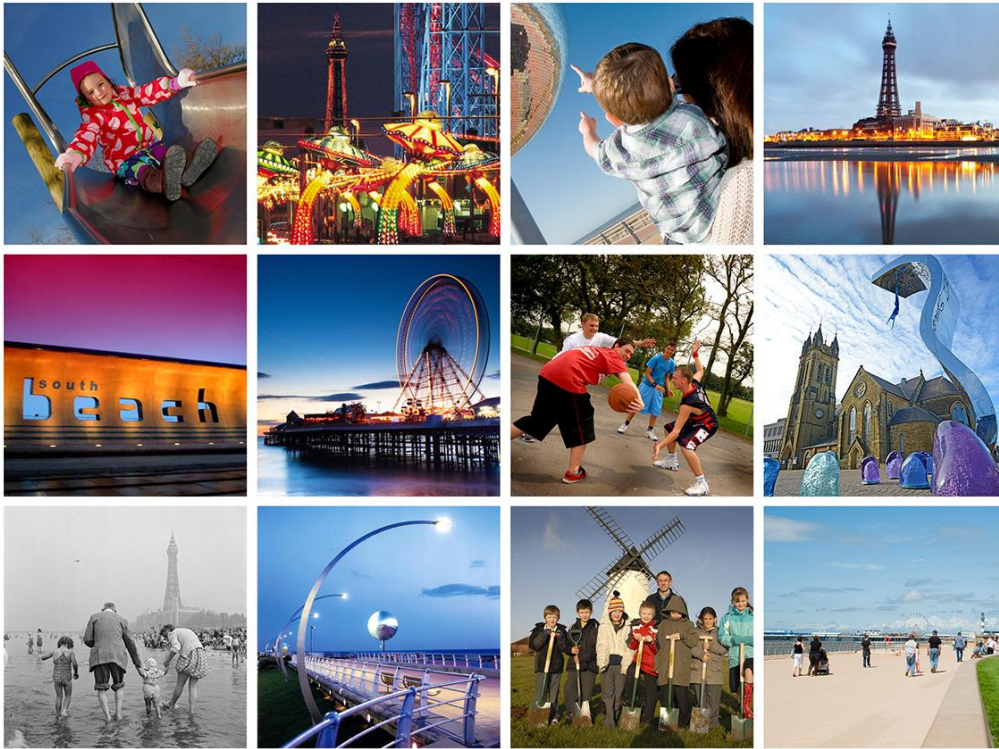


'Blackpool Families Rock'

Blackpool Council



Family Time Policy, Procedures & Practice Guidance

About this document

Title	Family Time Policy, Procedures & Practice Guidance
Purpose	To provide guidance to social work teams and the Family Time service when making arrangements for the supervision and support of Family Time between children and their families
Updated by	Moya Foster
Approved by	Children Services Leadership Team
Date	January 2020
Version number	1.0
Status	Published
Review frequency	Three-Yearly
Next review date	March 2023

Table of Contents

Section	Page
Introduction	4
Policy statement	4
Blackpool Families Rock - Model of Practice	5
Practice guidance	7
Planning and reviewing Family Time arrangements	7
Family Time happens in a number of ways	8
Types of Family Time covered by this guidance	8
Supervised Family Time	8
Supported Family Time	8
Facilitated Family Time	9
Section 8 Child Arrangement Orders Children Act 1989	9
Where Family Time should occur	10
Reviewing Family Time	11
Ceasing or suspending Family Time	11
Arranging a supervised or supported Family Time	11
Appropriate intervention and support	13
Observation skills, communications and report writing	13
Giving evidence in court	14
Safety & wellbeing of staff	14
Risk assessment & management	14
Promoting enjoyable & meaningful Family Time	14
Involvement of allocated social workers in Family Time	14
Procedures for the Family Time Service	
Process to arrange Family Time	15
Recording expectations and standards	15
When supervised/supported Family Time can be externally commissioned	16
Supervising Family Time on behalf of other local authorities	16
References	16
Appendix 1 – Referral form and Recording formats	17

Introduction

Blackpool Council promotes positive, meaningful and appropriate Family Time between children in our care and their families. Family Time can have a powerful effect, both positive and negative, on children including stabilising or destabilising their attachments with their carers and aiding or disrupting plans for reunification. It is essential to have a clear and consistent approach when considering Family Time needs and this must be based on sound principles. This document sets out policy, expectations and guidance for practitioners.

