

South West Family Services, Suite 3 Gandy Street Chambers, 11 Gandy Street, Exeter, Devon,
EX43LS

email: office@southwestfamilyservices.com phone: 07961671514

FAQ For Family Time Sessions

This fact sheet should answer our most frequently asked questions. Please take the time to read through and contact the office if you have any questions.

It's important to read these alongside the preparation details sent to you, and the service agreement and expectations. All three documents together are the 'Guide to Family Time Services.'

TIMEKEEPING AND PUNCTUALITY

It is crucial that you arrive at the designated time. If you are not on time, the allocated worker will contact you. While we strive to answer calls when possible, please note that our office is not open 24/7. Therefore, avoid texting or repeatedly calling if you are running slightly late. The allocated worker will manage the session and will reach out to you if there are any delays. At the end of the session it is essential you are on time leaving/collecting the child.

CANCELLING AND SICKNESS

If a child is unwell, they can usually still attend family time sessions, as the general expectation is that both parents are capable of caring for the child. Typically, a child's illness is not a sufficient reason for them to miss seeing their parent. However, every family is different, and the decision depends on the structure of the sessions, the type of illness, the child's age, and other unique factors. Decisions about whether a child should attend should almost always be made by the parents, not by our team but please consult us if you are unsure. We may ask you to consider whether it is in your child's best interests to attend and might insist on specific precautions or practical measures. Ultimately, it is almost always your decision, not ours. If a session is cancelled because the child is unwell this will be confirmed to both parents. Please note that sessions cancelled with less than 48 hours' notice, for any reason, are not refundable or transferable. If persistent cancellations occur we reserve the right to ask for a holding deposit by one or both parents or end our services. If a child needs medication during a session the family support worker will always phone and check with the resident parent before the visiting parents gives calpol or anything else.



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ARRIVING AND CHILDREN WHO ARE RELUCTANT OR UNSURE

The resident parent is responsible for presenting the child(ren) to sessions and should not expect our team to coax children into starting sessions. Whilst we will offer appropriate encouragement and reassurance it is for the parent to ensure this is adult led rather than expecting the team to do this for you. If you are finding this difficult or need help or advice please contact the office to arrange a time to discuss.

GIFTS

The visiting parent may give the child(ren) a small gift during sessions. However, we encourage parents not to give gifts every time, as children will quickly come to expect them! We do not permit the exchange of gifts, cards, or letters between parents through our team unless this has been agreed upon in advance.

PHOTOS

Unless a court order specifies otherwise or there are specific circumstances that make taking photos inappropriate, any parent spending time with their child(ren) may take photos, provided the child is comfortable and does not object. If there are specific reasons why a resident parent might not want the other parent taking photos, this should be discussed with the service manager.

OTHER PEOPLE

We are happy to welcome other important family members when agreed by both parents. This includes in person and virtually, by phone or video call. Nobody else is allowed to join sessions unless agreed in advance.

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE

This is addressed during service planning discussions at the start or during reviews we conduct together. Sessions might be held in a family room which is a lovely homely room with sofas, television, books and is designed to feel like a living room. The use of rooms or community hubs depends on availability. This will be communicated as part of the usual confirmation process.



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VEHICLES & TRANSPORT

This is addressed during service planning but generally families do not travel in private vehicles. Some families get a taxi/bus/train for specific activities, but this is always by arrangement before sessions.

PAYMENT

Invoices are sent in advance to the parent responsible for payment, and each session must be paid for at least three days prior. We do not send reminders or follow up on unpaid invoices. If payment is not received on time, the session will be cancelled and both parents will be notified via email. To avoid cancellations, please ensure timely payment. Parents have the option to pay for the entire month at once or on a session-by-session basis, as long as payments are made at least three days in advance.

CONFIRMATIONS

We typically do not allocate set times for sessions long-term, as this impacts other families we work with and limits opportunities to extend sessions or make changes. We send confirmation of session times and the allocated worker details 5-7 days in advance via email. Please check your inbox and junk mail to ensure you receive these confirmations. If you have not received confirmation of session times, please contact the office.

REVIEWS AND QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

We provide parents with the opportunity to participate in regular reviews on a quarterly basis, or more frequently if needed. If you would like to request a review, share feedback, ask a question, share concerns or make a complaint please refer to the relevant section on our website or contact the office.



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changing worker

Our team operates across the Southwest, and in some areas, there are allocated workers, meaning some families have the same person for most sessions. However, we actively try to rotate workers frequently. It's important to remember that the child is coming to spend time with their parent, not a specific worker. Changing workers helps maintain this focus and ensures appropriate boundaries, which can sometimes be challenging for families as our team becomes part of the time spent together.

changes to sessions

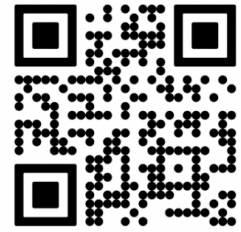
Please avoid waiting until the last minute to check or ask! Any changes or alternative arrangements should be emailed to the office no less than five days before each session to allow for appropriate adjustments. A good reminder is the confirmation email, which will hopefully prompt parents to ask about any changes. For example, if you want to go somewhere specific, include other people, or need support to discuss something specific with your child(ren).

HOLIDAYS

Sessions with our service are booked routinely until a new arrangement is made or a new court order changes the arrangements. If either parent has planned holidays or dates they are unavailable, this should be notified to the office as soon as possible. Generally if planned sessions are cancelled due to holidays, they are not 'made up' unless agreed upon.

WHEN WE ARE NO LONGER NEEDED, OR THINGS CHANGE

It is the responsibility of both parents to inform the office if sessions are no longer needed or if there are changes required. The court, Cafcass, and solicitors typically do not notify us of such changes. Regardless of who pays for the services, both parents must ensure that the office is informed.



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SHARING INFORMATION AND SAFEGUARDING

Most people have a basic understanding of safeguarding and the responsibilities it entails. As parents, you have a duty to ensure the safety and well-being of your children, and as a service we take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. In this context, safeguarding concerns often relate to the emotional impact on children who may feel conflicted or torn between parents, rather than the more typical types of harm you might initially think about. If we believe a child is experiencing harm or is at risk of harm, we will share this information with the local authority. It is their responsibility to determine whether support or intervention is necessary. While we may raise concerns, it is ultimately the local authority's duty to investigate and reach conclusions.

FINAL NOTES

The family support worker will guide you through sessions but if you have any specific questions please contact the office by email. office@southwestfamilyservices.com

This FAQ is regularly updated, and your feedback is often helpful to us and other families. If you believe there is something that should be included in this document or the preparation document sent to parents, please share your suggestions. Your input helps us provide the most relevant and comprehensive information to parents.