
Time spent with those you love and care about:

Guidance for Children & Families Staff

Contents

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. One Minute Guides	5
FAMILY SEEING PROJECT	6
Time spent with those you love and care about	9
FAMILY SEEING	11
Delivery of face to face time with those you love and care about during Covid-19	13
3. Safety Plans	18
4. Networks	20
5. Getting off on the right foot	21
6. Toolkit	22
7. Calendaring	25
8. Time spent with those you love and care about during Covid-19	26
9. Mind of My Own	27
10. Useful Links	28

1. Introduction

Time spent with those you love and care for:

Family Time is all about children and young people spending time with the people they love and care about. This could be anyone they feel connected to, for instance friends, extended family, neighbours, people from the community or pets! It does not just mean immediate birth family. We want to make this time feel more natural, and less professional. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we learnt that it was important for children and young people to spend time with the people they love and care about in various ways, including regular virtual contact such as texts, FaceTime and WhatsApp calls as well as seeing each other in person to do fun things.

This Guidance:

This guidance is aimed at children and families staff to help them think about best practice when organising time between a child or young person and the people who are important to them. It is made up of all the fantastic work completed by the Family Time Development group between August 2020 and March 2022. The group also decided that we want to move away from the term 'Family Time' as it feels too professional, instead referring to it as what it really is – time spent with those you love and care about. This language will be used throughout this guidance.

Our Pledge to families:

We value trusted relationships and aim to continuously prioritise building them during our involvement with children, young people and their family & network. We appreciate that such relationships require commitment, frequently investing in time, and a determination to succeed for all; this is the basis of our practice model. For those we collaborate with & work alongside we truly aim to offer a fair and consistent service, it is imperative to achieve the best quality of service for children; their family's and network within the community they live in. People matter, we must ensure they are listened to and their words are accurately illustrated alongside the professional reflection and analytical lens. We must support everyone to achieve their very best, we invest in them to invest in bespoke agency/partnership interventions, in a clear transparent way. We aim to respect and gain clarity of why we are involved, and assist the family led agency plan and outcomes. We must always ensure that every intervention is purposeful, respectful and the clarity of the written word is wrote in language that is familiar to those we serve and is always understood. That it offers insight into the child, young person, family, network individuality, and strengths & needs.

We accept that all child/ren and young people's circumstances must be considered taking on board the parameters of best practice for frequency of meeting with people, the efficiency of accurate and timely recording to offer a quality of practice that is first class. These requirements need to be completed within the policy, procedures and legislation, which governs the intervention.

We recognise the need for regular opportunities to invest in and build the best outcomes for the individuals assisted by the service we provide.

Family seeing and recording the interventions must be illustrated with fairness and accuracy with the respect we would hope evidences individuality, strengths and worries which is without bias and that can, and is expected to be challenged. We honour achievements, success and inspiration and stand alongside those we serve to offer the support to development the right outcomes; - working collaboratively with those, we serve and work alongside.



Visual representation of young people's views on family time, created as part of the action research learning with the University of East Anglia

2. One Minute Guides

In this section you will find various One Minute Guides relating to Family Time practice in North Yorkshire.

One Minute Guides for children, young people and carers:

1. *The Family Seeing Project* covers the University of East Anglia Project but is aimed at both practitioners, parents, carers and networks. Although this guide refers to the research project that ran between January to March 2021 it is still relevant as it highlights the importance of having early conversations between a child's parents and their carers

One Minute Guides for Practitioners:

1. *Time spent with those you love and care about* focuses on how to produce the most effective Safety Plans. This One Minute Guide is for reference during Covid-19 and eventually this should revert back to the safety plan within the child's records.
2. *Family Seeing* also covers information about the action research project conducted with the University of East Anglia that saw the introduction of conversations (previously termed icebreaker conversations). Although this guide refers to the practitioners role in the research, rather than the families'
3. *Delivery of Face to Face time with those you love and care about during covid-19* focuses on how practitioners can ensure that everyone is safe when spending time together

For more practice-based One Minute Guides visit the [Strength in Relationships Intranet Page](#) or the [Resource Hub](#)

One minute guide

FAMILY SEEING PROJECT



What is the Family Seeing Project?

When children come into the local authority care, it is important that they can stay connected to their families and spend time with them. We call this 'Family Time'. To make sure this 'Family Time' works well for everybody, we want to help parents and carers to meet each other and talk about plans for the child to stay in touch with their family. We hope that such conversations will provide an opportunity for parents and carers to learn more about each other and exchange important information about the child.

Why is it important for me to meet my child's parent/carers?

When children are in care, it is important that they feel there is some connection between their family and foster carers/family, so they do not feel they are living in two different worlds. Where parents and carers can get along and work together in the child's interests, this helps children to enjoy and benefit from their family time. Sometimes, parents and carers don't get the chance to meet up and/or talk, so this 'working together' doesn't happen. So, we want to ensure parents and carers have a chance for an initial conversation/meeting at the very start, outside of formal planning meetings or reviews - an "icebreaker conversation".