Policy statement

“As your corporate parent we want to ensure you are happy, safe, healthy, confident and are able to bounce forward if something goes wrong. We want you to achieve your ambitions and potential and have an active role in the decisions that are made about your life. As your corporate parent we promise to; help you and stick by you, love and care for you, help you to understand your past and see your family and if you can't see them we will explain why. We will respect you and continue to support you no matter what” (Our Children's Strategy 2019/20).

The legal context for Family Time lies within the Children Act 1989, which requires that local authorities promote and support family time between children and their families unless it is not in the children's best interests to do so. More recently, the Children and Families Act 2014 made amendments to the Children Act 1989 to emphasise the **need to ensure that Family Time is consistent with the child's safety and welfare**. This followed several research studies highlighting risks of when children have Family Time with their families¹ and was introduced with the aim of reducing disruption related to inappropriate Family Time taking place.

Under Section 34 of the Children Act 1989 every Care Plan being presented to court must contain a detailed plan for Family Time and this same section lays out the circumstances in which Family Time can be withdrawn or refused.

Given this context, the child's safety, welfare and wellbeing should always be the primary consideration when developing a Family Time plan for the child. The plan needs to be based on the individual needs and circumstances of each child, rather than a standard formula being applied. Findings from research are helpful in weighing up, as opposed to dictating, options

¹ Eg see Moyers et al, 2006; Loxtercamp, 2009
Family Time Policy, Procedures & Practice Guidance

High quality professional planning and support can make a huge difference to the success of contact at every stage, ensuring that contact is purposeful and regularly reviewed as children's needs and wishes change. Our research Briefing and Contact Planning Tool aim to help social workers to integrate research into their thinking about contact, drawing on Beth Neil's work to create a dynamic model for planning and reviewing that recognises the importance of supporting everybody involved – birth families, new families and children.



RIP_Frontline_Tool_C
ontactMakingGoodDe

Polly Baynes, independent social worker and associate trainer for Research in Practice, has been working with Beth Neil from the University of East Anglia to create a Frontline Briefing and Practice Tool for Research in Practice, which focuses on contact for children as part of assessment, in adoption, permanent foster care and kinship placement. Beth Neil is a researcher and academic involved in the [Contact after Adoption Study](#) – a project that has been following a cohort of young people, now in late adolescence, since they were placed for adoption before the age of four.



664884b2-7410-42a
7-9133-6ad1338e35f

“Blackpool Families Rock” Model of Practice

Blackpool's families, children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. Our 'Blackpool Families Rock' Model of Practice has been co-produced with children, young people, families and foster carers who have experienced our services. The Co-Production Group developed a set of Practice Principles, using a Social Pedagogy methodology; Head, Heart and Hands. The Practice Principals describe how our families and communities want Blackpool's partnership agencies to 'work with them,' in terms of our core beliefs (head), the values we hold (heart) and the way we practice and behave (hands).



Heart: Feeling	Head: knowledge culture and thinking	Heart: the doing of what we think and feel
<p>We are all human</p> <p>We can all make mistakes</p> <p>Trusting relationships are important</p> <p>Respect each other</p> <p>Be kind</p> <p>Let's be brave together</p> <p>Never give up on me</p> <p>See me (I am unique)</p> <p>See the good things</p> <p>Share the power</p>	<p>Don't be nosy (ask yourself if you really need to know this)</p> <p>Use plain language</p> <p>Share knowledge</p> <p>Take care in how you talk and write about us</p> <p>Share what you know about us</p> <p>Be non-judgemental</p> <p>Walk in my shoes</p>	<p>See our strengths</p> <p>Find out what works for us</p> <p>Show you've listened by your actions</p> <p>Be clear about expectations</p> <p>Get to know me</p> <p>Know who is important to me</p> <p>Support us to develop our own plans and solutions</p> <p>Have meaningful meetings</p> <p>Celebrate positive changes</p> <p>Make time for me</p> <p>Be honest</p>

