Child Contact Interventions (Preparation, intervention, observation and reporting of contact, previously known as supervised contact)

Child Contact Interventions (CCIs) are designed to help parents and children establish safe and beneficial contact when this is difficult to do so on their own. The interventions described in this factsheet are only available for court cases where Cafcass is involved. Interventions are short-term and intended for families where independent, safe and beneficial contact should be possible for them in the future. All CCI work is commissioned and funded by Cafcass.

CCIs encourage parents to listen to their child’s views and to approach contact in ways that meet their child’s needs. The intervention is intended to support parents and children, giving them ideas of how to establish and sustain safe and beneficial contact in the future. It is overseen by a professional, takes place in a safe and controlled environment and informs Cafcass assessments, including consideration of any safety concerns. The interventions are mostly locally based and undertaken by organisations working in partnership with Cafcass. They are all accredited and assessed by National Association of Child Contact Centre (NACCC) and will have links to local communities and sources of support away from the courts.

Types of Child Contact Interventions

There are several types of intervention available, depending on the needs of the child and case. Interventions can be with one or more children, with work being undertaken to meet their individual needs:

- Work with children to prepare for contact – this can help them with the reintroduction of contact and/or ensure that their views are listened to. Work is likely to focus on meeting the child’s emotional needs.
- Work with parents to prepare for contact – this might be appropriate to ensure that the child’s views are heard and responded to. Parents are helped to understand their child’s needs and to work together to support the child.
- Intervention and observation of contact – this is used to reassure the child and monitor their acceptance of contact, as well as the parent’s responses. It might be used to support reintroduction to contact. It can also be used where observation is needed to gain understanding of any risk and safety factors.
- Sustaining contact – to help sustain a relationship, perhaps during a period where a parent is attending a contact activity programme, such as a Separated Parents Information Programme, and/or an undergoing an assessment.
- Indirect contact – this might be appropriate as a step towards direct contact, perhaps while a parent is attending a programme or undergoing assessment.
- Dispute Resolution work – this may take place with the adults in the case to help resolve issues impacting on contact and improve communication. It may include helping parents complete a Cafcass Parenting Plan. The plan is worked out between parents after they separate and puts the best interests of the child first. The online Parenting Plan can be found at: www.splittingup-putkidsfirst.org.uk.

Parents may also be asked to complete the Getting It Right for Children programme. This is a free online skills development programme aimed at helping them learn new ways to communicate about contact problems: www.theparentconnection.org.uk.
A Cafcass practitioner will talk with you about how a Child Contact Intervention might help in your case.

Referral for a contact intervention

A Cafcass practitioner will talk with parents about how a Child Contact Intervention might help in their case and make them aware of what will be asked of them as part of the intervention process. Cafcass will make a referral to a chosen partner organisation, which will include information about the needs of both the child and parents. A court may make an order about the intervention and regarding the next steps.

Cafcass has partnerships across England and will find a convenient location as possible for the intervention. Initially a Contact Agreement Meeting will take place where the work to be undertaken as part of the intervention will be explained and agreed with the parents. Towards the end of the intervention parents will be expected to attend a Next Steps Meeting to review the intervention, consider the progress made and confirm the next steps.

How this work informs cases

Partner organisations do give feedback to Cafcass and to parents about what happens in contact. Records of all interventions will be provided to Cafcass and this information can be used to inform assessments and reports back to court. Partner organisations will also want to know about the child’s and parents experience of the intervention. The feedback process will be explained before the intervention takes place.

Supported contact

There is a network of Supported Contact Centres throughout England. These are voluntary centres and they offer a warm and supportive environment for children to have contact. These centres do not offer supervision or report on contact, and are intended only for families where safe and beneficial contact is agreed between the parents to be possible. Referrals to centres can be made direct by the adults or their representatives. Supported contact is not commissioned or funded by Cafcass. Our only role is to recommend that only centres accredited by NACCC are used. More information about supported contact is available on the NACCC website: www.naccc.org.uk.