



SECURE ACCOMMODATION NETWORK

## Good Practice Guidance

- Title:** Maintaining Contact with Young People in Secure Children's Homes (England and Wales).
- Purpose:** To enable families and significant others to have better access with young people resident within secure children's homes (England and Wales)
- Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 There are a number of political, legal and organisational definitions of family but none of which will encompass the widely diverse family backgrounds, which we come across when carrying out our duties.

For example:

- Nuclear Families – 2 parent
- Single Parent Families
- Same sex Partnerships
- Extended kinships
- Relevant non-related persons

- 1.2 This Good Practice Guidance does not attempt to define what family is but rather suggests that it is “whatever the young person and relevant adults considers it to be” within the legal frameworks.

- 1.3 For the majority of young people in our care there will be no doubt that their interests will be best served by efforts to sustain or create links with their natural families. It is important that staff think about families as an asset to young people rather than a risk.

- 1.4 Indeed much research has concluded that young people perform better socially, emotionally and educationally where family contacts are preserved.

Refer also to:-

*Youth Justice Board. Youth Resettlement – A Framework for action*

*Children's Regulations 2001- Regulation 15*

*Volume 3 Dept Health Guidance and Regulations – Family Placements*

*Volume 4 Dept Health Guidelines and Regulations – Residential Care.*

*Contact with Children Regulations 1991*

*Section 34 Children Act 1989*

*What works In Residential Child Care National Children's Bureau 2006*

**Refer also to:-**

*Safeguarding Children  
The second joint Chief Inspectors Report on Arrangements to Safeguard Children – July 2005*

- 1.5 The safeguarding children – The second joint chief inspectors report on arrangements to safeguard children emphasises the importance of maintaining contact with families for those young people within secure accommodation.
- 1.6 When endeavouring to maintain family links secure children's homes should follow a "two pronged" approach:
1. Supporting the young person in keeping contact through facilitating some or all of the following:
    - o visits,
    - o phone contact
    - o written contact (letter and email)
    - o video conferencing
  2. Ensuring the secure children's home has the policies and procedures in place to make certain that contact is promoted and supported and to clarify when contact can and cannot take place.
- 1.7 Secure children's homes should ensure that young people are looked after in a manner which stresses, and practically supports contact with parents, family and others of significance to them
- 1.8 With this in mind secure children's homes should consider how they might involve families during each of the following stages of the placement.
- Referral / Pre Admission,
  - Admission,
  - Care Planning
  - Through care,
  - Aftercare / Resettlement
- 2.0 Referral / Pre Admission,**
- 2.1 Once a referral has been placed with the secure children's home a designated staff member will clarify the information contained within the received paperwork. Particular attention should be made to clarify the current legal and care arrangements.
- 2.2 Dependant on the legal status of the young person the referral information will include some or all of the following documentation:

[www.secureaccommodation.org.uk](http://www.secureaccommodation.org.uk)

<http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/PractitionersPortal/Assessment/>

- The Young Offender Assessment Profile – Assett
- Referral Papers
- Additional Background Information
- LAC paperwork parts 1 and 2

2.4 Once the appropriate paperwork has been received and agreement to admit the young person has been confirmed where possible contact with the young person and their families should be made prior to admission.

### 3.0 Admission

3.1 When a young person is admitted to a secure children's home they and their families are likely to be very anxious. It is therefore imperative that every effort is made to ensure the young person and their families are aware how they can keep in contact with each other.

National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes Standard 15

3.2 Upon arrival the young person's paperwork should be checked to ensure that contact arrangements and any contact restrictions are known.

3.3 The young person should be offered the use of the telephone to contact parent(s), carers or a significant others in order to confirm their safe arrival to the secure children's home.

3.4 A member of staff – where possible a member of the young person's keyteam should contact the appropriate family members or significant others and introduce themselves and if appropriate invite and arrange for them to visit.

