



**YMCA**

**Family Work  
Supervised Contact  
Welcome Pack**

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# Welcome

We know you are likely to be going through a difficult time and, perhaps, you wish you did not have to be here. Although you may continue to feel that way we hope you will be able to feel comfortable, safe and relaxed as well.

We want the very best for your child/children and we will treat you all with respect and consideration. This does not mean we will always agree but we will take seriously your views on your own case and on anything that happens during your involvement with YMCA Family Work.

Please try to relax and rest assured that your child will be kept safe and be well looked after.

We have tried to make the centre a pleasant environment physically and hope you notice this in the décor and atmosphere.

If there is anything we can help with do ask; all the staff will do their best to answer any questions.

## **Aim:**

**YMCA Family Work** aims to provide children with a safe, friendly and neutral environment in which to enjoy contact with parents, other family or carers and help them develop and build good relationships for the future.

## **Objectives:**

- Provide a professionally run contact centre offering independent, non-judgmental supervision, advice, guidance, and assessment of contact.
- Provide children with an environment where they can express their feeling and views about the contact they want with their family.
- Support all parties to feel assured that the contact is safe, positive and in the best interests of the child.
- Work with families to help them find their own solutions to overcome the barriers to positive contact.
- Support children and their families to have fun and enjoy time together.
- Help families develop suitable indirect contact arrangements.

# Introduction

## YMCA Family Work fully supports and endorses the European Union Charter on Human Rights with particular reference to:

**Article 9** – children should not be separated from their parents unless it is for their own good, for example if the child has been mistreated or neglected by a parent, and:

**Article 12** states that every child should have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

These rights were incorporated into the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union:

**Article 24** states that children have the right to protection and care as necessary for their well-being, that they may express their views and their views must be taken into consideration in accordance with their age and maturity. In all actions the child's best interests must be the primary consideration and that every child has the right to maintain on a regular basis a personal relationship and direct contact with both his or her parents, unless it is contrary to those interests.

The Children Act 1989 amended 2004 and the Children and Adoption Act 2006 are the two main laws which exist to help the Courts protect these rights in this country.

**North Staffordshire and Stoke YMCA fully support, endorse and provide services that contribute to the every child matters agenda.**

**Every Child Matters: Change for Children** is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19.

The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

Be healthy

Stay safe

Enjoy and achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being

# Contact Details

**Service Manager:** Alison O'Donovan

**Tel:** 01782 222389

**Email:** [donna.savigar@ymcans.org.uk](mailto:donna.savigar@ymcans.org.uk)

Please contact us by email if you prefer but avoid this if your need is urgent as we can't guarantee a quick response.

**Office hours:**

Usually, someone will be in the office 9 – 4.30 Mondays to Friday, and on a Saturday prior to individual contacts

The staff dealing with you may be working flexible hours and not available all the time. If you need to speak to someone dealing with your case you can leave a message with another member of staff or on the machine. If it is a simple enquiry it may be that someone else can help but please remember that all staff are carrying their own caseload and may not be familiar with your circumstances.

*"Children should not be separated from their parents unless it is for their own good"*

**Your Case Work Team**

Case Work Supervisor is:

Co-Worker is:

Name of Others Involved:

# Illness Policy

Illness / Disease	Minimal Exclusion / Absence Period
Vomiting / sickness	48 hours after symptoms cease
Diarrhoea / upset tummy	48 hours after symptoms cease
Gastro-enteritis, food poisoning, salmonella and dysentery	Until free from illness and on advice from GP
Conjunctivitis	24 hours after the start of treatment
Chickenpox	5 days from appearance of rash and all blistery spots dried up
Hepatitis A	7 days from onset of jaundice
Measles	5 days from appearance of rash
Meningococcal infection - Meningitis	Until fully recovered from illness and on advice of GP
Mumps	Until swelling has subsided and not less than 5 days from onset of
Whooping cough	5 days after starting anti-biotics
Poliomyelitis	Until free from infection and on
German measles (Rubella)	5 days from onset of rash
Scarlet fever	Minimum of 3 days after commencing anti-biotics
Impetigo	Until the skin is fully healed
Plantar warts	No exclusion. Should be treated
Scabies	Until treatment is received
Hand, foot and mouth disease	Until clinically well
Ringworm of the scalp	Until treatment has started
Ringworm of the body	Until treatment has started
Worms	Until treated
Head lice	No Exclusion. Child must have been treated
Influenza (Flu - including Swine flu)	Until clinically well
Typhoid fever	Until declared free from infection by GP
Tuberculosis	Until declared free from infection by GP