Our approach when we work with children and families is:

- **Relationship Based practice: creating trusting and honest relationships with families**, which provide opportunities for them to change. Support families to understand our concerns for their children. Be respectfully clear with families regarding the impact of concerns on their child's daily life and their outcomes if changes in their life do not happen. Work in partnership with families to develop a Plan for their family, which has their children as a central focus.
- **Restorative practice: to improve and repair relationships within families and communities.** The purpose is to build healthy families and communities, increase social capital, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and repair(ing) harm.
- **Systemic Solution Focused Practice: Working as a 'Systemic solution focused family' at 3 levels:**
 - **Support families** to develop a wider eco support system, which enables them to make the changes they need to thrive and succeed.
 - **Partnership staff** across Blackpool work as a solution focused system; a 'jigsaw of support', which fits together & nurtures family led sustainable change.
 - **Strategic leaders** across Blackpool operate as a Strategic Solution Focused Family, creating an environment which enables their workforce to implement 'Blackpool Families Rock' Practice Guidance Principles, which supports families and communities to be resilient and achieve positive sustainable change.
- **Balancing 'Harm' and the impact on the child's life with 'Strengths' within the family and local community network.** It is a way of viewing adults and children as resourceful and resilient in the face of their worries. Support family led Plans, which focus on children's

aspirations and outcomes, whilst balancing this approach with a good understanding of the worries we share about the children's daily lived experience.

In Blackpool we believe:

- Children can achieve better outcomes when they are supported by their families and community and every child has a fundamental right to family life.
- Social Workers and partnership agencies need time and space to build trusted relationships and feel empowered to support families.
- It is the responsibility of everyone who works with children to make sure they are supported by their families and community.
- Support for families should come from within their communities and support networks and be focused on improving their daily life experience and creating the capacity to change.
- Blackpool families who are really struggling are more able to keep their children safe when they are supported by trusted, empowered social workers and family practitioners that focus on the whole family's strengths.
- Everyone who works with children in Blackpool can and should play a role in helping families stay together and feel empowered.

In Blackpool our Values are:

- We are accountable for delivering on the promises we make and take responsibility for our actions and the outcomes achieved.
- We act with integrity and we are trustworthy in all our dealings with people and we are open about the decisions we make and the services we offer.
- We are compassionate, caring, hard-working and committed to delivering the best.
- We take pride in delivering quality services that are community focused and are based on listening carefully to what people need; services that we can operate with a positive and collaborative attitude.
- We are committed to being fair to people and treat everybody we meet with dignity and respect.

Our Beliefs and Values influence our Behaviours. In Blackpool we:

- Work 'with' families, not 'do things to them'.
- Are child focused, but support the whole family via our strengths based approach.
- Build and nurture trusted relationships with children and families.
- Be consistent and do what we say we will do.
- Ensure that when formal intervention is required, we manage it at the lowest possible level.
- Support our workforce and challenge them to deliver a great service.
- Encourage our families and communities to be aspirational for themselves and each other.
- Respect difference in families and communities and ensure we are inclusive.
- Be transparent and objective in our decision-making.
- Learn from what works and what does not work and keep developing our services to build on the things that deliver the right outcomes.

General Aspirations for practitioners & Together workers when delivering Family Time

Family Time should:

- Always place the child's best interests at the forefront of planning
- Enable children to enjoy and explore their relationships with their family and significant others
- Give permission to settle in a new family or support reunification

- Be age-appropriate in length and type of activity
- Be consistent with the child's care plan
- Support reparation and recovery after abuse or trauma including support of any therapeutic process that might be in place
- Help children to understand their background, family history and unique identity.
- Support life story work and allow children to ask questions about why they do not live with their birth parents

Research has identified a number of factors in the child, birth relatives and carers that are associated with either beneficial or detrimental time spent with their families². This can be used to evaluate the risks and strengths associated with family time for a particular child (see references).

