

**What is a ‘good’ Home Visit?**

This guidance has been developed to assist Early Help services in planning and undertaking home-visits, to maximise safeguarding good practice for practitioners visiting homes and the children and families they are visiting.

Wherever possible, visits to children should be undertaken in their home so that you can see them in their own surroundings and observe them interacting with their family.

**Think about why you are visiting the family at home**

**Reasons for visiting a family at home include:**

**1.** Making contact to provide information about your service and other services available

**2.** Engaging with the family to encourage them to access services and support (completing a referral)

**3.** Delivering a service through home visits.

**Making contact to provide information about your setting and other services available**

An example of using home visits for this purpose is when you visit a family who have expressed an interest in your service.

**In this case the aims of the visit would be:**

**•** To provide clear accurate information about your service, how you work, what are the expectations etc.

• To gather information about the child/ren and family e.g. child’s needs, likes,

dislikes and routines.

**Engaging with the family to encourage them to access services outside of the home**

**In this case the aims of the visit could be:**

**•** To provide information about your role and other local services, including the role of the Early Help Panel

• To enable the family to talk about what they need

• To support the family to identify what services they need

* To complete an Early Help referral

• To support the family to access services

**Delivering a service through home visits**

* Visiting a child at home to check on his/her safety or wellbeing.
* Visiting a child at home to deliver a planned, home-based service.

**Things to think about before a home visit; planning and preparation**

**Is it appropriate for someone from your organisation to visit this family at home?**

* Can you liaise with other agencies?
* Have you clarified the purpose for the visit?
* Have you identified the best person to do the visit?
* Have you considered and agreed a joint home visit?

**Before you make a home visit you need to think about;**

**•** What is the purpose of the visit?

• Have you got as much information as possible about the child, family and

location to be visited?

• What contact has already been made with the family e.g. a phone call or

written appointment to let the family know that you will be visiting and what

your role is?

• How you will let the family know if you are unable to keep the appointment?

• How much time will you need to make the journey and the visit without

rushing?

• Can you communicate with the key family members? It is not appropriate to

use children as your interpreter?

• Are you taking appropriate toys, equipment and resources?

• Are you taking appropriate information in an accessible format e.g. clear

English, other languages, other formats e.g. DVD?

• Is your style of dress appropriate? Does it show respect for the family’s

culture and values?

• What is your setting’s check out and check back system (log in log out)?

• Do you know what to do if you are concerned about your own, or someone

else’s safety or wellbeing while on the visit?

**Personal safety and home visiting**

Your organisation should have a procedure about how to do home visits safely that includes;

* Risk assessment; what your organisation needs to know to ensure that it is safe

to visit this family at home

* Is clear about the purpose of each home visit and how long it is likely to

take?

• Has a check out and check back system so that your colleagues /manager know;

* + Where the staff member has gone and why?
  + When she/he should be back?
  + What to do if they don’t turn up?

• Make sure staff have access to **a mobile phone** that is the property of

the organisation, charged and in working order, so that they can

communicate with your setting throughout the visit if necessary.

* Set out what to do if a member of staff is concerned about their own, or

**someone else’s safety or wellbeing while on a home visit**

**Things to think about during a home visit**

**•** Remember **you are a guest** who has been invited into the family’s home. You may ask people for information but they are under no legal obligation to give it to you. They can also ask you to leave at any time.

• When you arrive, assess if it is **appropriate for you to be there**. For example, do you feel welcome? Do you feel unsafe? Have you turned up in the middle of a family party?

• Make sure you have **appropriate identification** and encourage the family to check it properly, particularly if they haven’t met you before.

• Before you enter the house or flat, ask the family to put any **uncaged animals** in a separate room.

• **Maintain professional boundaries** in your relationship with the family e.g. do not drink alcohol or smoke with them and don’t accept presents.

• Consider **confidentiality** at all times. Do not chat about other families that the family is in contact with. Do not discuss anything in front of other family members without checking beforehand or privately that it is ok to do so.

• Consider **safeguarding policies and procedures** at all times. You need to **be prepared to deal with the unexpected** e.g.

* Young children ‘home alone’
* Poor home conditions that pose an immediate risk to child’s safety or wellbeing
* You notice marks or bruises on a child that give you cause for concern
* You are told about sexual abuse or domestic abuse

Before you leave, check that family members are satisfied with the outcome of the visit and are clear about;

* Any plans made
* What will happen next
* Who will do what
* Date and time of your next visit
* Unless you have child protection concerns, if there is **information to be shared** with other agencies, check with the family;
  + - What is to be shared
    - Who with
    - By whom

• If you have **child protection concerns**, and providing it is safe to do so, tell the family;

* What you are concerned about
* Who you will share the information with
* What is likely to happen next

• If you are concerned about the child’s safety or wellbeing and it is not appropriate to discuss this with the family because;

* You don’t feel safe
* You are concerned about child sexual abuse
* You are concerned about domestic abuse and the perpetrator was present
* You feel that raising concerns could compromise the child’s safety and wellbeing

You must seek advice urgently, once you have left the family home

You must discuss the situation with;

* The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) from your organisation or
* **First Response on 0845 460 001 (0800 999 7677 out of hours)**
* If you feel anyone is at risk of immediate harm then the police should be contacted. **999**

**Hints and Tips**

* Make sure you’re familiar with your own organisations policy and procedures for home visiting before embarking on any.

**Hints & Tips**

* If the family are receiving support from a multi-agency team and there is more than 1 service home visiting. Make sure you are communicating with one another and being clear about the roles and boundaries so not to overwhelm anyone
* Be clear about what and how you are sharing information between agencies and to and from the family and children.

**Things to think about after a home visit**

**You will need to consider the following areas;**

**• Checking back in at your organisation**

**• Recording**

**• Following up any safeguarding or child protection concerns**

**• Actions agreed and next steps**

**• Sharing information with appropriate agencies**

* **The worker reflection on the visits**
* Reflection of your emotional responses to home visits is important to discuss at supervision.
* You should share your emotional feelings in supervision and reflect on how your own emotional response affects observations and how often you visit the family.

**Hints and Tips**

Remember the focus of home visit should be the **children**, is it easy to lose focus when home visiting and involved in the dynamics and issues of the adults. The voice of the child should be heard and reflected in your home visit and case recordings.

**Hints and Tips**

* Visits should build meaningful relationships with the family: be open and honest with them about what you are doing and what they need to do to make progress towards positive changes and outcomes.
* Your observations of changes and any family circumstances, composition , child’s appearance behaviour and interactions with other family members should be recorded.