

## **Factsheet 12**

# Contact – seeing your child

### **How do I know when I can see my child?**

Before you go into court on the first day, you should talk to your lawyer about how often you want see your child

At court your lawyer will tell the magistrate how often you want to see your child

The magistrate will also listen to what the lawyer for Community Services says about how often they think you should see your child

The magistrate will then decide how often you will see your child while the case is being finished in court

The magistrate will write this down in an order. The order is called an interim contact order.

### **How does contact work?**

An organisation will be responsible for arrangements for your child

There is a caseworker who will arrange when and where contact will happen

At the start contact will usually happen at the office of the organization who is responsible for your child or at a Community Service Centre

This will usually be near where your child is living

Contact will usually be supervised. This means there will be someone in the room with you.

This person is called a contact supervisor

The contact supervisor will stay in the room and take notes during your time with your child

If the contact worker and case worker think the visits are going okay, contact may change to a park or shopping centre or a play centre.

You can talk to your caseworker or contact supervisor about a suitable place for contact with your child

If you are having trouble getting to contact talk to the caseworker to see if anything can be changed to make it easier

## Getting ready for contact

It is very important to go to all the contact visits even if it is difficult for you

If you are not able to get to contact make sure you tell your caseworker at the organization where you are having contact before the day. They should tell community services that you can not come and tell them why you can not come.

It is a good idea to text the caseworker to tell them you are not coming

Leave the text in your phone so you have a record that you sent it

It looks bad if you do not turn up to a contact visit

- Make sure you know where you have to go
- If you are not sure where you have to go check with the caseworker
- Plan your trip so that you will be there on time
- Make sure you have enough money for your transport
- Dress appropriately



- Do not take drugs or alcohol on the day of a contact visit
- Do not come to contact hungover or coming down off drugs
- Have your phone charged and switched on in case the contact worker needs to contact you
- Make sure you have the phone number for the Community Services Centre in your phone in case you need to ring
- Take a healthy snack and drink for you and your child
- Take a toy or activity that you think your child will like

## During Contact

Contact can feel uncomfortable for parents and children

Try to relax

This is your time to be together with your child



It is normal for some children to be shy when they first arrive at contact. Your baby or toddler may at first cling to the contact worker.

This can feel hurtful, but remember it is normal. Give your child some time to settle into the visit.

You should turn your phone onto silent at the beginning of contact. Give your attention to your child.

It is your job to look after your child at contact. The contact worker will not look after your child.

You will need to check if your child's nappy needs changing, or they need feeding

If you want to talk to your caseworker do this after contact not during contact time

Older children might ask when they can come home with you. Do not make any promises to your child about coming home.

Tell your child you love them and talk to them about something else

### **Tips for saying good-bye**

It is hard to say goodbye to your child

Try to be brave

Reassure your child that you will see them again

If your child knows the days of the week, tell them the day you will see them next

If your child is crying and grabbing it is best to leave quickly

Say goodbye and let the contact worker distract and settle your child

Try to be brave and not to cry in front of your child

### **Looking after yourself after contact**

If leaving contact is hard for you organise to meet up with a friend, a family member or your support person

You can also ring lifeline 13 11 14 and tell them how you are feeling

It is best to share your feelings

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