



GETTING TOGETHER
Page 6



**WELSH NETWORK OF
CHILD CONTACT
CENTRES**
Page 7



**FAMILY COURTS AND
HOW THE CHANGES
MAY AFFECT CHILD
CONTACT CENTRES**
Page 8



**FAMILY JUSTICE
COUNCIL AND CHILD
CONTACT CENTRES**
Page 10

Welcome to NACCC's new Chief Executive Yvonne Kee



How did I get here? As NACCC's new Chief Executive I can see how relevant both my volunteering and paid work have been in bringing me to this point. But when I was involved in the National Childbirth Trust in the 70s and sat on a playgroup committee, for example, I never realised the path they would set me on. Not least they began a career almost wholly in the voluntary sector and charity management.

I started in local government, but after having my children I became Project Coordinator for North Derbyshire Women's Aid, to establish and work at a women's refuge, supporting women and children affected by domestic violence. My work then moved to Sheffield, to set up the country's first Children's Information Service, and also its national association. After 9 years I moved closer to home, to establish and manage Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Volunteer Centre, and was again involved with its national association as a trustee. In 2001 I took on a regional role with the National Childminding Association, as Midlands Development Manager, but with the national lead for the volunteer structure within the organisation.

So these are the themes – families, charity management, the value of volunteering – and within them the work with different agencies, quality standards, mixed funding sources and using a whole mix of skills through necessity! Perhaps my new role will be the biggest challenge so far, but I am excited and thrilled to be joining NACCC, and looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible as well as the different agencies who work with us.

I recognise that it is a time of great change for NACCC and member Centres. My priorities are to find out your key issues, raise our profile and attract funding for the development of Centres and the future security of NACCC.

Funding

All who are involved with the Voluntary sector will be aware of the difficulties in attracting funding. This is especially so when it comes to the very difficult area of 'Core Funding.'

At the 2004 NACCC Annual General Meeting and Conference, the then Minister for Children, Mrs Margaret Hodge commented that when she was appointed she had been 'utterly shocked to discover that there wasn't a budget line to ensure we (Government) can support Contact Centres. Mrs Hodge went on to say, 'as we look forward to our next review period 2005-08 the aim is to try and ensure that we get a proper continuous funding line so that you don't have to move from pillar to post.'

This comment plus the announcement of a 'pot of cash' for Sustainability Funding, covering the period 2004-06 was an encouraging start, coming as it did after the May 2004 announcement by the DfES of 'start-up' funding for 14 new Supervised Contact Centres. Despite ongoing discussions, initially by our previous Chief Executive and then by me in my role as Interim Chief Executive and Treasurer, progress has failed to be achieved, with the DfES recently intimating that there would be no further Sustainability Funding in the present spending review period, which ends in March 2007.

The DfES had previously made funding available to NACCC to enable the organisation to

employ Support Officers to assist Child Contact Centres to prepare for and achieve Accreditation status. This funding has now come to an end with the result that the Support Officers, who undertook sterling work, have left the organisation. An application for further funding to enable NACCC to increase the number of Support Managers to five was less successful than envisaged with only 24% of the amount applied for being awarded. The consequence is that it has regrettably been necessary to make redundancies and to temporarily leave unfilled posts which have become vacant following resignations until additional funding is obtained.

A meeting was recently held with a Government Minister, attended by NACCC's Chair, new Chief Executive and the Treasurer to discuss the plight of NACCC and its Member Centres. We were politely heard, however, we were also firmly advised that there was no further funding available at this time. The situation is of real concern to all involved with Child Contact Centres and while the Chief Executive and Trustees will be exploring all avenues in their efforts to attract additional funding Member Centres are encouraged to lobby their local Member of Parliament to raise awareness of the challenges being faced in funding the Child Contact Centre movement.

Gordon Anderson,
Hon. Treasurer

NACCC staffing

To help streamline the organisation and to bring it in line with its reduced funding there have been a number of changes at NACCC.

Chief Executive:

Yvonne Kee. ykee@naccc.org.uk
Monday to Thursday but flexible.

Field Staff:

Support Managers, Duncan Gore and Judy Birchall.
d.gore@naccc.org.uk and
j.birchall@naccc.org.uk

Barbara Majumdar, Support Manager left NACCC to take up another job.
The CCCSOs funding finished on 31 March 2006.

Office staff:

Katie Lockett, Admin Assistant (full time) k.lockett@naccc.org.uk

Donna Moreland, (Monday to Thursday 10am to 2pm) and Judith Mewse (nee Miller), (Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 9.30am to 3.00pm). Administrators (job share 30 hours per week): Information line, membership & CRB. d.moreland@naccc.org.uk and j.mewse@naccc.org.uk

Ruth Miles, Monday, Tuesday & Friday 9am to 5.00pm. Project Administrator: Information line, publications, health & safety & database. r.miles@naccc.org.uk

Carolyn Cottam has been made redundant from the NACCC office after twelve years. All her colleagues at NACCC will miss Carolyn and wish her a very happy early retirement.

