

Contact

Information for parents and guardians

This sheet is about contact with your child while they are not in your care. It will help you understand what contact is for and how it is arranged. It will also help if you are not happy about your contact arrangements or want to change them. This information applies to children and young people living in out-of-home care as a result of Child Protection intervention including foster care, residential care and kinship care (being looked after by a relative or a family friend).

What is contact?

Contact, sometimes called 'access', is any contact your child has with you or other family or friends while they are in care.

Contact can happen in different ways including face-to-face visits or outings, overnight stays, telephone calls, letters, cards or emails. Sometimes contact is supervised to make sure children and young people are safe.

Why is contact important?

Contact helps children and young people stay in touch with their family and other people who are important to them. Contact can be about working toward your child returning to your care, or helping your child's connection with you and other important people in their lives while they are living in care.

Who is contact for?

Contact is for your child to stay connected to you and other people important to them. Decisions about contact must put your child's needs and rights first. Parents and family also have rights and your views and wishes will be treated with respect even if agreement about contact is not possible.

How can I help contact to go well for my child?

Your child will enjoy contact more when it occurs in a calm, respectful, predictable and safe way. When everyone behaves like this the contact is likely to go better and your child will enjoy this time.

You may wish to consider bringing activities such as books or games that you can do with your child when you have face to face contact. Feel free to ask your child's case worker if you need any assistance.

No doubt you will have questions that you want to ask your child's case worker. If possible make a separate time to meet with the case worker for this discussion as contact needs to be focused on your child spending quality time with you.

Who can have contact?

While your child is not living with you, we have to make sure that they are safe and well cared for, and that their day-to-day life is well planned. Only people who have been included in a court order to attend contact or approved by Child Protection can have contact with your child while they are in care.

Decisions about who can have contact will depend on your child's needs, the situation in your family, the Children's Court order and the case plan.

It is very important that only approved people attend contact. If someone who has not been approved comes to a contact visit they will not be allowed to see your child. The person will not be allowed to stay for the contact even if the contact is supervised and even if you know the person well, or they have met your child before.

What if I want someone to come to contact with me?

If you want another person to come with you to contact, you should discuss this ahead of time with your child's case worker. An assessment of the other person will be needed before a decision can be made. The person will need to agree to some checks, which may include a police check.

It is important that you allow enough time for an assessment before the person comes to any contact visit. A decision can usually be made fairly quickly.

How will I know what the contact arrangements are?

You will have the opportunity to be involved in working out the contact arrangements for your child. You may not always agree with the contact arrangements. If you have concerns please discuss them with your child's case worker. Contact decisions and arrangements are reviewed if things change and you should always have a say.

Planning for contact includes deciding about:

- who can have contact
- the type of contact each person can have
- how often, when and where contact will happen
- if contact will be supervised and who will supervise
- rules about the contact (such as, if anyone comes to contact when they are affected by drugs or alcohol)
- what will happen if contact can't happen as planned.

What if I don't agree with a decision about contact?

If you don't agree with a decision about contact, let your child's case worker know. They may be able to help. If not, you can speak with the case worker's manager. You can ask for an explanation of any decision made by Child Protection about your child. If you are still not satisfied, ask for information about having the decision reviewed.

If you need help to understand this information, please tell your child's case worker.

Your child's case worker is:

Phone:

The case worker's manager is:

Phone: