



## **Cafcass Cymru Private Law Supervised Family Time (Supervised Contact) Fact Sheet (September 2024)**

Children should, when safe and possible, be able to spend time with their parents (or other people important to them) in their local community, their own homes or a familiar home of a family or friend. Supervised family time is a short-term service, commissioned and funded by Cafcass Cymru, as part of the practitioner's assessment for the Family Court. Referrals are only made if necessary for the purpose of assessment, where close supervision of the child and parent's time together is needed and there is no other suitable person to do this.

### **What is the purpose of supervised family time?**

- Supervised family time (supervised contact) is where parents spend time with their child/ren in a safe, closely monitored environment, as part of Cafcass Cymru's assessment in private family law court proceedings, where further information is needed about a parent's ability to safely meet their child/ren's needs.
- The family time is supervised by a contact service provider accredited by the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC). They provide detailed records of observation to Cafcass Cymru to assist the practitioner to complete their assessment and make safe final recommendations for the child/ren.
- Supervised family time can be commissioned, by Cafcass Cymru to test out family time arrangements and ensure that the child/ren feel happy and safe to spend time with their parent before the court makes a final order.

### **Before making a referral for supervised family time**

- Before making a referral for supervised family time, the practitioner allocated to the case will look at the individual family circumstances and speak to the adults and, if they are old enough, the child/ren involved. If they think a referral is necessary to resolve the issues in the case, they will discuss this with a Cafcass Cymru manager. Together they will consider what supervised family time sessions will contribute to the assessment.
- For supervised family time to be purposeful and of benefit to the child/ren, there has to be a realistic chance of a positive, safe relationship being established between the child/ren and the adult who will be spending time with them, which can continue beyond the supervised sessions.
- The practitioner will think about what the service can realistically and safely achieve for the child/ren, and consider any allegations about domestic abuse or other concerns about harm, and the outcome of any fact-finding hearings. The practitioner will think about the impact of a referral on the child/ren and adults and assess whether a referral is safe, or whether making a referral could lead to risks of physical, emotional, or psychological harm to a child or adult.
- The practitioner will carefully consider how the child/ren feels about their spending time arrangements. Before making a referral, they will talk to the child/ren about the suggested arrangements, and for younger child/ren will usually observe family time with the parent concerned.

## **When is a referral for supervised family time suitable?**

- A referral should only be made as part of an assessment that informs Cafcass Cymru's report to the court.
- A referral is only suitable if there is a realistic prospect of a safe and positive relationship between the child and the adult being established, beyond the intervention.
- The court, and Cafcass Cymru, must be satisfied that any supervised time ordered with a parent does not expose the child or other parent to continued risk of harm and is in the best interest of the child.

## **When is a referral for supervised family time not suitable?**

- A referral is unsuitable if the child is of an age to clearly express their views and is refusing to spend time with the parent concerned.
- A referral is unlikely to be suitable if a fact finding hearing or criminal hearing is due to take place which is relevant to the safety and wellbeing of the children or adults.
- A referral is unsuitable if there is no Cafcass Cymru assessment taking place, for example, a referral should not be made at the end of proceedings as part of a final child arrangements order.

## **How many sessions will take place?**

- A maximum of six hours of funded supervised family time can be provided. However, the number and length of sessions that the practitioner requests will vary depending on the issues that need to be assessed.

## **How does the referral process work?**

- The referral will be made by the allocated practitioner, after discussion with a manager. If a court orders supervised family time that has not been recommended by a Cafcass Cymru practitioner, the allocated practitioner will make sure that the referral is suitable. This may mean they meet with the family and child before making the referral. If the practitioner does not consider that the referral is safe or suitable, Cafcass Cymru will write to the court to explain the issues and seek guidance on how best to proceed before progressing the referral.
- The Cafcass Cymru Commissioned Services Team are responsible for sending the referral via secure portal to a commissioned service provider and will inform the family when the referral has been made.

## **What are the responsibilities of the supervised family time provider?**

- The service provider is responsible for informing Cafcass Cymru within 10 working days whether they accept the referral. They are responsible for arranging introductory visits and the supervised family time sessions with the family. They will inform Cafcass Cymru if parents do not engage and of any issues such as violent, threatening, or abusive behaviour involving the family. The provider is responsible for directly informing police or social services of any immediate child protection or safeguarding concerns in accordance with The Wales Safeguarding Procedures and their own safeguarding procedures.