is important this is recorded in a case note on the child's record. These will be done within timescales set under [Records Must be Kept Up to Date](#), and in the manner set under [Recording Visits](#) sections the Case Management and Recording policy of TriX.