Progressive and flexible Family Time arrangements should help parents to maintain their parenting skills, and children to maintain their sense of family and home. (KEEPING MORE CHILDREN SAFELY AT HOME IN BLACKPOOL A REPORT OF THE 'GOING HOME' PROJECT)

Family Time can happen in a number of ways:

Definitions

DIRECT family time means face-to-face time between the child/young person and birth family members and/or significant others, and also includes phone calls, texting and emails.

INDIRECT family time means letters and cards from members of their birth family and/or significant others, usually through a third person.

Family Time may not only be through the arrangement of formal, supervised, and time limited sessions, as it can also be:

- via a letter,
- over the telephone, or through use of Skype, or other forms of social media
- face to face time which does not require the involvement of Children's Social Care.

Types of Family Time covered by this guidance

Where a child is subject to care proceedings, we have a duty to promote Family Time with the birth family (where this is not detrimental to the child) but in other circumstances it is discretionary.

Supervised Family Time: Supervised Family Time is undertaken by professionals with appropriate training and support. Family Time is supervised to ensure that children are kept safe during the session, to assess the safety of children, and/or to inform reports for legal

² Neil E et al 2015

proceedings. Family Time may, where assessed as appropriate, be supervised by a foster carer.

When we may supervise Family Time:

- where the child is subject to an interim care order in care proceedings and Family Time is not assessed as safe
- where the child is Accommodated under Section 20 in care proceedings, or the Section 20 arrangement is a prerequisite to care proceedings and the Family Time is not assessed as safe
- where the child is Looked After, supervision of Family Time will be considered on an individual basis and Family Time arrangements are reviewed through the statutory review process
- where the child is subject to an SGO. Any agreement for professional supervision of Family Time is exceptional; it will be for a maximum of 3 months and should be set out in the support plan. In both circumstances the expectation is that the special guardians are also present throughout the session

Supported Family Time: where it is assessed that a professional should be present (a social worker, Together Worker or foster carer) to ensure Family Time runs as smoothly as possible and produces the best outcome for the children by supporting the parent and/or the child. This person is not required to supervise as above, although would be expected to intervene if the child's safety or wellbeing is at risk.

When we may support Family Time:

- Where a child is Accommodated under Section 20 and an assessment has indicated that the child and family need appropriate support to rebuild a relationship or support successful reunification.
- Where an SGO is in place and this has been identified as a need in the support plan to enable a safe transition to unsupported Family Time. The Family Time is supported by the SGO Support Worker.
- There may be some exceptional circumstances where the child is the subject of a child protection plan, we have required an adult to leave the family home, and no appropriate family member has been assessed as appropriate to assist with Family Time between that adult and the children. In this situation, the need for safe Family Time is highlighted as part of the child protection plan and how this will be achieved is arranged and reviewed through the core group. This will be time limited to the first 2 weeks of the plan to enable to the Social Worker to make more permanent arrangements

A key consideration should be whether the person supervising or supporting will be able to maintain an involvement long-term, as the consistency of supervisor/supporter and their relationship with the child is paramount.

Facilitated Family Time: This is where Family Time is assessed as requiring no supervision or support by the Local Authority, but the children and family members are helped through

provision of venue, funding, transport or other support service for an agreed timescale to achieve best outcomes.

When we may facilitate Family Time:

- Where an appropriate alternative person has been assessed as able to supervise or support Family Time and there is an assessed need to provide resources to assist
- Where provision of accommodation, transport costs or other assistance has been agreed within an adoption or SGO support plan.

Unsupported Family Time: This is where young people are able to make their own direct arrangements with family members and where there are no difficult emotional issues for them. If the child is Looked After, foster carers and social workers need to be told when the Family Time will take place and anything that may change the Family Time to supported Family Time or where an alternative person is assessed as able to provide appropriate supervision or support.

The Local Authority will not supervise, support or facilitate Family Time where this is the only reason for social care involvement.

Section 8 Child Arrangement Orders Children Act 1989

Applications for contact (family time) under Child Arrangement Orders Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 (formerly known as Contact Orders) are usually between private individuals. Where someone seeks contact in respect of a child who is Looked After by the local authority it will be considered a public law matter. The court can request a welfare report under s7 Children Act 1989, either from the local authority or from a Children and Family Reporter who is an officer appointed by CAFCASS.

