

7-minute briefing

Home Visits

1. What is this briefing about?

This briefing gives guidance to practitioners undertaking home visits where there are safeguarding concerns. It is not intended to replace any agency's existing procedures.

2. Why do a home visit?

A common finding of case reviews is that practitioners don't understand the child's world and don't demonstrate professional curiosity. A home visit is a great opportunity to do this. If you have concerns about a child, there may be times where it is necessary to visit the home even if this is not part of your everyday practice (for example school, nursery). If home visits are part of your role (such as health visitor, police, family support worker) it is important to make the most of the chance to see the child in their own environment.

3. What do I need to do before visiting the home?

Be clear and open with the family about your reason for visiting. Decide whether this will be a planned or an unannounced visit. Consider the best day and time to go, for example if you want the child to be present, or if you want to observe something specific like a mealtime. If personal safety is a concern, go with a colleague or visit with another agency. In these circumstances, assess the safety for the child.

4. What should I look for in the home?

Record who lives in the home and their relationship to the child. Note if anyone else is present. See where the child sleeps, eats, washes, and plays if possible – this can tell us a lot about their lived experience. In some cases, the living areas of the home were clean and tidy, but the child's bedroom was in very poor condition. Asking open, non-judgmental questions is best. Use all your senses, such as what you can smell, to give you clues about the home environment. Observe the child's interactions with their family. If the home is untidy or unclean, consider whether this is likely to cause harm to the child. Also consider efforts made by the family to make the best of their circumstances, particularly if they are living in temporary accommodation.

5. What if I can't gain access?

If you have safeguarding concerns and are unable to access the home, discuss with your supervisor and talk to other professionals involved. Record agreed actions of discussions and review the outcome. Use the escalation process if you remain worried.

6. Further resources:

- Birmingham Home Conditions Checklist in the [Neglect Toolkit](#) can help assess the home environment.
- Birmingham Women's & Children's NHS Trust has [information online about home safety](#).
- Information about housing support and bed poverty is included in our [Resources to Prevent Neglect](#).