

PROTECTIVE CONTACT

Protective Contact defines a crucial minimum amount of face-to-face physical interaction necessary, in order to be able to effectively safeguard against potential abuse and/or neglect, being inflicted by the keepers of those held confined.

This is not to be confused with **Protective Custody**, since in that instance, the isolation of someone confined, protects that person from harm by others who are similarly confined. **Protective Contact** can result in **Child Protective Custody**.

Where one person has been awarded, or has arbitrarily seized total power and control over every aspect of the life of another person, such power differential and total dominance by one over the other, renders one of them powerless and at risk of abuse. In many such settings this leads to a form of socially radicalized bonding. In order to provide effective support and protection for the person at risk, a set of checks and balances needs to be both available and capable of being imposed.

Evidence of violence, abuse, neglect and/or radicalization, manifests in a number of ways, and in most instances early detection is possible by means of regular face-to-face physical contact and independent interaction with outside support. Cuts, scratches and bruises, weight loss, burn marks, dishevelled appearance and subtle changes in demeanour, are all potential red flags for abuse, but can be easily concealed through the use of masking garments and plausible pretexts. Such behavioural changes and injuries rarely come to notice during brief and infrequent physical contact visits, especially when the keeper is present, or when contact is restricted to phone, email, Facebook, Skype, letters or cards. Conversely, **Protective Contact** visits provide the minimum level of physical contact necessary, in order to effectively protect a confined and isolated person from potential harm.

Protective Contact is especially important in the event of relationship breakdown when minor children are involved. Unfortunately, current laws and practices place far too many children in the custody of a single keeper. In most cases, this leads to the total exclusion of extended biological family members, the very people who are most likely to be highly motivated to provide protection for the family's children.

Protective Contact within the context of relationship breakdown is defined as a child spending 20% or more overnight sleepovers per year with each willing, able and fit biological parent, (that is 73 or more nights per year). For children, the minimum amount of 20% sleepover contact is crucial, if such contact is to provide a minimum standard of protection from potential harm inflicted by a single keeper.

Protective Contact of 20% overnight sleepovers can consist of 6 nights per month, or 4 nights per month plus half the school holidays. The 73 nights per year can all be taken on school free days, and therefore can apply to all parents living up to 200/300 Kilometres apart. However any more than 20% of nights require both parents to reside within school range. Statistical information on these numbers has been collected by both Australian and British Government agencies for some years.