

## Birmingham Children's Partnership

### Towards a Stronger and More Consistent Approach to Home Visits During the Pandemic

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The Children's Partnership is seeking to reach an agreed position, across all partners working with vulnerable children and families, around home visits. Since the pandemic began in March the position has been uneven and inconsistent, and agencies have made unilateral, and different decisions concerning visits, leading in too many cases to too many vulnerable children and families not receiving face-to-face contact with professionals, many of whom want to visit but have not been allowed.

The Partnership Operations Group has sought to address this and is now seeking a clear position from system leaders as to a minimum requirement for visits to families' homes, based on a risk assessment. In simple terms, where the risk of not visiting, for the child, is greater than the risk of visiting, then visits should take place, with appropriate safety measures in place so far as is practicable (PPE; hand-washing; social distancing etc)

It is proposed that **all safeguarding partners in the city** now review their procedures and agree a common set of circumstances where agencies maintain a shared approach to our safeguarding responsibilities.

It is proposed that all partners should sign up to, and implement in our own agencies, a shared approach that mandates home visits in *at least* the following circumstances:

1. When an agency has a safeguarding concern about a child, before referral on to CASS/MASH
2. Where a joint visit between any two agencies is the plan emerging from a strategy meeting (a strategy meeting is only held when a risk of significant harm to a child has been identified)
3. For children with a child protection plan, in pre-proceedings (the stage before an application to court for potential removal) or care proceedings. This represents the cohort of children in the community identified by all agencies as at greatest risk of harm. All partners should be maintaining face-to-face contact, as indicated in the multi-agency plan for each child
4. When an agency refers a child/family to another agency, and there is a request for an initial joint visit, to smooth the introduction and/or transition to a new worker/agency involved

A home visit is appropriate in all of the above cases. That visit should be for an appropriate length of time to establish rapport, explore the issue with family member/s and establish the necessary course of action (a 15-minute limit is not reasonable in such cases)

Partners are asked to agree these measures, agree to keep visiting policies and procedures under review, and ensure that operational managers understand and accept these newly-stated partnership expectations

**Birmingham Children's Partnership**  
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