Mark Walton has been made redundant, but will still be working for NACCC on a consultancy basis.

Despite the reduced work force, NACCC will endeavour to maintain high standards within the obvious restrictions imposed by reduced funding.

Funding

LOBBY, LOBBY, LOBBY

NACCC's Chair, Treasurer and Chief Executive recently had a meeting at DfES, to talk about our achievements and funding plight. One key message to come out of it? Lobby! This is a key year for the government, as it starts work on its next spending review, so it is particularly crucial to get our message across as often as we can. Some Child Contact Centres have already successfully attracted the interest of MPs and local councillors.

A good starting point is to recognise that politicians are there to represent your interests. They can ask relevant questions in Parliament, influence your local authority and get media attention just by visiting you. Most importantly, they will become aware of your experiences, issues and values.

Here's how to lobby:

- Be clear on what your message will be
- Look at useful websites about how to put that message across, such as www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork
- Find the name of your local MP by ringing 020 7219 4272 or visiting www.locata.co.uk
- Write to your MP about the Centre and your concerns or events. Give any supporting information, such as facts and examples. Keep the letter succinct, asking for a response.
- Consider arranging an appointment in advance, or at the MP's surgery.
- Better still, get them to visit you at your Centre. Volunteers Week might be a good time to do this (1 – 7 June), or Make a Difference Day in October, when MPs are encouraged to do volunteering themselves
- Do some research about the MP: their politics; any significant committees or interests; topical national/local issues; any recent press coverage

- Plan your meeting and put together a short briefing. You can use this not only as your own prompt but also to give to the MP before the meeting
- If the MP visits your Centre, invite the media and take photographs
- Afterwards, write to say thank you, note any action the MP may have agreed and offer further information
- Write a Press Release if relevant
- Continue to keep your MP informed

Let NACCC know how you get on, or share with us any successes you have already had.

Yvonne Kee,
Chief Executive.
ykee@nacc.org.uk

The Chair of NACCC, Fiona McGill, had the opportunity to tell her local MP Sally Keeble about Child Contact Centres and NACCCs difficult financial plight. Mrs Keeble is undertaking research for work she is doing for the Government committee working on the Children and Adoption bill.

Following her visit, Mrs Keeble said she would use her position to push the Government for extra funding for contact.



A Family Justice Television series is currently being researched and would like to include the role of Child Contact Centres. Interested Centres in London, Brighton and Essex should contact **Lara Leslie** on **020 7503 1640** or email lara@khpl.co.uk.

Going for Gold

Although ALL Child Contact Centre volunteers are worth their weight in gold...

What wonderful commitment has been shown once again by NACCC Child Contact Centre volunteers. It is so good to be able to recognise and in some way see the measure of service given to local communities through the work done at Child Contact Centres. Congratulations from all the Trustees and staff at NACCC and thank you all once again for providing this invaluable role enabling families to maintain contact.

The following list indicates the number of each level of certificate awarded since the last publication of 'Contact Matters'. The number in brackets indicates the total number of year's service given to that Centre.

Basildon Child Contact Centre:
12 Volunteers 1 Silver, 11 Bronze (38 years)

Brighton and Hove Child Contact Centre:

6 Volunteers 2 Gold, 1 Silver, 3 Bronze (37 years)

Bury St Edmunds Contact Centre:
1 Volunteer Silver (7 years)

Camberley & District Contact Centre:
17 Volunteers 5 Gold, 4 Silver, 8 Bronze (98 years)

Chippenham Child Contact Centre:
6 Volunteers all Silver (43 years)

Euxton Contact Centre:
2 Volunteers both Silver (14 years)

Freshwaters Contact Centre – Harlow:

25 Volunteers 10 Gold, 12 Silver, 3 Bronze (169 years)

Grimsbey Child Contact Centre:
16 Volunteers all silver (106 years)

Child Contact Centre Accreditation

Congratulations... to all the Child Contact Centres listed below who by the January 2006 NACCC Board Meeting all had achieved Accreditation.