## Illness Policy continued

### **Children are not allowed to attend the Centre if they are poorly.**

If your child has a communicable infection they should be excluded from the Centre for the period that is relevant to the illness as on the Exclusion advice displayed.

It is important that in cases of an outbreak of communicable infections i.e. (3 or more cases) that the appropriate agency is informed.

Local Health Protection Agency	01782 221 158
Local Authority Safety Team	01782 234 567
Early Years OFSTED	0121 254 904
RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences)	08453 009 923

In cases of diarrhoea and vomiting children should stay away from the Centre for 48 hours after the symptoms cease.

If a child becomes ill at the Centre the parents will be informed and the child should be taken home.

If you are unsure, staff may be able to advise you.

We advise that you not attend the centre:

- During the first 2 days of your child taking anti-biotics.
- If your child is suffering from a high temperature and /or is generally unwell.



# Reports and Confidentiality

YMCA Family Work is one of a range of services offered by North Staffs YMCA, which is a registered Charity. We are independent and not attached to any other organisation, and will provide a report of the Assessment to the court. A copy of the report will be sent to your Solicitor and to the referring agency e.g. CAFCASS.

Although the programme of intervention from YMCA Family Work can vary, the assessment is usually there to try and reach conclusions and make recommendations about what is in the best interest of your child/ren.

These conclusions and recommendations are presented in a report which is made for – and is the property of – the court. It is unlikely you will be too surprised by them as they will have already been discussed with you; you may even have reached agreement over future arrangements for contact and this will be included in the report.

YMCA Family Work staff are non-judgmental, and do not expect you to be a perfect parent or to be calm and collected at all times. However, all members of the family are part of the assessment and it is possible that what you say and do will be repeated in the report; this applies only to those things that are relevant to the assessment.

We are a confidential service and your details will not be revealed to anyone other than the Court, the referring agency and your solicitors. Our files are kept securely and will only be seen by staff dealing with your assessment. Confidentiality is assured, except where we consider that someone is at risk, at which point we will discuss our action with you.

YMCA Family Work will not repeat any information in reports that could be harmful to you or your children but please do ask if you are at all unsure about what kind of information will be used.

After YMCA Family Work report is submitted you will probably be returning to court, though there are exceptions to this.

If you disagree with any matters of fact (that is, things which actually happened or didn't happen, dates, words, etc.) not matters of opinion, then please contact the author of the report. If the points you make are accepted a correction will be made and submitted to the court.

Please be ready to read about things your ex-partner has said about the situation. You may not agree with their viewpoint but please do not suggest that YMCA Family Work staff hold that view.

**If you have any queries or wish to make any comments before or after the report is produced, please speak to a member of staff.**



# Your Experience at YMCA Family Work

There are so many different types of contact that take place here that it is impossible to describe your situation in detail. Please take the chance to discuss any queries or concerns with the people directly involved with your family.

Here are a few indications of some of the ways in which contact may be approached.

## **Contact Parent** (non-resident parent/applicant)

You will probably be asked to arrive 15 minutes before the contact session is due to start. This is because:

- Staff may need to discuss things with you such as how the last session went, what the plans are for this session and any concerns or ideas that have arisen since the last session. You can ask questions and express your views at this time.

It may be important that you do not meet with your child's other parent so arriving early (and leaving late) will help this to be avoided.

