

# Practitioner Guide to Undertaking Statutory Visits



This guidance has been written to assist in practice when undertaking statutory visits. It is informed by:

- Leeds City Council Practice Standards
- Children Act 1989;
- Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 – amended 2011;
- The Children Act 2004;
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005;
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011;
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015

The key aims of the guidance are to ensure that statutory visits:

- Have a clear purpose to promote the welfare and protection of the child, ensure their views are heard and acted upon and that the child is seen
- Take place at set intervals based on the child's plan and level of need
- Are carried out by a qualified social worker
- Are recorded so as an uninvolved person to the situation can understand the purpose, what happened, and how the statutory visits have supported the child/young person and their family to make positive progress in line with their plan to address any worries

## Best Practice

### Good quality statutory visits will evidence that:

**There is planning prior to the visit:** The Social Worker will have background information with regards to the child/young person and their parent/carer. The information can be obtained from the referral or from the electronic case file to gain an understanding of the current circumstances and have a plan of what they want to discuss with the child/young person and their parent/carer. Unless the visit is unannounced, arrangements will be made with the parent/carer of a date and time for the visit and the Social Worker will arrive on time.

**There is a record of details of all people present within the family home:** This includes family members who reside in the property and any visitors present. Asking the visitors their name and their relationship to the family enables an insight into who is involved in the child/young person's life. If the child is subject to child protection, child looked after, private fostering visits etc obtaining dates of birth and addresses and details of the relationships to the child are recorded within the case management system is good practice to ensure a robust assessment.

### The Social Worker has discussed the purpose of the visit with the child and family:

- Consider if there are any language barriers prior to the visit and ensure an interpreter is accessible to communicate effectively and where this is not possible that language line is used, however the presence of an interpreter is always preferable.
- Be aware of any disabilities or additional needs of the child/young person or the family and consider how to communicate effectively
- Consider visitors in the house or having communications in the garden. Information is confidential and should be discussed with parents/carers alone without others overhearing. If child/parent/carer wishes to have someone present, establish that this is appropriate, dependent on the circumstances and the consent of the individual is freely given. When this is

not deemed appropriate record on the child's record as to why certain information could not be discussed or shared and arrange another time for these conversations to take place

- Plan the purpose of the visit and share any worries with parents/carers. Obtain their feelings, wishes and views in relation to this
- Any actions from previous visits should be followed up with the parents/carers to ensure that the family are getting the right support at the right time

**There are records of observations of the child/young person:** Consider how the child presents physically, including appropriateness of clothing, health, hygiene, signs of injury. Consider how the child presents emotionally, including their mood and their behaviour. Consider how the child interacts with their parent/carer, siblings, other family members present or visitors. If there is a sibling group and one or more sibling is not present a further visit must be undertaken to see the child(ren) who were not present during that visit.

**The Social Worker has seen the child/young person alone:** Alone also means not in the presence of parents/carers, siblings or friends record on the child/ren's record that they have been seen alone and if not why not.

**Age 1 year & Under:** Babies may be asleep during visits. Social Workers can request to see them or hold them but must undertake a follow up visit to see the child awake and well.

**Age 2-4 years:** Dependent upon the child's level of development observations are vital. Social Workers should attempt to interact with them through engaging in play or asking them to show you their bedroom by themselves

**Age 5 years & over:** Direct work is aimed at establishing what a child/young person's day-to-day lived experiences are, as well as ascertaining their views, wishes and feelings. Social Workers need to have an insight into their daily lives.

**The Social Worker will observe parents/carers and adults within the property:** What are they doing during the visit? How do they present physically and emotionally? How do they interact with the child/young person? How do they respond to the child/young person's needs? Do they engage in conversation with you or appear unresponsive or anxious? Is there any evidence of drug or alcohol use, mental health difficulties or domestic abuse?

**Home conditions are observed:** Observing the overall home and the child/young person's bedroom is necessary in all cases. For different case types, observations can be dependent upon the level of concerns however for:

**Cases where neglect is a concern:** Observe the home conditions in terms of hygiene, how is the property decorated? is there appropriate sleeping arrangements and bedding? is there food within the property? is there anything dangerous within the property that may cause harm for example glass on the floor? Are there appropriate toiletries within the property such as toothbrushes? It is essential that all rooms in the house are observed particularly children's bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens. Social workers need to be mindful that downstairs rooms may not reflect the conditions of rooms upstairs/or in other areas of the house. If parents are reluctant to show other rooms social workers need to explain sensitively the importance of why all rooms need to be observed. If rooms have not been observed this should be recorded clearly on the child's record and attempts made to observe these rooms during future visits.

**Cases where domestic abuse is a concern:** Consider any physical evidence of domestic abuse within the home such as holes in walls or damage to the property. Are there locks on doors or on access to food? Speak with both parents/carers alone to obtain information. Social workers need to be mindful that speaking to parents/carers/child/ren alone in their home environment may not be safe and ensure follow up conversations take place in other environments to ensure the wellbeing of individuals i.e., school, social work offices, in the community or an alternative safe space for that individual.

**Cases where substance misuse is a concern:** Is there evidence of drug or alcohol paraphernalia within the property? Does this pose a risk to the child/young person? Are there individuals who are attending the home

address who many pose a risk? Where does the parent/carer store substances or prescription medication? Is there evidence of alcohol use in cupboards or bins? Are there any concerns of neglect within the home? Is the family having financial difficulties?

**Useful direct work tools can be found at;**

- [Free social work resources & tools for direct work with children and adults \(socialworkerstoolbox.com\)](https://socialworkerstoolbox.com)
- [Cafcass resources for professionals](#)
- [Resources to help identify and engage young people at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation | Barnardo's \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#)
- [Assessment Archives - Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com](#)

<b>About the Document</b>			
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