These are orders that require the person with whom a child lives to allow that child to visit, stay or have contact (family time) with a named person. Some orders will be very specific as to times, dates and arrangements for contact; other orders will be more open with detailed arrangements to be made between the parties by agreement. These orders are not just obtained by parents for contact with their children; there can also be orders for contact between siblings or the child and wider family members.

Sometimes the order will give directions that the contact is to be supervised by a third person. The order may also only be for a specific period or contain provisions which operate for a specific period.

The Local Authority should never be compelled to undertake this supervision or support of Family Time without consultation between the court and the Local Authority.

Where a supervised family time is requested and not directed by the Court, there should be an assessment of risk, including extended family members if they are involved in family time, and need by the allocated Social Worker, considering:

- whether the child is at risk of significant harm if Family Time is not supervised,
- if the Family Time will be of poor quality or detrimental to the child's well-being without a supervisor or supporter, or
- when supervised Family Times observations are required as a key element of court or care planning.

Within the assessment phase, family time provides the opportunity to test out, support and model parenting styles and capacities. These activities occur alongside determining the child's needs and understanding their wishes and feelings.

Arguments put forward for more frequent family time arrangements usually rely on the premise that the family time promotes reunification and/or attachment. However, there is no evidence from research that by imposing more frequent family time arrangements on children in long term care there will be an increased likelihood of children returning home or maintaining or improving attachments. See for example Humphrey, C and Meredith, K; 2009 Baby on Board.

Most children who become looked after have poor attachments to their families and enter into our care because the court has decided that there are serious deficiencies in their parent's ability to care for and protect them. Although family time with their birth family can be beneficial for children, family time is also associated with placement breakdown and further abuse for some children when it is of poor quality or problematic (Moyers et al, 2006; Selwyn, 2004). In one study, over half of the young people aged between 11 and 17 experienced family time that was judged to be 'poor' and regularly saw relatives who were rejecting, neglectful or unreliable. Many of the young people were unable to cope with these experiences and were unlikely to talk easily about the emotional impact (Moyers et al, 2006).

The study identified a number of difficulties with family time:

- ☑ for more than a third (37%) of young people, contact was unreliable – ie the parent did not turn up or was consistently late
- ☑ some young people experienced inappropriate amounts of family time
- ☑ safety was a concern, particularly where family time was unsupervised
- ☑ replay of negative relationships – many young people had unresolved attachment difficulties that were re-enacted during family time.
- ☑ family time could diminish the influence of the foster carer (Moyers et al, 2006)

Harmful family time is associated with particular people, not with family time arrangements in general. Research suggests that when a child has been abused, prohibitions on family time are associated with better outcomes. Where there was no restriction on family time, children who had previously been abused were found to be more likely to be re-abused during family time or after returning home. These findings seemed to hold for all kinds of abuse (Sinclair, 2005).

Children separated from their families have intense and pressing psychological tasks to achieve in relation to integrating and making sense of their family relationships whether they see these people or not. Therefore, social workers and carers need to pay careful attention to seeking young people's views, whether expressed directly or indirectly. Do not assume that an apparent lack of interest is what it seems. Be aware that young people's needs in relation to family time will change as they become established within the family and community in which they now live and develop new interests, relationships and friendships. They will go through the recognized developmental stages that are part of growing up and this will also affect what they want from their contact. Be clear and transparent when children's family time arrangements have to be modified or compromised in order to meet their other needs. It is also important that the reasons for decisions are clear in the records as they may choose to look at these in later life.

The longer a child is in our care the more likely they are to lose touch with their parents and siblings (Morgan 2009). This needs to be considered regularly in reviews and IROs have an important role in reflecting the changes that children go through as they become settled and develop new patterns of relationships with peers and significant adults, or as parents and family members go through changes in their circumstances. Where it is in the best interests of the child this is also a good time to explore options to re-establish contact if it has broken down.

Where Family Time should occur

The venue for Family Time should be considered as part of the planning for the Family Time and take into account the needs of the child, the parents and any known risks. Consideration should be given to Family Time taking place at the child's home, the foster carer's home or the home of a family member where possible. Otherwise, a community venue such as Children's Centre or Family Hub could be used, or the Family Time could take place in the community according to the assessed needs/risks and considering the child and parents' wishes and feelings.

