

## **The child and family contact service**

The child and family contact service supports Looked after Children to have good quality contact with parents and other family members within a safe and supported environment.

Following the evaluation of a pilot contact service Children & Young People's Social Care agreed that the model should be endorsed and "rolled out" across the city. Three locality based contact services have been developed

The model is designed to support a framework for the delivery of a high quality dedicated contact service which works to a consistent service specification.

Central are the principles are that contact should be;

For the benefit of the child

Organised in a setting which is child centred

Supervised at the lowest level assessed as safe

Arranged so children travel as little distance as possible

Supervised wherever possible by the child's carer or consistent adult

Not all contact is supervised within the contact service, many children do benefit from support from their carers and subject to risk assessment, some contact with family members is unsupervised.

The service specifications for the contact service set out a referral model where Social Work staff refer to a Contact Coordinator, the detail in the referral informs an initial risk assessment and the contact agreement. The risk assessment assists in identifying an appropriate venue and the level of supervision, management and support the contact requires to make it a safe and positive experience for the child and siblings or adult attending.

Contact agreements are promoted as an effective way of ensuring arrangements for contact are clearly stated and communicated to all parties and form the basis for subsequent review and amendment to reflect changing circumstances and needs.

Contact recording is to be completed and supplied to the Social Work team within agreed timescales to ensure accurate and timely communication.

The team promote and support the quality of contact as well as ensuring contact venues are clean, welcoming, well equipped with access to basic refreshments. Staff will suggest activities, games, which those attending contact may find helpful. They will also actively support life story work and "memory box" work to enable children to have access to information about their family should direct contact not continue.

Contact staff use basic Webster Stratton materials to support "parenting in contact" to assist parents in managing aspects of their child's behaviour which they may find difficult or challenging.

They have a strong focus on user participation and involvement welcoming feedback and suggestions as they are committed to continuous service improvement and development.