What will happen in the first conversation/meeting and what is my role in it?

We would like the conversation/meeting to set the scene for your future relationship with your child's parent/carers and provide an opportunity to exchange important information about the child. You might feel you need to raise your concerns, share hopes and ask questions during the meeting, and we will ensure you are heard and supported.

What is my role?

Parents/network	Foster careers	Social Workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• share important information about your child with the foster carers, including bedtime or daily routines, favourite toys and foods, hobbies, and important health information• bring some of the child's personal items to help them settle in and keep important memories, such as pictures, toys, clothes or any other special things• ask the foster carers information about their home and how they plan to care for the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• talk to parents about the child's routines, favourite games, toys, or foods, their medical needs and health issues, and the family traditions• ask the parents questions about the child's cultural traditions and any other relevant information that will help you care for the child• discuss things about IT, technology, face time, WhatsApp, face to face time• give the parents information about your home and how you plan to care for the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• support parents and careers and ensure that all steps will be taken to reduce any anxieties before the conversation and give any reassurance needed• ensure that the reason for the conversation or meeting is clear and understood by everyone, including the child• facilitate the conversation/meeting and make sure that all participants feel safe and comfortable, and everyone's opinions, ideas and feelings are respected• help collect the carers' and parents' feedback

Will I get any help before or after this conversations/meeting?

The social workers will talk with you about how best we can achieve a conversation which benefits all and especially the child. We will ensure everyone feels ok to have a brief discussion to build a platform to have a best relationship for all. Hopefully in time this will lead to all the adults being able to talk freely and build a network of support for the child and each other.

Do I get the chance to feedback how I feel about these conversations/meetings?

We want to ensure that you are listened to & heard in the conversation/meeting, and that you find this helpful.

After the conversation/meeting, we will ask for your feedback:

Do you think everything is in place to build a trusted relationship?

Or is there still a lot/some work to do? You will be given a simple questionnaire but you can also discuss your concerns with the social workers.

You can also share your views confidentially in our separate research project with independent research team from the University of East Anglia, and we will provide you with further information about how to take part.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

NameSocial Worker

Contact me on:

NameSupervising Social Worker

Contact me on:

.....

To help us improve this practice, please provide your feedback using the questions below.

On a scale of 0 – 10, how helpful do you think the ‘ice breaker’ conversation was? (circle)

10 - *Very helpful - everything is in place to begin to build a trusting relationship*

0 - *Not at all helpful – much more needs to be done to build trust*

01..... 23..... 45..... 6..... 7..... 8..... 9 10

What makes you as high as you are?

What is stopping you be any higher?

What needs to happen to move up the scale?

One minute guide



Time Spent With Those You Love and Care About

A Family Time Safety Plan should be completed with children, young people, family members, friends, foster carers & connected people – everyone in the child's network. It should include up to date safety requirements in relation to Covid 19

This Safety Plan should be treated as a live document and updated after any significant changes and should always be reviewed at a child or young persons Looked After Review. Each person who has an individual Family Time with a child should have their own safety plan. Each update should be recorded on the child's case summary with the date highlighted and shared with the family, foster carers and other professionals (including Practice Coordinators, Fostering Social Workers, Children and Family Support Workers, and the Independent Reviewing Officers).

This One Minute Guide complements the guidance for completing the Family Time Safety Plan document.

Top Tips

- The Family Time Safety Plan should ideally be created in person with the children, family, foster carers and the family network and shared with other professionals involved in the planning.
- The family time safety plan should be relevant to each individual's circumstances in the family.
- Avoid generic statements.
- In the section **Family and Network Details** where possible use direct quotes from the child. Include who and why people are important to the child.
- **Include the professionals** who can support the family, outlining why they are important. This could include professionals who are still connected to the family but not currently involved with them.
- Using your knowledge of the child and family set out how the child and family want to be **contacted/communicated** with e.g. texts, by phone, take out walks, face to face, on social media etc.
- In the **What Needs to Happen** section include the aspirations for family time and what the goals are.
- In the **Timeline** section you don't need to use individual weeks but could use weeks 1 – 2, for example
- Acknowledge what has been achieved by the family in the **Timeline** section as well as the timeline that will lead to a return to family or a time when Family Time can move to community or family led and managed Family Time.

- **Words and Pictures** about Family Time and Covid must be age appropriate. Please state if it has not been possible to complete this
- In the **Who Is Involved in the Plan** section, break down in detail what is going to happen in Family Time and by whom e.g. who will meet the parents in the car park, who will ring the family to confirm attendance, rules around food etc.
- Ensure the role of the Children and Families Support Worker or the person facilitating Family Time is clear. Include any specific support/recording requirements.
- Include all Family Time, e.g. face to face, calls and virtual Family Time.
- Everyone should honour every task allocated to them in the **Who is Involved** in the Plan section.
- Include a **network lead** for the future as soon as one is identified.
- Use the **Plan Rules** section to outline what would happen if **bottom lines** are not adhered to e.g. if someone refuses to wear a face covering.
- In the **Recording and Demonstrating the Plan** section the expectation is that there will always be a child friendly version of the Family Time Safety Plan, which has been shared with the child.
- Remember – **Family Finding Coaches** can help you with your Family time Safety Plan.

One minute guide

FAMILY SEEING

Building the best relationships between parents and carers through supporting 'ice-breaker' conversations

What is the aim of Family Seeing? We really want to carry on asking everyone to practice in this way whilst we work through the research findings.

This project ran between Jan and March 2021 and followed the key principles for children's contact set out in a recent review by the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. They are:

- Focus on the quality of contact.
- Listen to the views of children and young people.
- Recognise the significance of siblings, grandparents, wider family and friends.
- Ensure that all involved are clear about the purpose of contact.
- Ensure that contact plans are tailored to each child and regularly reviewed.
- Ensure skilled professional support is available.

(<https://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/app/nuffield/files-module/local/documents/contact-six-key-messages-nuffieldfjo.pdf>)

Practice Improvement Project. This practice initiative aimed to improve the quality of children's family time by ensuring parents and carers are encouraged to have a shared conversation to get to know each other within the first couple of days of children coming into care. This is separate from any formal planning meetings or reviews. It is vital for all children in our care to feel as settled as possible and understand that the adults in their life are trying to build solid foundations in their relationship from the beginning – to ensure that we can make the best plans for them. Children and young people will be able to then build confidence in the knowledge that we are all trying to work together. The first conversation/meeting between parents and foster carers can set the scene for successful ongoing relationships, which have a lasting benefit for a child/ren. We called these first meetings 'ice-breaker conversations'.

Why then & now?

We were successful in getting some funding via the Department for Education 'Partners in Practice' scheme to improve family time for children in care in North Yorkshire. We aimed to trial the new approach of ice-breaker conversations between January – March 2021, when children are received into care. We have collaborated with parents, wider family, foster carers, and social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, Guardians and the Judges and children and young people's views and this has been incorporated through our participation team. Helping us understand the outcomes of this new way of working were colleagues from the University of East Anglia (Julie Young, Beth Neil and Irina Sirbu). We would really welcome this practice to continue during the Development work in relation to family time.

What is my role?

We understand that meeting between the child's local authority careers and parents is a very important moment that can be also very emotional for everyone. Your role will be to support parents and carers and ensure that all steps will be taken to reduce any anxieties before the conversation and give any reassurance needed. Prior to the conversation, the parents, carers, family network and children's hopes, queries and concerns need to be heard, understood and listened to. We must ensure that the reason for the conversation or meeting is clear and understood. This will be unique to the child and you should ensure that the child's view is heard on how they feel about carers and parents being together. You will facilitate the meeting and make sure that all participants feel safe and comfortable, and everyone's opinions, ideas and feelings are respected. You will also help collect the carers' and parents' feedback.

Outcomes which we hope to achieve?

- Building a trusted relationship between the key adults who care for and about the child.
- Establish conversations from the start between parent and carer.
- The child can see/or is aware that the adults are talking with each other and creating a more natural trusted relationship, investing in offering the best care for the child
- Carers can be encouraged to be part of the network for the child and family of origin, and their important roles and contributions into the child's life are recognised
- Conversation and clarity about details of the child's day-to-day life and their care needs can be established.
- Family Time can become an open discussion in relation to meetings, phone calls, letters and cards as well as digital forms of contact for example video calling using FaceTime, Skype or WhatsApp.

Research conversations

The views of children, young people, their family and carers were gained to further identify and consider their experiences what has worked well and where we can further improve our thinking to improve relationships and build trust and conversation, which helps children see those who love and care for them being determined to get it right.

Key Contacts:

Sam Clayton (Head of Effective Practice & Quality Assurance): Samantha.Clayton@northyorks.gov.uk

Jo Miles (Principal Social Worker): Joanna.Miles@northyorks.gov.uk

One minute guide



Delivery of Face to Face time with those you love and care about during Covid-19

Aim

It is vital for all children in care to have their face to face Family Time, this is more so during the pandemic.

“In a crisis everyone recognises the need to stay in touch with the people they care about. Keeping connected with loved ones is particularly important for children who have already experienced disrupted relationships, their feelings of loss and rejection are already likely to be heightened Maintaining family links is important for helping children cope with separation, loss and identity issues” Nuffield Foundation – April 2020

However, there is also a balance to identify between the safety and wellbeing of the children and the safety and possible anxiety of the birth parents, Foster Carers, and Children & Families Support Workers due to the risks from the COVID-19 virus. With this balance in mind, we will continue to deliver face to face Family Time alongside the delivery of virtual sessions in a safe way.

Safety Plan

A template for a Safety Plan has been developed which will replace the Risk Assessment, the agreement (contract) with the child's parents, and the family time schedule. The aim of the document is to promote discussion with everyone in the families' network to look at the best way of moving forwards in the best interest of the child.

The safety plan should be developed with all members of the network, including foster carers. Family Time (contact with other family members) should be included as part of this plan and include all the risks associated with Covid-19. In order to help with this, please refer to the Family Time Covid-19 Risk Assessment and Protocol for guidance [Link](#)

The Safety Plan should be treated as a live document and updated regularly. If the safety plan is not in place then Family Time will be paused whilst this is completed. If any updates are made to the document please ensure that everyone receives an updated copy

The diagram below explains the process that needs to be followed when planning Family Time.

The child's Social Worker and the Fostering Social Worker have a discussion to consider how the delivery of face to face Family Time can take place and how much virtual family time will be offered. Use of a scaling question (example on page 3) may help with the discussion. Both Social Workers need to consider if the Foster Carers are shielding and the impact face to face Family Time could have on the stability of where the child is living and acknowledge the anxiety around risks related to the COVID-19 virus.



The child's Social Worker, Fostering Social Worker and the Foster Carer to have a joint discussion. The child's Social Worker to also liaise with the birth family. A collective decision is then made as to how face to face Family Time could be delivered alongside virtual Family Time. This is to reduce anxiety and to be clear about how Family Time will be managed. This will be clearly recorded in the safety plan.



Childs Social Worker will liaise with the Practice Co-ordinator (if Family time is going to be supported by a children and families support worker) to share and discuss the child's safety plan. The plan should be shared with the parents, the Children & Families support Worker and the Foster Carer. The plan should be reviewed when needed and any changes discussed and recorded in the document

If all parties **do not agree** that face to face Family Time can go ahead at this time but understand what needs to be in place for this to happen in the future. Then:

- The Safeguarding/LAC and Fostering Team Managers need to be informed
- Virtual Family Time must be introduced and the safety plan updated.
- After two weeks' the position should be reviewed by the child's Social Worker and Fostering Social Worker to reconsider introducing a mixed approach of face to face and virtual Family Time
- The most appropriate person will explain to the child that face to face Family Time will be resuming sometime in the future and how this is going to happen in the future using Words and Pictures that have been developed as part of the safety plan.

The most appropriate person will explain to the child how this is going to happen using Words and Pictures (example and template attached) the Children and Family Support Worker can assist with this.

Key Considerations: transport arrangements; hand washing arrangements; social distancing; exemptions from wearing a face covering, nappy changing/toileting, gifts and food, cleaning of rooms before and after Family Time; venue, possibly outside if good weather. Please refer to the Family Time Protocol documents in SharePoint for further details [Link](#). A checklist has been added at the end of this document (page 5) to assist in ensuring all elements have been considered.

Scaling Question –

To enable face to face Family Time to be considered, a scaling question can be used to help with discussions with all those involved.

On a scale of 0 – 10 where we consider the child having face to face Family Time with their family right now. Where would you rate the safety of this and the possibility of it going ahead?

10 is where the child has a really good understanding of what is going to happen when they see their family. The parents and the Foster Carers are comfortable and confident with the arrangements and everyone is happy for face to face family time to resume.

0 although the family and the Foster Carers know that it is really critical that the child sees their family everyone is very anxious and worried about catching the COVID-19 virus and do not want it to go ahead at this time.

Some example questions are listed below. These could be asked to draw out the rationale for the scaling:

- Where would the Social Worker and Fostering Social Worker rate and consider where the family and Foster Carers might rate after discussion with them?
- What are the most important things that have already happened to get everyone best prepared for face to face Family Time going ahead and it being safe?
- What is stopping you being any higher, what are your biggest worries for face to face Family Time resuming?
- What are the most important steps that need to be taken to get everyone ready for face to face Family Time and it being as safe as possible?

Child's name	Rating	What makes you as high as you are?	What is stopping you be any higher?	What needs to happen to move up the scale?

Helping the child/ren understand

Words and Pictures

As we all know, it is really important for all children to have a good understanding of what is happening regarding when and how they can see their family. It is even more so at this time as they may have extra worries and questions. Words and Pictures is a tool that we can use to help explain to the child what is happening using the family professional's words to tell the story.

Why use Words and Pictures?

- Children could be confused about Family Time. They will be aware of what is happening but may not fully understand. Words and Pictures will help children better understand the situation.
- Children might hear different versions of a story, including what is on the news and in the media, which could result in them creating their own story which will cause confusion, anxiety and distress.
- A Words and Pictures Safety Plan will help the child understand the steps to take during Family Time to keep everyone safe and well, for example hand washing and social distancing arrangements.

Theme	Activity	Responsibility	Checked (yes/no)
Communication	Has the child's safety plan been completed/reviewed? (Including updates to ensure that parents are safe to be out in the community and that social distancing for adults can be maintained safely at all times.	Child's Social Worker/Fostering Social Worker	
	Is the child aware how face-to-face Family Time is happening? (Consider Words and Pictures as explained above to help them understand.)	Foster Carer/s Social Worker	
	Have the expectations around the duration of Family Time been shared with the Children & Families Support Worker, Foster Carer/s and Parents?	Social Worker / Practice Co-ordinator / Children & Families Support Worker.	
	Has the location of the Family Time been discussed with the Children and Families Support Worker, Foster Carer/s and Parents? (Venue/community?)	Social Worker / Practice Co-ordinator / Children & Families Support Worker	
	Are all adults aware of the government guidance to keep themselves safe? (hand washing, relevant social distancing, face coverings)	Social Worker / Children & Families Support Worker / Foster Carer/s	
	Have expectations around personal care and physical contact been shared with the Children & Families support Worker and parents?	Social Worker / Children & Families Support Worker/ Foster Carer/s	
	Have the Foster Carer/s and Parents been contacted on the day to double check that no one in the household has any possible symptoms of the Covid-19 virus or are isolating ? And it is made clear that if this is the case face to face family time will not take place and virtual will be offered as an alternative.	Children & Families Support Worker / Foster Carer/s	
Pick up – drop off	Has the child washed their hands before and after being transported to Family Time (ie. before getting in the car)?	Foster Carer/s / Children & Families Support Worker / Parents	
	If the child is coming from an Early Years setting or school, they need to ensure that the child has washed their hands prior to leaving their venue. Are they aware?	Early Years / School Setting / Children & Families Support Worker	
Transport	Can Foster carers transport the child to Family Time in order to reduce cross household infection?	Foster Carer	
	When the worker is transporting: Hands to be washed before entering the car, hands to be washed when arriving at the venue, hands to be washed on leaving the venue and again after leaving the car and arriving home. Face mask to be worn– ventilate car if appropriate.	Children & Families Support Worker	
	When the worker is transporting: Cars and car seats need to be wiped clean using antibacterial spray/wipes after each journey.	Children & Families Support Worker	
Venue	Social Worker to share the expectations of the parents around Family Time being held outside, where possible, to reduce risk of infection.	Social Worker	
	If prams and pushchairs are being used, they need to be wiped clean before and after the Family Time. Please remember prams and pushchairs cannot go into the venues.	Children & Families Support Worker / Parents	
	If Family Time is being held in an NYCC venue, ensure that hands are washed on entering and leaving the building.	Children & Families Support Worker / Parents Practice Co-ordinator	
	If the child requires feeding, then the person who prepares the bottle, to ensure that they wash their hands before and after contact with the bottle. Food and snacks should only be brought to family time if agreed as part of the safety plan. Preparation must follow covid guidance.	Children & Families Support Worker / Parents	
	At the end of the session, ensure the room, door handles and toys have all been wiped down.	Children & Families Support worker / Parents / Practice Co-ordinator	

The example below shows how Words and Pictures can be used to tell a story and support Family Time arrangements:

Alicia lives with her foster carer Jo. Every Tuesday & Friday Alicia used to visit her Mummy and Daddy. Now she speaks to them on the phone instead because of a virus.



Some people call the virus Covid19. It is like a bad cold but it can move from one person to another quickly and make people poorly. This is why Alicia could not see their mummy and daddy face to face.



Everyone has said that Alicia should be able to see her mummy and daddy face to face next week, as long as she is very careful and she washes her hands. Alicia must also wash her hands when she comes home. Alicia is really excited about seeing her mummy and daddy and understands that they all have to be very careful.



3. Safety Plans

We wanted to see how we were doing and how we could improve, covid was one worry but there were other things we wanted to look at too. An audit was conducted between April and May 2021 to assess the quality of children's Family Time Safety Plans. 40 children's safety plans were selected for this audit and 32 completed forms were returned. In 59% of cases (19) no Family Time Safety Plan was in place. A copy of the full audit can be found [here](#), with a summary of the key themes identified in this audit below

What's working well	What are we worried about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Covid risk assessments. • Family meetings are taking place • Case notes include detailed notes on the arrangements relating to family time • Family Time risk assessments included information relating to family time • Language in the plan was child friendly; there was clarity of expectation and role of CFSW. Mum was able to influence the plan. • Relevant professionals are named and recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people's voice not included in the plan, nor is it clear if the young person has seen the family time safety plan. • No family time safety plan in place. • Court contract of expectations is in place - which we should be moving away from as we have a clear safety plan • Family time safety plans not specific to the individual families but are generic. • Foster carers, family members and the families' network have not been included in the development of the plan. No trajectory for moving towards unsupervised / outdoors or community contact etc. • Reviews need to take place. • There are family member such as auntie's etc who may wish to see the young person and it is not clear what the arrangements could look like to spend time safely with any family member. • Bottom lines are covid related and not family related • No mention of timings or frequency of contact - only that it happens twice a week (no days/times or duration) and no mention of what happens if it is missed

How can we improve it?