A Family Time venue should be assessed with regards to:

- age-appropriateness,
- being appropriate to the needs of each individual child,
- risk, including the child and Together Worker or supporter's ability to successfully supervise or manage that Family Time, and
- confidentiality

Reviewing Family Time

The appropriateness of the Family Time to the child's needs should be reviewed at least once every statutory review cycle as part of their care plan or if significant events occur within the family before then.

When deciding whether Family Time should remain supervised, consider:

- if there has been an improvement or development in resilience factors,
- if the issues that necessitated supervision have diminished and no further risks have developed, or
- the age of child

Any views on whether supervision of sessions could be reviewed due to a change in circumstances within the family should be communicated to the social worker and IRO, via the Family Time manager, to ensure they are aware of the views of the Family Time service. This can then be discussed with the child, family and carers.

Ceasing or suspending Family Time

Family Time may be ceased or suspended when the risk is too great for it to continue or when the impact on the child is so detrimental that it outweighs the positive benefits of Family Time for the child.

Family Time directed by the court may only be ceased or suspended for 7 days without reference back to the court³.

Where the child is subject of Section 20 accommodation and not subject to proceedings, careful consideration needs to be given to the cessation or suspension of Family Time as this is incompatible with Section 20 and may result in the withdrawal of Section 20 agreement.

Circumstances under which this might be considered include;

- the parent presents as being under the influence of substances that is clearly impacting on their presentation or behaviour in the Family Time session and this is, or is likely to, impact on the child (such as alcohol, prescription or other drugs),
- there is an injury to the child during Family Time,
- the use of inappropriate language and/or aggressive behaviours or messages to the child, or child and together worker
- the parent(s) repeatedly not attending sessions.

The decision about the cessation or suspension of ongoing Family Time should always be made by the allocated social worker. However, concerns arising during a Family Time session may require the child and together worker to make an immediate decision about that session. The decision to cease or suspend a Family Time session should be communicated with the family member at the time by the Together Worker and in an age appropriate way with the child. If the social worker is available this should be discussed with the social worker at the time or as soon after the event as is possible. The Together worker should inform their manager

³ (Section 34 (4) of the Children Act 1989)

immediately so that they are aware of the reasons for the suspension of the session and decisions about further Family Time can be discussed with the social worker.

If necessary, a meeting will be held with the family to discuss the reasons for the difficulties and expectations of future sessions and plans clearly laid out.

Any decision to cease or suspend Family Time must be clearly recorded on the child's case record as a case note with a clear evidence base as to why the decision was taken. The decision should be notified to all interested parties, including; parent(s), child(ren) if they are of an age to understand, and any guardians of the child.

In cases of adoption and SGO, the decision to cease or suspend Family Time rests with the adoptive parent / Special Guardian, but should always be made in accordance with the child's best interests and the Family Time agreement made at the time the adoption/SG order was made.

Arranging a supervised or supported Family Time

Whenever possible, consistency should be promoted by having the same person supervise Family Time.

The Family Time Service will;

- receive requests for supervised or supported Family Time via a referral process
- the manager will discuss the referral with the social worker to ensure information is clear, and will discuss capacity to accommodate the request
- make necessary logistical arrangements to ensure all parties can attend Family Time, and that the parents and child's views are considered
- discuss with the care giver transport arrangements as necessary, to ensure the child can get to and from Family Time
- confirm to the social worker the arrangements, including whether it is to be provided in-house or not
- inform all parties of the arrangements
- the allocated child and Together Worker should familiarise themselves with the child from the Childs record (mosaic system) and if necessary discuss the history and circumstances relating to Family Time with the social worker
- where possible and if felt by the social worker to be of benefit to the child, the Together worker should meet the child before the session to introduce themselves, explain their role and what will happen and answer any questions the child and care giver have. If time does not allow for this then the Family Time service should aim to send the carer a photo to show the child what the worker looks like
- where possible when setting up an initial session for the first time the worker should aim to meet the parents before the session to explain their role and what will happen, be clear about expectations and establish any worries or concerns the parents may have before the child arrives
- record the session appropriately on the attached ([Appendix 1](#)), and ensure it is uploaded to the child's record (mosaic).