You will already be in the contact room when your child arrives. The contact session is for you and your child to enjoy being together and staff will try not to interfere. If you need help with practicalities – or if your child needs help or is shy – staff may intervene but they will try to do this less and less as your time with Families & Communities Staying Connected progresses. This means you are responsible for your child. Staff will, of course, intervene if your child becomes very distressed or is at risk of harm in any way.

Your child will usually be able to return to their other parent if they want to. Your child is much more likely to spend time with you if s/he knows she can go back to the resident parent whenever they choose.

YMCA Family Work provides a range of toys and activities for different age groups. Feel free to become familiar with what is on offer, ask for anything you can't find and rummage through the boxes! We ask that you tidy up after the session has finished – or use the last few minutes to encourage your child to help you tidy up.

You will be asked to remain behind after the session for about 15 minutes. This is because:

- Staff may want to discuss what has happened in the session or general progress.

Your child's other parent or the person who has brought the child needs time to get away without there being a possibility of bumping into you.

You might need time to settle or to talk through problems if there are any.

## **Resident Parent** (respondent, main carer)

As you arrive for contact session, your child's other parent should be in the building and waiting in the contact room. They will have been briefed by the staff and ready for contact to begin. Staff will not allow contact to begin if there are any doubts about the parent's ability to keep your child safe; you will be told this on arrival, away from your child. If you are at all unsure about your safety you are welcome to telephone the centre before you arrive in order to check the contact parent is in the building; other arrangements are also possible to help you feel relaxed and safe – do ask the staff dealing with your case.

If your child is shy or clinging to you the staff will allow them time to settle and will encourage them. It is best for your child if you also encourage them to go into contact so as to give them the message that it is safe and that you approve. This is important even if you have doubts about longer term contact as your child needs to feel safe and needs to know you accept this; even very small children can pick up on the anxieties of a parent.

If your child very strongly resists leaving you (e.g. kicking, screaming, crying) it is likely contact will be abandoned and attempted another time, although staff may take the opportunity to get to know your child and help them settle in. Again, your assistance with this is very much hoped for and appreciated.

Whilst your child is in contact you are welcome to use the waiting room or to leave the building (if you know your child is settled) and return later. If you leave, please make sure that we have your mobile number, especially if you have changed it recently. Whilst on the premises you should be offered a drink – please ask if we are busy.

Feel free to express any anxieties if you have to staff and to ask for an update on how your child is doing in contact. There will always be another member of staff in the contact session.

If your child wants to see you or becomes significantly distressed, staff will return him/her to you. If your child then settles an attempt will usually be made to return them, though this depends on several factors. It is helpful if you encourage your child to enjoy contact, taking an interest in them and what they have been doing when they come out to you.

When your child is returned to you at the end of the contact session they will gain a lot from having you ask them if they have had a nice time or commenting on anything they bring out. You do not have to mention the other parent if you prefer not to.

You will probably leave the centre with your child about 15 minutes before the contact parent. If you have any concerns about getting away from the building.

## **Child/Young Person**

You will usually arrive with one parent and spend some time with another parent. You can return to your resident parent at any time during the contact session if you want to. You can check they are still there, get something from them or see them if you feel upset.

All the staff of the centre want you to have a good time. One or two people will be in the contact session with you and your other parent and they will watch how you are having a nice time and what you are doing.

You can play with any of the toys or activities that we provide – if there is something you would like in the rooms, tell a member of staff and they will think about getting it if it is a good idea and useful for other children, too. You can also bring your own things from home if you want.

When your contact session is finished you will go back to your other parent and then go home.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What do I tell my child about seeing his/her non-resident parent who he/she doesn't even know?**

As with all these questions, that will depend on circumstances such as the age of your child and their current understanding. It will probably be much more helpful to you to discuss all of this with the staff – but here are a few pointers:

Children will usually ask for information they need and it is not necessary for you to enter into long-winded explanations. Sometimes it helps a child understand if you say things like, "We used to be together like me and Charlie are together now". You then need to explain why the child's non-resident parent is important. You may wish to say that everyone has only one father/mother (use the term father/mother here, as some people have more than one daddy/mummy); you can describe this as being very special because all sorts of people love you (grandparents, siblings, friends, etc.) but you only have one father and one mother. After this explanation about who the non-resident parent is you can refer to him/her as 'daddy/mummy' or – if your child uses that title for someone else – 'daddy Pete/mummy Sue'. If either of you aren't ready for this stick with 'father/mother'.