3.5 It is good practice to ensure that parents and carers receive information about the secure children's home, as soon as is practicable after admission (and in some cases before admission):

- Letter of introduction – to include directions, bus and train information and visiting and contact arrangements.
- Other information pertaining to the secure children home's rules and expectations re contact and appropriate behaviour such as the secure children's homes:
  - Statement of Purpose
  - Information Brochures
  - Information for Families.
  - Young Person's Guide
  - DVD Guides.

## 4.0 Care Planning

4.1 It is imperative that staff working with the young people are aware of individual family dynamics and are sensitive understand the potential emotive issues with the families such as bereavements, separation, divorce etc.

4.2 The process of Assessment for Children and Young People admitted for welfare reasons, or remanded by the courts to secure children's homes, is based on the seven key areas identified within 'Good Parenting – Good Outcomes' and "The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families". One of which:

- **Family and Social Relationships:** involve the young person's ability to make friends and get on with other people as well as the quality of interaction and the dynamics with the family.

4.3 Each secure children's home should have procedures in place to ensure that parents and carers opinions and views are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis e.g. a parents and carers consultation leaflet.

4.4 Parents / significant others should be encouraged to attend all care planning / sentence review meetings.

## 5.0 Through care

5.1 Families / significant others visiting young people should be encouraged and made welcome. Obviously some security and safety considerations might attach to family visits if there is a perceived risk involved. In most cases however, with appropriate briefing, supervision and risk management, visits can be carried off successfully.

5.2 Each secure children's home should monitor the amount of contact each young person has with their families / significant others.

5.3 Particular attention should be made in respect of the amount of visits the young person is receiving as often families / significant others may have to get numerous buses and trains, and find this difficult and expensive. As a consequence the visits may start to decline or not happen at all.

Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families - Section 2

LAC/  
'Good Parenting, Good Outcomes: Assessment and Action Records

National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes Standard 15

**Refer also to:-**

*Youth Justice Board  
- Secure Facilities  
Placement  
Guidance  
Appendix 8 Assisted  
Visits Scheme*

*Children Act 1989  
Schedule 2  
paragraph 16*

- 5.4 If families / significant others are in need of financial assistance to enable them to visit then they should be supported and guided towards:
- Youth Justice Board Placements** – The Youth Justice Board Assisted Visits Scheme
- Welfare Placements** - Local authorities are permitted to make payments to parents, relatives and any other person connected with the young person if they believe that visits could not be made without undue financial hardship.
- Staff should be aware of any special requirements that would require additional support and assistance.
- 5.5 It is up to the individual Youth Offending Team or Local Authority to approve the funding assistance. But secure children's home staff should ensure that if required they help facilitate requests for help.
- 5.6 Social workers and Youth offending team officers should be encouraged to bring family members / significant others with them when they carry out statutory visits.
- 5.7 Each secure children's home should have a published and distributed visiting and contact statement in place.
- 5.9 Each secure children's home should have policies in place to contact families / significant others to give:
- (weekly) progress reports
- and to inform them of any significant events, including:
- Incidents –
    - Single separation,
    - Restrictive Physical Intervention,
    - Violence or Aggression
  - Any illness or accident that necessitated medical attention.
  - Any complaint that the young person had submitted.
  - A transfer to another placement
- 5.10 It should also be common practice to inform on stories of success and achievements.
- 5.11 The education department within the secure children's homes should also ensure contact is maintained with families / significant others to ensure educational

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achievements and concerns can be shared.

## 6.0 Aftercare / Resettlement

- 6.1 The key to effective resettlement is the direct involvement and engagement of the young people and their families throughout the placement.
- 6.2 Each secure children's homes should have procedures in place to ensure that aftercare / resettlement issues are reviewed and promoted throughout the care / sentence planning process.
- 6.3 To assist the resettlement process post discharge if it is thought appropriate, visits or contact through phone or letter from staff to the young person should be offered.

Refer also to:-

*Youth Justice Board  
Youth Resettlement  
A framework for  
action.*

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