

Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Social work visits to children living at home policy

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

1 Introduction

Visiting children in their home environment or ensuring that they are seen regularly by the professional network is an essential part of ensuring the child's safety, monitoring their progress and carrying out work to implement their plan.

The following policy sets out the requirements and expectations for visits where a **child is living at home with their parents**.

Please note that all children must be visited at home within 7 days of referral.

2 Children in need

There is no statutory requirement for visiting or seeing children in need, but it is Camden's policy that:

- Children in need and their families are visited at home at least every 3 weeks (15 working days) and should be planned and purposeful.
- In complex cases where there may be an element of risk, social workers and their supervisors should consider increasing the frequency of visits.
- Where possible, frequency of visits and their purpose should be agreed with parents and recorded in a written agreement.
- At least one visit every 3 months should be unannounced.
- Where a visit fails for any reason, this should be recorded in case notes and re-scheduled immediately to occur within 3 working days.
- Children over 3 years old should be seen alone at every visit. Children under 3 should be seen when they are awake on at least every second visit.
- The child's bedroom should be seen on every third visit.
- Team managers are responsible for ensuring that planned visits are undertaken by another team member where the allocated social worker is absent for any period of time and for ensuring visits are undertaken on any unallocated cases.

- Records of all visits should be recorded in the visits section on MOSAIC with a full report of the visit recorded in case notes via the link in the visits episode. There should be a separate record for each child in the family.
- The date of the next scheduled monthly visit should be inputted so that the system is able to generate a reminder.
- Records of visits must include a note of discussions held with parents and children around the implementation of the child's plan, including progress towards desired outcomes and whether they are receiving appropriate services and support.
- Records of visits should be structured using the following headings:
 - purpose of visit (areas discussed during visit)
 - present (list people seen during visit)
 - discussion with parent/carer (covering current home situation, implementation of plan, incidents of concern incl. domestic abuse etc); routine questions about domestic abuse have been found to be effective in enabling disclosure from domestic violence victims.
 - discussion with child (state if child seen alone)
 - observation (of home, child's bedroom, child's interactions with parent/carer, family relationships)
 - analysis
 - actions/issues arising.
- If the child is not seen or not seen alone, this should be noted and a record made of any explanation given as to why.
- A record should also note whether there have been any changes in household composition since the previous visit and how these may have impacted on the child.
- Following visits, social workers should raise the following concerns with their supervisor and where appropriate, the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer if there are:

- any concerns about the child's welfare
- any difficulties in gaining access, particularly where 2 successive planned visits have failed
- difficulties in seeing the child alone
- concerns about new members of the household.

3 Child protection

- **Where a child is subject to a section 47 enquiry** they will be a child in need and the above processes will apply. **However** due to the high level of concerns, the frequency will need to be increased to a level that social workers and their supervisors consider appropriate to ensure the child's safety whilst the enquiry is on-going.
- **Where a child is subject to a child protection plan**, visits are governed by the statutory requirements of *Working Together* and the *London Safeguarding Children* procedures.
- Frequency of visits and responsibility for them should be agreed at the conference and the chair should ensure that they are included in the recommendations made by conference. The information should then be set out in the child's plan as developed by the core group, who should take joint responsibility for its implementation. Frequency of visits and their purpose should be included in any written agreement with the family.

Camden's policy is as follows:

- The conference will decide on the frequency of visits based on the level of risk but the child **must be seen at home by the social worker at a minimum of every 10 days**. Any visits by other named members of the core group are in addition to this requirement and cannot be used to justify less frequent visits by the social worker. Any concerns relating to risk should be recorded and immediately shared with the other core group members.
- In cases relating to babies and young children (0-3 yrs) who are not attending any educational or early years provision, the conference should make arrangements for them to be seen at a frequency of at least every 10 days by the health visitor or social worker.

- The conference should make arrangements for older children who are not in mainstream education to be seen by a named member of the core group at a frequency of at least every 10 days.
- At least one home visit every 3 months should be unannounced, particularly if there are concerns that an adult who may pose a risk to children may be visiting or staying at the home.
- If a child;
 - lives away from home on a temporary basis (with Camden retaining case responsibility) as part of the child protection plan,
and
 - this address is out of borough and travelling distances make it impractical for core group members or social workers to maintain contact at the required frequency

social workers should make arrangements with the receiving local authority for the child to be seen by a responsible officer of that local authority.

- The frequency of home visits by the social worker or how often the child is seen by a member of the core group should be increased by the core group where levels of risk warrant a higher level of monitoring.
- Social workers should check with members of the network to ensure that the child is being seen at the agreed frequency and that there are no concerns. This information should be recorded in the case notes on the child's MOSAIC record.
- The social worker should see the child alone if they are over the age of 3. Children under 3 should be seen awake for part of the visit at least once every 6 weeks.
- Social workers should make an assessment of the state of the home and check cupboards to see if there is adequate food.
- The child's bedroom should be seen by the social worker at least once between each conference and parents should be asked about sleeping arrangements.

- Social workers should be vigilant to any bruising or other injuries to a child and/or any possible attempts by parents to conceal injuries.
- All home visits should be scheduled and recorded in the visits section on MOSAIC and the date of the next scheduled visit should be inputted so that the system is able to generate a reminder.
- Detailed records of home visits should be recorded in case notes using the link in the visits episode and using the following headings:
 - purpose of visit (areas discussed during visit)
 - present (list people seen during visit)
 - discussion with parent/carer (covering current home situation, implementation of plan, incidents of concern incl. domestic abuse etc); routine questions about domestic abuse have been found to be effective in enabling disclosure from domestic violence victims.
 - discussion with child (state if child seen alone)
 - observation (of home, child's bedroom, child's interactions with parent/carer, family relationships)
 - analysis
 - actions/issues arising.
- A record should also be made of discussions held with parents and children around the implementation of the child protection plan, including what progress towards desired outcomes has been achieved and whether they are receiving appropriate support and services.
- If the child is not seen or not seen alone, this should be noted and a record made of any explanation given as to why.
- A record should also note whether there have been any changes in household composition since the previous visit and how these may have impacted on the child.
- If a home visit does not go ahead, the reason for this should be recorded in the case notes and another visit should be scheduled to take place within 3 working days.

- Team managers are responsible for ensuring that planned statutory visits are undertaken by another team member where the allocated social worker is absent for any period of time and for ensuring visits are undertaken on any unallocated cases.
- Any concerns regarding the child's safety and welfare arising from the home visit, or difficulties in gaining access to the child, should be immediately reported to the team manager and the conference chair.
- The manager and conference chair should be notified where:
 - 2 scheduled visits have failed
 - the child has not been seen by the network within 10 days
 - the child has not been seen alone within 6 weeks.
- Where there is consistent failure to engage either with home visits or in allowing professionals access to the child, this should be raised in the next conference and a decision taken on what action to take under the division's policy "Working with non-engaging, resistant and hostile families":
[working-with-non-engaging-resistant-and-hostile-families.pdf](#)
- The conference chair should monitor whether or not visits have been carried out and the child has been seen by the network within the required timescales.

4 Staff safety

When carrying out home visits, managers and staff should be aware of any potential risks to the safety of workers and refer to the Staff Safety and Lone Working policy available at: [children-and-families-staff-lone-working-and-safety-policy.pdf](#)