

# Family time (contact)

*during the COVID-19 pandemic*



## Sharing the decision

Making decisions about family time during the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging and best done in conversation with others. Talk to your manager, the child or young person, their loved ones and carers – and assess their unique circumstances. Try to think through everybody's needs as well as important logistics. These sorts of questions may help:



### The child or young person

What are they worried about? What do they need to feel connected to family?



### Parents and loved ones

What do they think family time should look like during the COVID-19 pandemic?



### Carers

What are they worried about? What do they need, to feel okay about family time?



### Supervision

Who supervises family time? Are they still able to do it? Can they do it differently?



### Age

How old are the child's loved ones and carers? The elderly are very vulnerable.



### Access

Does everyone have access to phones and the internet (incl. credit and data)?



### Tech ability

How tech-competent is everyone? Are they able to text, video-call, use apps?



### Frequency

How often was family time happening? How often does it need to happen now?



### Restoration

How does family time influence decisions or timeframes relating to restoration?



### Placement stability

How will family time impact on placement stability?



### Health

Is anyone unwell, in isolation or symptomatic? Is anyone very vulnerable?



### Location

Where can family time happen safely? Consider physical and virtual spaces.



### Distance

How far does everyone need to travel to be there in person? Is travel possible?



### Transport

How will everyone get there? Public transport means more exposure.

## Recording the decision

Decisions about family time have a big impact and are likely to change as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. So it's important keep a clear record of your decision-making process in your client management database.

## A Note on Rights

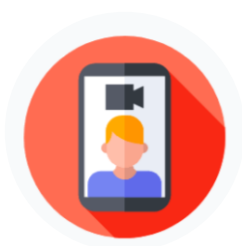
**Parents** have a right to be involved in decisions about their children in care. For more information, go to the ['Your rights as a birth parent'](#) and ['Contact arrangements'](#) pages on the Department of Communities and Justice website.

**Kids** in care have a right to stay connected to their families and communities. There is more information about this on the ['Your rights as a child or young person in care'](#) page on the Department of Communities and Justice website, as well as in the Charter of Rights Booklets for [7-12 year olds](#) and [13-17 year olds](#).

**Carers** have the right to have their opinions respected and to be consulted on decisions about the care of a child or young person.

## Connecting in creative ways

You may need to support kids in care to connect with their loved ones differently, especially if someone is particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, unwell, in isolation or has flu-like symptoms. Consider using the suggestions below – and wherever possible, **up the frequency** of family time when using these strategies to replace face-to-face time.



**Video-calls**



**Phone calls**



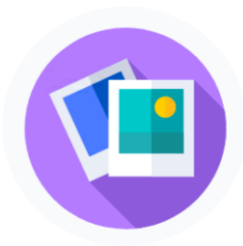
**Group texts**



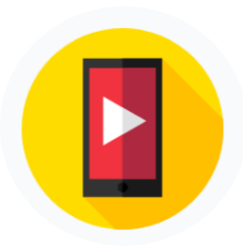
**Social media**



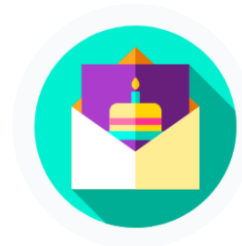
**Voice recordings**



**Photos**



**Videos**



**Letters & cards**



**Parcels**



**Sharing craft**



**Online games**



**Shared playlists**

## Connecting in person

When supporting a child or young person to see their loved ones in person, you need to:



**Plan** the visit with the child or young person, their loved one(s) and carer(s). Talk about how and why the visit will be different.



Choose a location/activities that will support everyone to keep their **distance**. People should be 1.5m<sup>2</sup> apart at all times. Help kids understand why.



**Limit the number of people** coming in person. Others can join via phone or video-call, or see the child or young person separately.



**Call ahead** to make sure it's okay for family time to happen. If anyone is unwell, in isolation or has flu-like symptoms then family time should not go ahead.



If parents have to cancel family time due to illness or other COVID-19 related issues, **reassure them** that it will not influence decisions about restoration.



If transporting kids or loved ones, **limit the number of people in the car** and sit passengers in the back. **Wipe** the keys, handles, steering wheel before/after. Carry hand sanitiser and masks. If someone seems ill, ask them to wear a mask.



**Wipe down the room/area** before and after family time. Pay particular attention to surfaces, door handles, taps and light switches.



Direct everyone to practice **good hygiene**. Everyone should clean their hands before and after family time, and after they eat or use the loo. Carry hand sanitiser and masks. If someone appears unwell, ask them to put a mask on



Display **this poster**, to help everyone adhere to good hygiene practices. There are more posters like this on the [Department of Health website](#).



Direct everyone to **avoid touching**. Help kids make a game out of greeting their loved ones with 'air-fives', and elbow or foot taps, instead of hugs.



**Limit time spent indoors**. When indoors, open the windows to ventilate the room.