- Collaborative production of a family time safety plan
- More individualistic plan suited for the needs of each family/ network.
- Timescales and dates would be useful on plan.
- Up-to-date Family Time Safety Plan discussion and agreement to take place with all parties.
- Remove the court contract of expectations and replace with a safety plan.
- Clear plan rules, which highlight what to do if things are successful or if there are issues
- Ask for a family seeing coach to assist the worker with thinking differently about the importance of family time and Covid risk assessment.

The questions used throughout this audit can be found [here](#)

Best practice for Safety Planning should involve conversations with everyone as soon as Family Time is needed. This should include parents and carers as well as the children and young people. For more guidance on creating Safety Plans and examples of best practice, follow [this link](#) to read through the slides from a workshop in creating Family Time Safety Plans.

4. Networks

What is a network?

When we are working with families to help them build up their network it is important to explain what a network is and how they can help the family and what they will need to know. Useful leaflets to explain this process to families can be found [here](#)

A network is a group of people with a connection to you, your family and your children. For example, it could be friends, other family members or neighbours. Gatherings with your network don't need to be big or formal, a friend sat on the sofa with a cup of tea is a gathering! They are there to support you and your family so they will need to know anything that you or your children might be worried about and what to do if they are worried. Their priority is to make sure that the children and young people are safe and happy.

What do workers need to know about the network?	What does the network need to know from the workers?
Who would they want to include in their network?	What the concerns are for the children and young people in the family
Is there anyone they don't want in their network	The families' strengths in looking after the children
Who would the children/young people want or need to include in their network?	How the network has helped keep the family safe in the past
Is there anyone the children/young people wouldn't want in their network	What needs to happen to close the families' file

If younger children are involved, Words and Pictures can be an effective way of explaining what is going on and how the network is going to help. More guidance on Words and Pictures can be found on the [Strength in Relationships Intranet Page](#)

Networks and Safety Planning

Networks should be involved in the safety planning process so they are aware of any worries or danger. They can then agree to help at specific times or in specific circumstances to keep the children/young people safe when things are difficult. When the plan is ready the family and network can test the plan out and make any changes they need. Workers should help the family and their network to finalise the plan and encourage Words and Pictures to be used to explain the plan to children. When the workers are confident the plan is working, the network can take responsibility for it

5. Getting off on the right foot

How to begin

Conversations (previously called Icebreaker conversations) encourage parents and carers to get to know each other when a child is going into care. The aim of this is to build up positive and trusting relationships at an early stage. Conversations should be child focused and look at sharing important information about the child, such as their home setting, routine, needs, friends, community and likes and dislikes. They can also focus conversations around what they would like their time spent with those they love and care about to look like. It is important to remember that children have their own networks, such as friends from school, their community and activities they take part in. Carers should be put in touch with people important to the child/young person to help maintain their network.

Conversations should become business as usual within NYCC, utilised as the first step in building up relationships between a child's parents and their carers. They can be adapted to fit each family, for instance, conversations can be held virtually if face to face meetings aren't possible and children can be involved in the conversations also, but this should be considered on an individual basis.

This initiative was trialled in NYCC between January and March 2021. Feedback was gathered from parents, carers and workers focusing on how successful they thought conversations were when working with families. A summary of this is below

Positive Impact of Early Conversations	Challenges with Early Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers parents reassurance about their child and their life in care whilst helping carers to understand the child's care needs • Helps to build positive relationships between parents and carers which is beneficial for the child to see their parents and carers getting on well • Helps to facilitate how future connections and family time would work, with the parents and carers being able to share how they would like it to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The timing of these meetings can create barriers as the period after a child goes into care is very busy, and it can be difficult for parents to have these difficult conversations so soon • It can be difficult to involve fathers in conversations as they are not always included in discussions with social workers • There may be barriers to positive relationships between parents and carers, such as lack of engagement and risk

The full report looking into the effect of these conversations can be found [here](#)

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6. Toolkit

What does good quality time with those you love and care about look like?

Research completed alongside the University of East Anglia looked into what children and families thought made good quality Family Time. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic that was ongoing at the time of this research project, it meant that many children had experienced virtual Family Time. A summary of the feedback they gave is below, the full report can be found [here](#)

What Makes Good Quality Time With Those You Love and Care For

- Parents, carers and young people wanted a mixture of virtual and face to face contact for Family Time – they valued the flexibility of virtual contact but felt it was difficult to maintain a relationship without physical contact
- Both parents and children expressed an interest for more frequent Family Time, with children expressing how they treasured the time they could spend with their birth family
- Children wanted Family Time to feel more 'natural' – they suggested activities such as playing football, seeing their pets and playing games with their family as it would feel less formal
- Parents and carers shared the opinion that they should work together for the sake of the children – parents felt that organising Family Time directly with the carers was easier than going through a social worker
- Carers felt they needed more control over family time, such as the ability to prolong or stop contact in response to the child's needs

Hopes, Aims and Expectations

Children and families also wanted more choice over how they can spend time with the people who are important to them, wanting it to feel more 'natural', some of these ideas are illustrated below:



Keeping time with your children safe and families together - even when they have to live apart.