NACCC is pleased to congratulate the following Child Contact Centres for achieving Accreditation:

- Ashton-under-Lyne Contact Centre
- Nottingham Child Contact Centre
- The Basildon Child Contact Centre
- Nuneaton Child Contact Centre
- Belper Child Contact Centre
- Oldham Child Contact Centre
- Blackheath Contact Centre
- Peterborough Child Contact Centre
- Bolton Child Contact Centre
- Preston Child Contact Centre
- Bootle/Sefton Child and Family Connect
- Reigate & Redhill Contact Centre
- BSR Child Contact Centre Mill Hill, Blackburn
- Rochdale Child Contact Centre
- Bury St Edmunds Child Contact Centre
- Solihull Child Contact Centre
- Bury Child Contact Centre
- Smethwick Contact Centre
- Camberley & District Family Contact Centre
- South Bristol Child Contact Centre
- Cannock Child Contact Centre
- South Gloucestershire Child Contact Centre
- Chard Child Contact Centre
- Southport Contact Centre
- Cheshunt Family Contact Centre
- Staines Contact Centre
- Children Come First (Daventry)
- Stevenage Child Contact Centre
- Children First Child Contact Centre, Hackney
- Stockport Child Contact Centre
- Chippenham Child Contact Centre
- St John Ambulance Child Contact Centre - Grantham
- Cloona Contact Centre
- St John Ambulance Child Contact Centre - Spalding
- Contact Care UK Ltd, Oldswinford
- St Helens Child Contact Centre
- Crawley Child Contact Centre
- St Mary's Child Contact Centre
- The Embrace Child Contact Centre, Ellesmere Port
- St Matthew's Child Contact Centre, Colchester
- Euxton Contact Centre
- St Neot's Child Contact Centre
- Exeter Southernhay Child Contact Centre
- Tamworth Child Contact Centre
- Freshwaters Contact Centre, Harlow
- Tring Child and Family Contact Centre
- Frome Child Contact Centre
- Tunbridge Wells Contact Centre
- Great Yarmouth Family Contact Centre
- Walsall Child Contact Centre

**Jimmy's Contact Centre –
Buckhurst Hill:**

4 Volunteers 3 Gold, 1 Silver
(35 years)

Kendal Child Contact Centre:

10 Volunteers all Silver (60 years)

**Knock Child Contact Centre
(Northern Ireland):**

28 Volunteers 23 Silver, 5 Bronze
(172 years)

**Nuneaton Children's Contact
Centre:**

8 Volunteers 2 Gold, 3 Silver,
3 Bronze (44 years)

Salford Child Contact Centre:

40 Volunteers 10 Gold, 13 Silver,
17 Bronze (156 years)

Staines Child Contact Centre:

6 Volunteers 5 Silver, 1 Bronze,
(31 years)

St Neot's Child Contact Centre:

6 Volunteers 2 Gold, 4 Silver
(45 years)

**St Anne's Child Contact Centre –
Birmingham:**

2 Volunteers 1 Gold, 1 Silver
(15 years)

**St John Ambulance Child Contact
Centre – Spalding:**

4 Volunteer all Bronze (12 years)

Vale Royal Child Contact Centre:

21 Volunteers 17 Gold, 3 Silver,
1 Bronze (206 years)

Woking Contact Centre:

9 Volunteers 6 Silver, 3 Bronze
(52 years)

Shirley Family Contact Centre:

9 Volunteers, 7 Gold, 2 Silver
(80 years)

**Hemel Hempstead Child Contact
Centre:**

20 Volunteers, 13 Gold, 3 Silver,
4 Bronze (157 years)

**The Shared Parenting Contact
Centre:**

20 Volunteers, 3 Gold, 9 Silver,
8 Bronze (99 years)

**Central Belfast Child Contact
Centre:**

14 Volunteers, all Silver (70 years)

**South Bristol Child Contact
Centre:**

7 Volunteers, 2 Silver, 5 Bronze
(35 years)

Yeovill Child Contact Centre:

5 Volunteers, 4 Silver, 1 Bronze
(33 years)

Wincanton Child Contact Centre:

13 Volunteers 10 Silver, 3 Bronze
(59 years)

A total of 1,904 years service given
to local Child Contact Centres.

Please do let us know in writing if
you have volunteers who you
would like to thank and
congratulate by issuing them with
one of NACCC's volunteer
certificates.

**Judith Miller & Donna Moreland,
Membership Administration.**

- Greater Manchester Supervised Child Contact Centre
- Watford Child Contact Centre
- Glastonbury Child Contact Centre
- Weston-Super-Mare Contact Centre
- Glendale / Avenue Child Contact Centre
- Wincanton and District Child Contact Centre
- Gloucester Child Contact Centre
- Wirral Contact Centre
- Havelock Family Centre
- Wisbech Child Contact Centre
- Hemel Hempstead Child Contact Centre
- Witham Child Contact Centre
- Jimmy's Contact Centre, Buckhurst Hill
- Workington Child Contact Centre
- Lancaster Child Contact Centres
- Yeovil Contact Centre
- Letchworth Child Contact Centre
- Lewes Child Contact Centre
- Lowestoft Weekend Contact Centre
- Medway Child Contact Centre
- Mid Ulster Child Contact Centre
- Norfolk and Norwich Families House

Accreditation – