



Statement of Principles & Practice for In Person Working in Child & Family Social Work

This statement has been produced to make explicit the necessity of in person presence in the communities which we work within our practice as social workers and social work leaders, including IRO's, Child Protection Chairs, Managers and Senior Managers. After the extraordinary measures necessary during the Covid19 pandemic, in some areas an expectation of working at a distance has become established, including unrealistic expectations experienced in the recruitment of temporary workers. While flexibility in working arrangements is a positive aspect of inclusive employers afforded to all staff members, the emphasis on direct relational practice needs to be reaffirmed. This has led to London's Local Authorities drafting this document in line with best practice and in order to promote equity across a workforce.

Relationship Based Practice

Social Work practice requires in person time with children, their families, extended network, and the community within which they live and the professionals from other agencies working with the family. Therefore, it is necessary for social workers to be present in the authority for which they work for most of their working week.

Risk & Assessment

The evaluation of risk and assessment of needs of children and families is a complex activity requiring debate and reflection between practitioners and managers. This cannot be achieved at the optimum level without in person dialogue. Addressing the impact of social difference, ensuring anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice, personal and professional support, supervision, and the creation of trusting relationships within and between teams of practitioners requires in person time together. This is particularly significant for students and ASYE' s who learn many skills through direct observation of colleagues.

Supervision & Wellbeing

Supervising practice and professional development requires individuals to have safe spaces for discussions developing secure relationships which requires in person meetings. Teamwork requires positive relationships to develop, which is achieved primarily through in person time together, joint working within and across teams. The practice culture of a social care organisation requires relationships to grow through in person communication. In person time also supports the mental health and emotional wellbeing of practitioners. Spontaneous conversations and group responses to emerging challenges and crises are more effective through in person presence.



Local Knowledge & Resources

In person time in locality bases also enables learning about and engagement with local resources to support families, liaison with other teams to maximise the options available to build on the strengths of families.

Guiding Principle

As a guiding principle social workers should be available within their borough for the majority of their working week; Local Authorities may choose to stipulate a given period which may differ according to the roles and functions of practitioners, which may include a variety of office bases according to the resources available.

Definitions

- **Distant working** is defined here as working from a geographical locality so far away from the employing authority that in person communication is not possible and therefore the practitioner could not be reasonably expected to travel to the locality to respond to an urgent need.
- **Flexible working** refers to the working hours of a social worker having flexibility regarding start and finish times & condensed hours. Arrangement for flexible working are part of the terms and conditions set by each Local authority generally agreed for specific reasons, reviewed within given timeframes with the guiding principle that the business needs of services must be met.
- **Hybrid working** refers to the use of video calls to enable people to attend meetings / have conversations from either a workplace or their own home. Each Local Authority will define their expectations of staff to be available in person during emergency situations.

Local Authorities will each determine the policy framework for distant, flexible and hybrid working agreements.