When children are separated from their parents/carers, siblings, pets and home, we would like to support everyone to keep connected to ensure a positive experience for your child.

**Is it good
enough for
your child?**

We would like to understand how we can safely ensure that relationships, feelings of love and belonging are always a priority and that we offer time with each other in a variety of ways to keep you all connected as family, network and community.

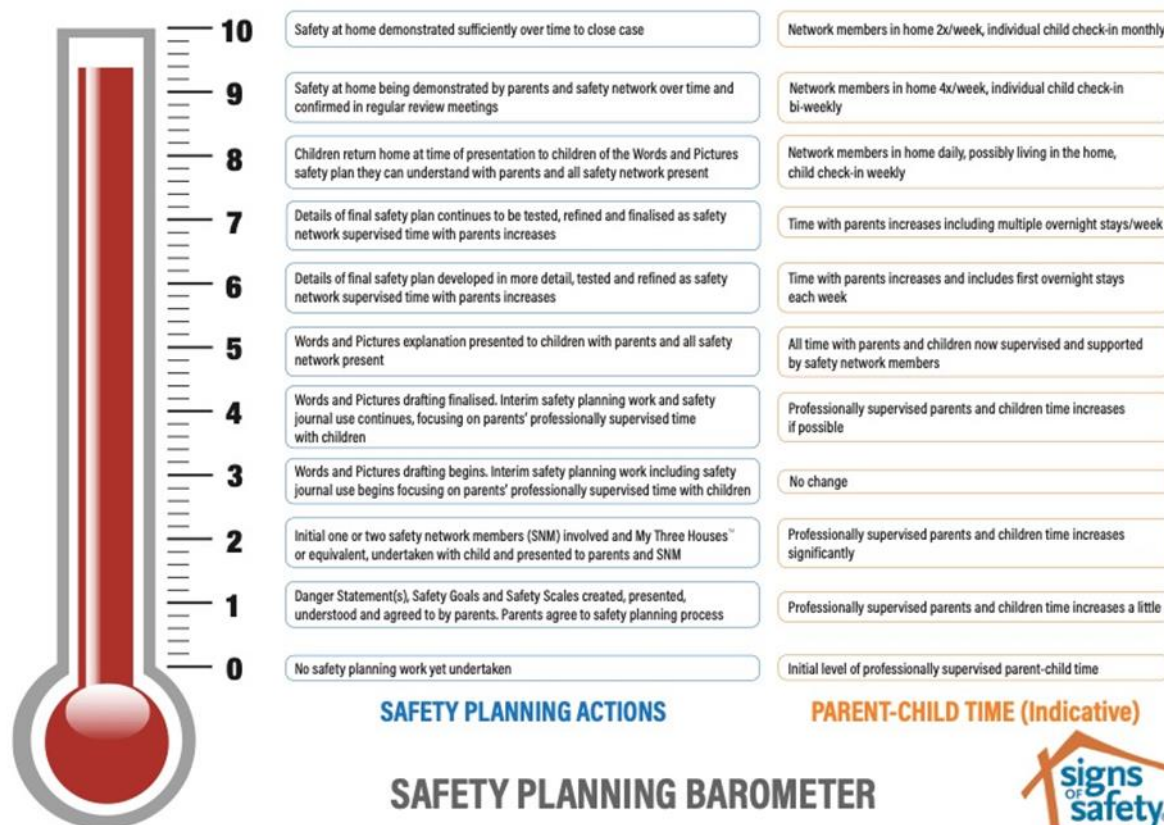
This will look and feel different for all families, but let's think about the possibilities and plan together!

Here are some of the things that we would like to discuss with families.



Signs of Success Barometer:

The day a child is brought into care should be viewed as the first day of working towards reunification. The Signs of Safety barometer is being brought into the new signs of success forms as it will help to demonstrate to children and families that our goal is reunifying a child with their family. It also provides a timeline, so families can see their progress and understand what they need to do to advance towards bringing their child home. In his role as Reunification and Child Permanence Development lead, Jonny Hoyle will be thinking about how this will look for us in North Yorkshire. This guidance summing up all the work completed by the Family Time Development Group will go on to inform the next steps to Jonny's work



Family tree with culture:

When we are drawing Genograms with a family, it is important to include their culture on this too. This can be anything that is important to that family, from their religion and heritage to what football team they support! Considering the Social Graces can help you to decide what information to include. More information about the Social Graces can be found [here](#). We should also include details about the relationships – who has a good relationship? Who has a difficult relationship? Who does the child/young person love in their family? All these details can be added to the genogram with a key to explain what each code means

7. Calendaring

Calendaring.

