

GUIDANCE FOR EXTERNAL FAMILY TIME ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Within the Specialist Assessment, Intervention and Family Time Team we have a structured framework for undertaking family time arrangements for cases that are referred to the team. This includes an opportunity for children to visit the centre prior to their initial family time, if this would be helpful for them, it also includes a family time agreement meeting being held with the parent/s prior to the initial family time, and regular review meetings which incorporate the wishes and feelings of the child / young person.
- 1.2** We adopt a progressive approach to family time. For example, while a parent may initially need to be fully supervised during family time, we aim to support the parents with any areas of concern with a view to moving family time to facilitated. Where safe for the children, we also promote family time in the community. Family time arrangements where there is a significant and/or imminent risk to the child / young person, will remain supervised.
- 1.3** If we know that a family member is likely to care for the child / young person on a long-term basis, we seek to involve that family member in family time prior to the final hearing. Likewise, if the child's / young person's permanence plan is likely to be long-term foster care, we aim to support the foster carer to build a relationship with the parent, so that they feel confident in managing the family time post proceedings.
- 1.4** When children / young people are placed outside of the local area, family time arrangements are often managed by external agencies. This is positive in that it reduces the need for children / young people to travel, however it is acknowledged that there is cost attached to this; there is often not the same level of oversight of these arrangements and also, there can be a lack of progress in terms of moving the family time arrangement on in terms of the level of supervision and efforts to support parents in being better able to meet the needs of their child / young person. Opportunities for children and young people to engage in community activities may also be limited.
- 1.5 Plan**
- 1.6** In order to help ensure consistency and progression, the SAIFT team will have and maintain a level of oversight of the external family time arrangements. This would include:
- Our Senior Family Time Worker (SFTW) attending a family time agreement meeting for all external family times. It would be preferable if the external family time agency are present during this meeting, however if this is not possible, they will be provided with a copy of the family time agreement that our SFTW will create within our LCS system. This will outline the agreed arrangements, expectations and boundaries in regard to parental behaviour and presentation (incorporating the known risk factors) and clarification as to what will happen if the parent is late for family time or misses a number of family times.

- Our SFTW will keep oversight of the quality of family time by reviewing the family time recordings provided by the external agency.
- Our SFTW will chair a review meeting every 6-8 weeks with a focus on discussing areas of strength and areas of concern of family time. She will also look to formulate a plan to help move family time on to a reduced level of supervision where this is appropriate.
- Our SFTW can, where appropriate, be available to discuss and formulate plans for family members to take over the family time arrangements with the family members directly.
- Prior to final evidence being submitted, the SFTW will meet with the child/young person's Social Worker to complete a "Safe and Meaningful Contact" tool which can inform decision making about the on-going frequency and nature of family time. The tool pulls together research about family time from the past 20 years and helps to ensure that the proposed family time arrangements support the child's developmental recovery (which should be the purpose of family time).

1.7 Process

- 1.8** The allocated Social Worker / Assistant Team Manager / Team Manager should notify our SFTW Emma Daltrey (Emma.Daltrey@Wiltshire.gov.uk) of the new external family time arrangement at the earliest opportunity. In addition to this, our SFTW will review our pre and care proceedings list on a monthly basis, to make sure that no arrangements have been missed.