



Leamington Community Primary School

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Home Visit Good Practice Guidance



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Leamington Community Primary School: Home Visit Good Practice Guidance

Why is a home visit necessary?

Reasons for visiting a family at home include (see below for further information on each):

- Contacting children and families who may require additional support;
- Engaging with the family to encourage them to access services outside of the home;
- Contacting children and families to establish reasons for a pupil's non-attendance at school;
- Delivering a service through home visits.

Contacting children and families who may require additional support:

An example of using home visits for this purpose could be to collect a child to bring them into school or to offer referrals to services such as early intervention teams.

Engaging with the family to encourage them to access educational services outside of school:

An example of using home visits for this purpose is to encourage a pupil's ongoing education whilst long term sick or excluded.

Contacting children and families to establish reasons for a pupil's non-attendance:

An example of using home visits for this purpose is to encourage attendance at school whilst improving liaisons between school and parents.

Delivering a service through home visits:

An example of using home visits for this purpose is visiting a child at home to check on his/her safety or wellbeing.

Planning and preparation for a home visit:

Before completing a home visit, it is important to ensure you are prepared and have thought about possible risks or issues that may arise. Think about the following:

- Are the family aware that a home visit is being completed?
- Who lives at or is regularly present in the family home, including pets?
- Are you the most appropriate person to complete the visit?
- Have you got as much information as possible about the child, family and location to be visited including details of potential risks?
- Do you know what to do if you are concerned about your own, or someone else's safety or wellbeing whilst on the visit?

If you answer 'no' to any of the above questions, then give consideration to the following:

- It may not always be possible to inform the family in advance of a home visit, specifically with regards to following up unexplained absences. In this case, it may be helpful to take a letter that can be posted if unable to make direct contact.
- Try liaising with colleagues and other involved services to establish a clear awareness of the family and the home, including any potential risks. Check the school's CPOMs system for information on current and past incidents/issues.
- Speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and review school's safeguarding policies to establish appropriate courses of action should you become concerned for your own or another's safety.

Personal safety and home visiting:

A home visit should not be completed without consideration to risk and the safety and wellbeing of staff. Guidance for promoting staff safety completing home visits, include but are not limited to:

- Ensure that you have prepared for the home visit, gathering as much information as you can with regards to the home, the family and potential risks. Review CPOMs records for the child/children to ensure you are up to date with past and current issues/concerns.
- Be clear on the purpose of the home visit - will you be delivering information which may be sensitive/provoke an emotional response from the family e.g. reviewing a Child Protection Report or advising of intentions to prosecute for poor attendance?
- It is always best practice to complete a home visit with a colleague. However, if circumstances allow and you are planning a visit alone, only go if you are confident that it is safe to do so. If you are unsure, always take someone else with you or don't go at all.
- Make sure you have access to a mobile phone that is charged and in working order, so that yourself and school can communicate throughout the visit if necessary.
- Liaise with colleagues around the nature of the visit, address/family and expected length of time you will be out of the workplace, ensuring you always sign in and out of the workplace. Leave your contact number with colleagues so that you can be contacted. If you are delayed, you must contact school to advise of this.
- Decide on a code word /phrase that you can quickly text to a colleague if you feel unsafe at any point in the visit and require assistance.
- Ensure that your car is parked facing the most appropriate exit route should you need to leave quickly.
- If you arrive at the property and do not feel confident that it is safe to enter, speak briefly with the family at the door (if appropriate) to reschedule. This can allow you to arrange support from a colleague/another agency worker or offer an alternative appointment at school.
- School should ensure colleagues are aware of how to respond if a colleague undertaking a home visit becomes uncontactable/does not return to the workplace within the expected time frame.

Things to consider during a home visit:

During a home visit, personal safety, along with the desired outcome, needs to be the focus of the visit. It is important to consider the following:

- 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 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 got signal on your mobile phone?
- Make sure you have appropriate identification.
- Before you enter the house or flat, ask the family to put any uncaged animals in a separate room.
- Always maintain professional boundaries and consider confidentiality.
- Do not discuss anything in front of additional family members without checking beforehand that it is ok to do so.
- Always consider safeguarding policies and procedures.

- You need to be prepared to deal with the unexpected, including but not limited to:
 - Young children 'home alone';
 - Poor home conditions that pose an immediate risk to a child's safety or wellbeing;
 - A disclosure is made relating to abuse.
- Before you leave, check that family members are satisfied with the outcome of the visit and are clear about:
 - Any plans made or actions identified;
 - What will happen next;
 - Who will do what;
 - When will it be done by.
- Unless you have child protection/safeguarding concerns, if there is information to be shared with other agencies, discuss with the family:
 - What is to be shared;
 - Who it will be shared with and why;
 - Who will be responsible for sharing the information;
 - When the information will be shared.
- If you have child protection/safeguarding 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, it may not always be 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 is present;
 - You feel that raising concerns could compromise the child's safety and wellbeing.

If you believe the child is at risk of significant harm, 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 setting.
- Social Care.
- Emergency services if you feel that the child is at risk of *immediate* significant harm.

If at any time during a home visit you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, you should make an excuse to leave. Under these circumstances it is appropriate to invent a reason to leave immediately.

Things to consider following a home visit:

You will need to consider the following areas:

- Checking back in at your setting;
- Recording the findings and outcomes of the visit – all visits should be recorded on CPOMs as soon as possible. Make a factual account of the discussion that took place and use the family's own wording when possible.

- Following up any safeguarding or child protection concerns, in line with school policy. Along with a discussion with the DSL, all safeguarding concerns should be reported on CPOMs.
- Implementing agreed actions and next steps in the time frame decided with the family. Again these should be included in the CPOMs report.
- Sharing information with appropriate agencies in the time frame agreed with the family.