All the work we do in social care involved working closely with our families. This is part of the Strengths in Relationships model North Yorkshire use within their Children's Social Care sector however, it is also important to note that the work we do relies on the families also working together. This can include the carer, whether a family member/family friend or an un-related carer, ensuring there is time for a child who cannot live with their parents, to reflect and feel the value of aspiration and nurture.

It is vital we understand the importance of this time to reflect and the impact this has on the child knowing they are safe, loved and belong, and have a clear identity both within their family and their current home. By putting together a calendar of a day in the life of the child, also of a foster carer, we can have a very small but fascinating insight into how they are able to provide this to the child(ren). The calendaring is a tool in the Family Seeing toolkit and is thinking about healing opportunities.

Below is a section taken from a child's calendar – it highlights activities the child is taking part in but also who in their family and network will be involved to provide opportunities of dosing. To see the full calendar with attached genogram [click here](#)

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 8:00 – Jane takes Ben to school 15:00 – Grandma takes Ben home 18:00 – Tea with Auntie Angela 20:00 – FaceTime with mum for bedtime story	4 8:00 – Jane takes Ben to school 15:00 – Grandma takes Ben home 18:00 – Takeaway and game night with Jake and Karen	5 9:00 – Dad and Grandad take Ben to football (NY Rovers FC) 12:00 – Grandad takes Ben for lunch 15:00 – Karen visits for a sleepover
10 8:00 – Jane takes Ben to school 15:00 – Grandma takes Ben home 18:00 – Tea with Auntie Angela 20:00 – FaceTime with mum for bedtime story	11 8:00 – Jane takes Ben to school 15:00 – Grandma takes Ben home 18:00 – Takeaway and movie night with Jake and Karen	12 9:00 – Grandad takes Ben to football (NY Rovers FC) 12:00 – Grandad takes Ben to watch Jake play football 17:00 – Ben has tea with Grandad and Jake

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8. Time spent with those you love and care about during Covid-19

When time spent with those you love and care about is arranged, parents will receive a text like the one below to make sure everyone is safe. More information about spending time together during Covid can be found [here](#)

You have a Family Time contact session x at 10.00 at XXXXX Family Hub, XXX .Prior to the session taking place in order to stay within COVID19 guidelines

Please can you confirm by 08.30 both your attendance and the following;

1. That you are not displaying symptoms of COVID 19, which are a new and continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.
2. That you have not been contacted by NHS Test and Trace through app or via a phone call and been told to isolate as a result of you being a close contact of someone who tested positive.
3. That you, are not waiting for results from a PCR COVID 19 test (whether you have symptoms or not).
4. That you have not had a positive Lateral Flow Test or PCR test in the last 10 days (with or without symptoms).

If you cannot confirm the above statements by the agreed time then the planned face-to-face Family Time session may be cancelled until it is safe for it to be reinstated (I.E when isolation period have come to an end). In the meantime, please contact your Children's and Family Support Worker to arrange a virtual Family Time session if appropriate.

9. Mind of My Own

It is vital that we capture the voice of children young people at all stages of our work – this can be done in a variety of ways. One way of doing this is through the Mind of My Own as it independently gathers the thoughts, views and feelings of children and young people. This links closely with the practice model so therefore should be offered to all children and young people.

Mind of My Own is an accessible app that allows children and young people to express themselves and communicate with workers at a time and place that suits them. This in turn helps their worker to understand them better and provide timely support.

The app allows the child/young person to:

- Share information that is important to them
- Share good news
- Report any problems they are having to their worker
- Prepare for statutory meetings



There are two versions of the app available:

- *One App* is suggested for children and young people aged 7+. Young people hold their own account so they will need access to an email address to set this up. One App is available in over 100 languages meaning it can be used to capture the views of all children and young people we work with, including un-accompanied asylum seeking children
- *Xpress* is designed for use by younger children and for those with SEND needs. With this app the child's worker can hold the account and go through the questions with the child as part of their work.

Mind of My Own can be extremely useful when a child or young person is preparing to spend time with those they love and care about. It allows the Children and Family Support Worker to get to know the child/young person and find out who is important to them, who in their network they would like to spend time with and what games or activities they would like to do

The instructions for setting up an account can be found [here](#) along with the [practice standards](#) for the app

The Mind of My Own training is mandatory for all practitioners and can be found on the Learning Zone

10. Useful Links

Guidance for Families:

- The guidance document for children, young people and families can be found [here](#)

Reports:

- The full report around this work can be found [here](#) along with the [executive summary](#)

University of East Anglia Guidance:

- [Engaging birth families of care-experienced young people](#)
- [Engaging the extended family in life story work and family time](#)
- [Supporting parents with family time](#)
- [Building a picture of fathers in family justice in England](#)
- [What role can the extended family play in the lives of children and young people in care or adoptive families?](#)
- [Icebreaker Conversation Initiative](#)
- [What do we know about children's family time?](#)

University of Sydney Guidance:

- [Conversation starters for children and families](#)
- [Family time – from a distance without technology](#)
- [Family time – tips for using video chat](#)
- [Social online games for children and families](#)