

Visits to Children

Home visits are a crucial aspect of working with children and families. A common finding from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is that practitioners do not understand the child's world and there is no better opportunity to develop and build this understanding than to spend time in their home.

South Gloucestershire's Practice Guide sets out how we work with children and families.

One of the Values which is central to our work is that we will put children's needs first, ensuring the voice of young people sits at the heart of our practice. One of our Practice Standards is that children are seen, heard, and listened to.

Click on this box to view South Gloucestershire's Practice Guide.



Direct work ideas

Helping hands

Circles of support

Wishes & feelings

Good day/ bad day



Tools for use when visiting babies

Attachment and Bonding Observations Checklist

A Day in the Life of a Baby

For further ideas, tips and advice, take a look at the useful home visits practical guidance which has been created for the Social Workers Tool Box website.

Click on this box to view the practical guidance.

Our practice model is *Signs of Safety* and this keeps children and families at the centre of our practice. There are a number of well known direct work tools which are endorsed by the Signs of Safety approach including *Three Houses*, *Wizard and Fairy* and *The Safety House*.

South Gloucestershire's *Good Practice Library* is available on the Signs of Safety SharePoint site. This contains a variety of creative and inspiring examples of direct work completed with children.

Good Practice Library

Purposeful visiting fundamentals:

These are a set of practice principles which set expectations around what should always be considered in visits to children.

Purpose: This needs to be clearly stated. What do we hope to achieve? How is this visit linked to the child's assessment or plan?

Child's voice: Have you seen and heard the child, have you seen them alone? Direct work can be observations or undertaking direct work tools. We must capture the child's views on their lived experience and get a sense of them through our recording.

Parent/ carer voice: What are parents saying? Are we checking they understand the plan for their child and know what needs to change? What is their insight as a parent? What are their strengths and skills, and how are we assessing their ability to change?

Safety plan and risk: Our safety plan for the child is reviewed with the family and amended based on new information, so it is dynamic and not static. This is an opportunity to look at how the plan is progressing and how parents see risk and safeguarding. For children in care this considers permanence, security and stability.

Analysis of visit: What have you learnt from the visit? Capture your reflections, were there any 'niggling thoughts'? Think about the impact on the child of what you have seen and heard. We consider actively the potential for over optimism, but we also consider ability to change and progress.

Actions: These will 'fall out' of the analysis. What do you need to do next? What has the parent or carer agreed to do between now and next time we visit? Do we need to follow up with any partner agencies?

DON'T FORGET

- To see the child *alone*. While it wouldn't necessarily be appropriate to see a baby on their own, you should visit during periods when they are awake to help see the interactions with their parents/ carers and observe how they respond in their environment.
- To see the child's *bedroom*. Is it age appropriate, is there evidence of personal belongings, is the bedding clean and dry, is the condition representative of the rest of the home?
- To see and speak to *individual children* when they are part of wider sibling groups.
- To be mindful of and to observe *sibling dynamics*.
- To consider *where you are seeing the child*. While it is likely to be important to predominantly see the child at home, visiting them in a variety of settings such as at school or in the community may offer the best insight into their lived experiences.
- To engage children during visits by tapping into their *hobbies and interests*.
- To use visits to gather the views of children to inform their upcoming core group/ review and to speak to the child about how they want to be involved in these meetings.
- To consider whether it is appropriate to complete *unannounced visits* and state your rationale for this in the visit recording.
- A visit to meet with parents/ carers to hold discussions or undertake interventions should be recorded in case notes as this does not constitute a statutory visit to a child.
- Supervision of family time is not a statutory visit to a child. When you see a child before or after a visit and spend quality time with them, this could constitute a statutory visit.

Visit Timeliness:

Social work visits to children need to take place in accordance with required timeframes. There are monthly reports produced on visit timeliness which are cascaded to staff by service managers and team managers.

The *Visiting Timescales 2023* document is available in Tri.x documents library. This sets out required timeliness parameters for visits to children according to their legal status.

TopTip Be responsive to the changing needs of children and recognise that there may be times when visiting more frequently than the required timeframes may be beneficial to a child. For example, as the newly allocated social worker, more frequent visits initially may support with relationship building.

Click on this box to view the Visiting Timescales 2023 document.

Recording visits:

Upload *direct work* you have completed with the child to the Attachments section of the child's file. Remember to make reference to it in the child's visit record and detail where on Mosaic it is saved.

Records need to show what the child is saying, not the adult interpretation of what they are saying. A child's voice is powerful, it's their story, their life so use their words; consider using *direct quotes* where possible.

Record observations; be specific and record full and accurate descriptions/ describe what you see. For example, when writing that a home environment was cluttered, explain the detail around what you can see or use the clutter scale as a measure.

Ensure that what you write enables the child to understand why you were visiting at any given time. Clearly outline the *purpose* of your visit.

Remember to specify where the visit took place. Only record a visit to a child if you have spent some meaningful time with them. Briefly seeing a child before they head out to play football does not constitute a visit, and neither does seeing a child through a window!

Use the agreed recording template. State any next steps that need to happen as an outcome of your visit with the date by which you intend to complete these.



Good
example
visit
record

Clutter
scale

Other useful resources

Practice Tip –
The Child's
Voice

Making home
visits by Harry
Ferguson

Ensuring
children's life
stories are at
the centre of
direct work