

Shared care arrangements during lockdown

An important question for parents during the Covid-19 lockdowns is how to manage shared care arrangements for children between different homes. Shared care arrangements include agreements between parents or caregivers, or Court Orders specifying day to day care and contact times.

During a lockdown, children may move between two homes for shared care arrangements if the following requirements are met:

- The two homes that children move between are a shared bubble (with only two homes making up a shared bubble); and
- The two homes must be in the same or neighbouring territorial authorities (your local City Council or District Council areas).

Note that while we are in Level 4, only two homes can be part of a shared bubble. If, in normal circumstances, you would have three (or more) homes linked by children moving between them then you will need to make changes to those arrangements during Level 4. This is likely to be the case where you or any other parent or caregiver has children from other relationships also moving between homes for contact.

While the lockdowns should never be used to deliberately restrict contact with the children, any decisions that parents or caregivers make should involve common-sense and consideration of the purpose of our public health response, which is to *“prevent and limit the risk of the outbreak or spread of Covid-19”*.

If your children are unable to see other family or whanau in person, then contact should be made possible by other means, such as phone, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype and other social media channels. Parents and caregivers should be generous with these forms of contact during the lockdown periods.

The Family Courts are operating at reduced capacity during the lockdown and, while urgent applications can still be made if there are care and protection concerns for the children, other applications are unlikely to be dealt with at this time. If you cannot agree on care arrangements and would like assistance from a trained mediator, the Family Dispute Resolution services are still available during lockdown with mediations taking place by video link or phone.

If you need further clarification on care arrangements in your situation, then you can contact a lawyer or your nearest Family Court.



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