

## **Is Lockdown Contact Being Abused?**

Family lawyers across the country have been swamped by arguments over contact with children during the coronavirus lockdown. It appears some are using the situation in an exploitative way and unnecessarily ignoring child contact court orders.

Sir Andrew McFarlane, Head of the Family Courts warns against disobedience of child court orders and believes under 18-year-old children should still be able to visit a parent that they do not live with. It is expected that parents will communicate with the best interests of the child in mind and not put the child at risk, but still allow social contact as before. Alas this is not always possible between parents at war or if one household is isolating due to the Covid-19 virus.

But for some parents, trust and communication have broken down and conversations over child visits can seem impossible. The government position is that children can move between households to be with the other parent. We think this is really important for mental wellbeing of parent and child, we should not allow the Covid-19 pandemic to disrupt social structure more than is necessary. It might be that the guidance should be amended to a more positive instruction allowing visitation, but Sir Andrew believes that the guidance is adequate and that management of potential exposure to the coronavirus is a matter for parental judgement. It is not always an easy decision to make, a lot of people have yet to rationalise the risk of Covid-19.

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