Now start to prepare your child for meeting his/her non-resident parent. Say that their father/mother has asked to see them because he/she misses them, loves them and wants to get to know them. If the child is aware of conflict between you, be clear that just because *you* don't get on it doesn't mean your child and his/her non-resident parent shouldn't.

Most people just refer to it as a special place for children to see their daddies or mummies that they don't live with. You can say that there will be other people there – refer directly to the staff if the child has met them – and that these people will look after you and help decide about when and how you should see your non-resident parent in the future. For older children you may want to describe the court and how a Judge ('a very clever and sensible person') will decide all of this when the **YMCA Family Work** people tell him/her what you have been doing with your non-resident parent.

## **What do I say to my child when he asks why he has to see me at this centre or why he can't see me more often?**

Tell your child this is what all the grown-ups have decided is best at the moment. Describe the assessment process according to age and understanding (question 1 above). Give your child reassurance by saying things such as, "...but even when I'm not with you I love you and think about you". With regard to frequency of contact it is best to say confidently that this is the way it is at the moment. Don't give your child any promises about things changing but you can say, "I'd love to see you more" adding, "...but at the moment this is the way it is". Whatever you do, don't blame the other parent!



### **How can I discipline my child when I only see him once a week for an hour?**

It's very hard because you don't want to seem like a 'baddy' in the short time you have together. Try and remember that as with all parenting your job is to help your child feel safe and looked-after. They will not feel like that if they are allowed to do anything they want; children don't want to be in control – it makes them feel insecure.

However, you don't want to spoil your time together by falling out if you can avoid it, so ask the staff for advice about techniques you can use. (Speak to staff about parenting materials such as Triple P tip sheets). It often works well to distract a child from bad behaviour. For some children it helps to have things explained to them – remember the room isn't yours "...so we must look after it and not break anything". The most successful technique is praise – praise your child for good behaviour including obedience.

### **How do I explain to my child that he has to see his non-resident parent who was cruel to me?**

If your child has information or was a witness to violent or abusive behaviour you can say that all people have good and bad things about them – describe the assessment process (see 1 above) emphasising the purpose of it being to decide if the child's non-resident parent is OK to see the child. YMCA Family Work are there to make sure that mum/dad isn't horrid in the contact session. Unless your ex-partner directly harmed your child you can again say that 'he/ she loves you and wants to see you and won't be horrid to you'. If your child senses you approve s/he will feel better.

### **How can I help my child feel safe seeing this parent she hardly knows?**

Emphasise how the non-resident parent loves and cares for the child and wants to know them. Mention the names of the staff and make sure your child knows where you will be. Talk about what you will do after the session, repeatedly going over what will happen, "You play in there and have a nice time... I wait here – you can come and see me if you want ... then at the end you can come and tell me all the things you've done and then we'll go round and see nana". Try to sound casual so the child does not start to think you are afraid; they will pick up on your mood and lack of confidence if you say things like, "Don't worry" "Be careful" "Come straight back if you need me" – much better to be firm, reassuring but not panicky.

***If you have any other question that you are worried your child(ren) may ask please don't hesitate to speak to a member of staff.***

### **Domestic Violence or Abuse**

If you are suffering – or have suffered – from domestic violence (including bullying, manipulation or exploitation) or abuse, YMCA Family Work has information about services to help you. This applies even if your suffering is in the past. You will not be asked to talk to staff if you prefer not to.

# Policies and Procedures

## Child Protection

Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire YMCA Foyer believe that it is always unacceptable for a child, young person or vulnerable adult to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults by a commitment to practise which protects them.

We will endeavour to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, involving parents, children and young people appropriately
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

The Child Protection Policy, together with all the YMCA Policies is available for families to see at the Contact Centre.



YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.