



Supervised Contact Policy

Arrangements for Review:

Pat Bacon is responsible for the implementation of this policy and conducting regular reviews. This policy was adopted in July 2010 and will be reviewed in **March 2011**.

Definition:

Supervised Contact is the name given to a situation where Children's Social Services (CSS) supervise a child's contact with a parent or other family members with whom they are not resident to ensure the safety of the child, and to assess the parents'/carers' ability to look after the child. Supervised Contact often occurs when a child is (usually but not exclusively) the subject of legal proceedings, e.g. application for a Care Order in Public Law. These contact sessions are written up and reports provided to the case holding social worker for use in court etc. They can provide critical evidence of the suitability or not for an adult to have contact with or care of a child in the future.

Often supervised contact will be arranged in a neutral setting, and in some cases the sessions take place in a room at Seashells.

Supervised contact may involve the supervisor simply observing the parent/child interaction, and becoming involved only if there is an issue of safety, or alternatively the supervisor may be instructed to provide advice or model appropriate parenting behaviours to the parent.

This policy is linked to the centre's policies on Fire Procedure, Health & Safety, Risk Management, Child Protection and Information Sharing (and should be read in conjunction with these).

Policy Context:

The Children Act 2004 strongly promotes the integration of services for children, requiring all organisations that work with children to work much closer than they have done previously. Family centres and children's centres are part of this developing agenda.

The children's centre programme gives priority to supporting vulnerable families and children, and it is clear through the development of the core offer that family support is one of the key mechanisms for doing so.

Seashells is committed to supporting parents to maintain supportive and nurturing relationships with their children. To this end we will support the role of Children's Social Services in supervising contact between parents/carers and their children (where this has been deemed necessary) by providing a safe, non-stigmatising environment for contact sessions. All visits are agreed at the Centre Manager's discretion.

Aims:

- To ensure the safety and well-being of all children, parents/carers and staff using Seashells
- To clarify the role of Seashells staff when Centre facilities are offered to parents and children taking part in supervised contact

The legal framework for this policy is:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Childcare Act 2006
- The Protection of Children Act 1999

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (Vetting and Barring Scheme)

Methods

A) Providing facilities for supervised contact

We will:

- Provide a safe, comfortable, pleasant, non-stigmatising and confidential space for children and families receiving supervised contact. In the majority of cases, supervised contact arrangements will need to be scheduled at the same venue for a number of weeks to provide consistency for families involved.
- We will ensure these facilities are suitable for young children, and will do all we can to provide a 'normal' environment for the child and parent to use.
- We will seek feedback from children, parents, and supervisors using the facilities that they are satisfied with the environment before the start of any session. If any changes are needed, these will be made as quickly as possible, or in the event of significant changes being needed, these will be discussed and responded to before the next session.
- CSS staff involved in supervising contact sessions will be responsible for ensuring the confidentiality and safety of all parents, children and statutory staff involved in contact visits.
- All centre staff and reception staff will be informed about the centre's role in facilitating supervised contact through their induction and supervision

B) Procedure for co-ordinating requests for supervised contact facilities

- All applications to use the children's centre facilities for supervised contact are coordinated by Seashells reception staff. They will ensure that a room hire agreement form is completed, and will take note of any special needs. They will also be responsible for obtaining contact names, addresses and telephone numbers in relation to each contact.
- It is the responsibility of the agency making the booking to state when there are specific needs in relation to the environment for the supervised contact session, and to work with the Centre Manager in planning for the visit. If CSS staff have any concerns about the venue following a contact session, these should be followed up as soon as possible with the Centre Manager and with their own agency.
- The Centre Manager is responsible for ensuring the centre's insurance policy covers Supervised Contact. Staff who are supervising supervised contact sessions, e.g. social workers, should be insured by their own agency.

C) Risk Assessments

- Where risk assessments are necessary these will be carried out by Children's Social Services in conjunction with the Centre Manager or supervisory Team Leader where necessary. CSS should provide appropriate and adequate information for the Centre Manager to assess the risk in his/her building.
- Where an individual risk assessment concludes that there are significant risks of abduction, harm to supervisor or harm to other service users, it will be the decision of the Centre Manager as to whether to offer the centre's facilities in this case.

- CSS should ensure that sufficient staff (and staff with an appropriate level of skill and experience), are involved in supervised contact sessions to minimise potential risks to other users of the centre. Where an incident arises from a Supervised Contact session, CSS will review the arrangements and provide feedback to the Centre Manager.
- Where any relevant issues or contingency plans arise from the risk assessment, these will be reviewed by the Centre Manager and communicated to staff as necessary within 24 hours of the booking being confirmed.

D) Procedure for centre staff in facilitating Supervised Contact sessions

- All children, parents, and supervised contact staff should be signed in and out of the building in the register held on reception. These will be used in the event of an emergency.
- Reception staff are responsible for welcoming children, families and staff involved in supervised contact visits, and ensuring they sign in and out.
- The Centre Manager and CSS staff supervising contact sessions will be responsible for ensuring the confidentiality and safety of all parents, children and statutory staff involved in contact visits.
- The session will be lead by a specialist supervisor (e.g. social worker or social work assistant) who will have the authority to intervene or to end the session should the behaviour of parent of child give cause for concern.

E) Joint Working

- Seashells will work to support staff supervising Supervised Contact sessions to the best of our ability.
- Agencies requesting a booking with the Centre for supervised contact should work with the Centre in planning for each visit and undertaking a risk assessment
- Staff supervising Supervised Contact sessions should be considerate when using the centre's facilities – for example, notifying the centre when there have been cancellations, ensuring the room is left in good condition etc.
- Any opportunities for skills sharing between the centre staff and supervised contact staff should be maximised to improve services for all children and families using the centre and to ensure appropriate transfer of information between agencies, in line with KCC's information sharing policy:

http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/Policy/ig_home.cfm

Policy Implementation

All staff will receive relevant training to support the implementation of this policy, and will have opportunity to regularly feed in to its review and evaluation. Equally, all staff involved in supervising Supervised Contact sessions at the centre will have opportunity to feed into the review of this policy.

Arrangements for Complaint

These are defined in the Children's Centres Complaints Policy.