Appropriate intervention and support

- The person(s) escorting the child to and from Family Time should be;
 - familiar to the child wherever possible and consistent, and
 - have an awareness of any risks or other issues.

- During a supervised Family Time session, the following are key responsibilities of the Together worker;
 - to promote positive interactions by supporting the child and their parent(s), and
 - where appropriate and identified by the social worker, to enable the development of parenting skills
 - be able to hear and see interaction between the child and the other participants in the session at all times,
 - be mindful of any whispering, use of language that is not familiar to the worker, ensure any child using toilets that require assistance are supervised if this is required within the referral
 - be mindful of the use of phones during Family Time and intervene if necessary in line with expectations within the referral
 - to intervene where the child and Together worker has significant concerns about immediate safety and emotional well-being of the child.

- Together workers must:
 - Adhere to Blackpool Councils Officers Code of Conduct
 - Maintain professional boundaries at all times:
 - behave politely and reasonably,
 - be supportive, both before and after the session, to the child,
 - show respect for families by closely observing and adhering to agreed times
 - declare any potential or actual conflict of interest that may impact on work.

Observation skills, communications and report writing

- Report writing should be undertaken with the following in mind:
 - progress of the child and their family over time, particularly in relation to the child's care plan, and referral
 - recording the child's wishes, feelings, and relationships
 - demonstrate strengths and improvements from the previous observation and areas for further support
 - being succinct & relevant
 - differentiation between fact and opinion
 - clarity, free from jargon, checked for spelling and grammar, proper structure
 - significant events clearly signposted and with consideration that these may be presented as evidence in court proceedings
 - clear analysis of parenting capacity & interactions
 - use of the appropriate format (see Appendix 1)

- records will be written up immediately after the session, however where this is not possible they must be uploaded to Child's record (mosaic) for the allocated social worker within 24 hours, and
- where there are significant areas of concern following the session, these should be immediately notified to their line manager, allocated social worker and/or their team manager.

Giving evidence in court

Where the child is currently subject to proceedings or may become subject to proceedings, the following should be borne in mind:

- where the child is subject to proceedings, Family Time records will be available to the court and shared with all involved parties
- the Together worker may be asked to give evidence in court on and about the recordings made.

Safety & wellbeing of staff

Workers undertaking supervised or supported Family Time, particularly out of office hours, should be aware of the Council's [Lone Working policy](#), its contents and make appropriate arrangements with their manager to ensure their well-being. Risks should be considered when social workers request supervised sessions out of core office hours and arrangements should be put in place to support the worker, eg checking in with a manager, or de-briefing.

Risk assessment & management

Any assessment of risk around Family Time provision or decision making should be undertaken on the agreed format as part of the referral (see [Appendix 1](#)). At times, some venues request additional information on their own format.

Promoting enjoyable & meaningful Family Time

- Where the local authority has a duty to promote Family Time, this may include financial support to parents or other significant family members to attend the session. This will usually be in the form of pre-booked tickets for public transport, and will be arranged and agreed by the social worker and/or team manager.
- Consideration must be given to the families, and their communities, and culture when planning Family Time.
- The Together worker should work with the social worker to consider if there needs to be a formal plan or activity at the session.

Involvement of allocated social workers in Family Time

When Family Time is being supervised during court proceedings, there is an expectation that the allocated social worker will directly supervise sessions on at least two occasions as part of their assessment and to assist with the formulation of plans.

It is also expected that allocated social workers will also supervise Family Time on occasion for children following the conclusion of proceedings. This can help in developing relationships with the child and with their family and will inform the annual single assessment.

