Family Time - Next Steps

Lancashire County Council takes "family time" very seriously, we think it is vitally important that children and young people see their parents and parents see their children when their children are in care. Due to COVID-19 we had to make the decision to stop face to face family time in March 2020 and instead family time has taken place by phone or online. We have kept this under review and we are now planning to review and reintroduce face to face family time, following Government Guidance.

Social workers will be undertaking a risk assessment on every child which informs if family time can be facilitated and how, including face to face. The risk assessment will consider the safety for children and young people, their parents, and carers, family time workers, social workers and the wider households where people live.

We will be making a judgement about how to balance needs and risks.

* This means that in this next stage where there is direct family time it may not be as often as usual, the frequency needs to be assessed, and there will continue to be phone calls and screen time.
* Direct family time will not take place if anybody has symptoms of Coronavirus such as a high temperature, a persistent cough or they have lost their sense of taste and smell, or if anybody in a household has these symptoms or if "track and trace" have advised anyone to self -isolate for 14 days.
* Direct family time will take place practicing social distancing which means keeping two metres apart where possible.
* Direct family time will take place outside where possible and appropriate.
* PPE will be available where necessary and following discussion and agreement with management.
* Where the risk assessment identifies that family time needs to take place in a Lancashire building, this will not happen straight away as we will need to work with Lancashire facilities teams in order to reopen buildings and to put in place systems for safely managing family time.

We will keep family time under continuous review.

**Risk Assessment/Family Time Plan**

1. Children's Social Worker completes a risk assessment/family time plan (appendix 1) on whether face to face 'family Time' can be facilitate safely, which their Practice Manager signs off then sends to the allocated IRO.
2. The IRO receives the risk assessment/family time plan.
3. The IRO agrees to the risk assessment/family time plan. The Social Worker saves these to a case note on the child's LCS record and the IRO records their agreement on a separate case note on the child's record.
4. If the IRO disagrees with the risk assessment/family time plan they will arrange to speak to the SW / PM in an attempt to resolve. If resolved follow point 3.
5. If it can still not be resolved a Skype meeting with PM/ IRO/TM & QRM to review the decision. If resolved follow point 3.
6. If it can still not be resolved this should be escalated to senior manager and safeguarding manager. If resolved then follow point 3.
7. If all the above cannot be agree then formal resolution to be recorded on LCS and sent to HoS SIA and the District.

**Appendix 1**

**Template: Risk Assessment/Family Time Plan due to Covid**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| **Factor** | **Assessment** | **Comments** |
| Name of Children / Legal Status |  |  |
| Family time arrangements prior to Covid 19  |  |  |
| Risk Assessment of family time during COVID 19 to included carers and multi-agency if needed (but not exhaustive). • Age of child and ability to social distance.• Childs current health including underlying health issues• Parents current health and underlying issues• Carers health and underlying issues• Consideration of ability to deliver FT safely in the community• Frequency of contact and minimisation of those in contact with the child(eg wider family)• Level of supervision or oversight needed |  |  |
| Can family time be facilitated safely, considering social distancing? |  |  |
| Does the child understand social distancing?If no, is it in their best interest emotionally to have contact (Using PPE)  |  |  |
| If face to face family time is not possible, what alternatives could be put in place (Skype etc)?  |  |  |
| If it is not possible to facilitate any form of family time, why?Are parents vulnerable (open to adult social worker, mental health worker etc). If yes, have they been updated to ensure support is offered/ provided if needed?  |  |  |
| When will the family time risk assessment and plan need to be reviewed? |  |  |
| Manager sign-off |  |  |
| Is the IRO in agreement with the family time plan? |  |  |