Procedures for the Family Time Service

Process to arrange Family Time

The social worker will Under Section 34 of the Children Act 1989 ensure that every Care Plan being presented to court will contain a detailed plan for Family Time to support each family time request

- The referring worker will complete the Referral & Risk Assessment form (found at [Appendix 1](#)) and email it to the Family Time Request central mailbox.
- Request for family time received – Manager responds, within 1 working day, to acknowledge request and request planning meeting to be held within 2 working days.
- Manager allocates to Together Worker*, within 1 working days of request. If Together Workers are not available to undertake Family Time within 3 working days then Manager to request Sessional Worker. *Manager checks workers caseload sheets (stored in Family Time 365 - Family Time Diary & Vacant Slots Folder) then double checks workers outlook diary (in case they are covering etc). Manager records allocation on caseload sheet and notifies worker to add to outlook diary. Manager to book venue/room.
- If no response to request for planning meeting within 1 working day, Manager to call and chase, if no response relevant team manager to be made aware.
- Planning meeting to take place led by Manager within 2 working days of request (2 set days per week established in diaries for planning meetings).
- Family Time to take place within 3 working days from request. Manager to alert Service Manager immediately if there is a delay with reason from delay and next steps.
- Manager and Admin to maintain tracking sheet.
- Once request met, Manager to move email request from Family Time Request central mailbox to archive to keep the mailbox clear.
- Manager must ensure that Together workers cover a reasonable number of contacts per week, dependent on hours per week worked, take into consideration travel time required to transport children if required, and other commitments. For example, a full time worker could reasonably be expected to cover anything between 20 and 24 Family Time Sessions per week, if they did not involve extraordinary travel or unusually lengthy contact time. There is an expectation that contact should involve the minimum possible travel time for the child.

Recording expectations and standards

- Family Time observations will be;
 - recorded on the template (found at [Appendix 1](#)),
 - recorded immediately if possible and in any event within 24 hours of the session and uploaded to the child's record (mosaic) in most circumstances
 - factual and evidence based
- Where there is a significant event or incident that must be brought to the social worker's attention, recording will be completed within 24 hours at most or the Together worker will have had a discussion with the social worker, duty worker or manager to ensure they are aware.
- Family Time observations will be recorded on the child's record (Mosaic) under case notes with the header Supervised Contact. If any case notes relating to the child need to be recorded on child's record in addition to the forms provided, the Family Time worker

must finalise the case notes themselves and not assign this step to the allocated social worker.

- Any conversations, text messages or emails with carers, children or parents/ families should be recorded on the child's record as a case note.
- It may be appropriate for the Family Time supervisor to provide a report on the sessions to the child's statutory review. In this case the report should be recorded using the template at Appendix 1 and sent to the IRO in advance of the meeting, with a copy to the Social Worker.

When supervised/supported Family Time can be externally commissioned

- Supervision or support of Family Time may be commissioned from an external provider where there are insufficient internal resources, only with the budget holder's agreement.
- When children are placed at a distance from Blackpool, it may be appropriate to request another local authority to supervise or support Family Time. This might apply when:
 - The placement is further away than a neighbouring authority
 - The child is in a stable long term placement
 - Proceedings have been concluded
 - The local authority has Family Time facilities in place which can reasonably be expected to provide the same level of continuity and quality that we expect from our own service
 - The allocated social worker should confirm in writing with the commissioned authority their expectations of the Family Time and how it is to be conducted, consistent with this policy

There is no obligation on another local authority to assist with the sessions when the child is Looked After by Blackpool. Payment may be requested, and if so, this should be agreed via the Service Manager for Family time.

When supervised/supported Family Time is being either externally commissioned or requested from another local authority, the provider/authority should be supplied with the referral form found in [Appendix 1](#).

Supervising Family Time on behalf of other local authorities

A request may be made by another local authority to supervise or support Family Time on their behalf. This can be received and referred to the Family Time Service - subject to capacity and to the following conditions:

- Any proceedings have been concluded
- We will not supervise Family Time for children subject to Section 20

A charge will be made to the local authority for this service, at the standard hourly rate for a Family Time, plus transport and any expenses and cost of venue if required.

References:

Loxtercamp L (2009) 'Contact and Truth: 'The unfolding predicament in adoption and fostering' *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 14 (3) 423-435

Moyers S, Farmer E and Lipscombe J (2006) 'Contact with Family Members and its Impact on Adolescents and their Foster Placements' *British Journal of Social Work*

36 (4) 541-559

Neil E, Beek M and Ward E (2015) 'Contact after Adoption' *CoramBaaf*

Appendix 1 – Recording templates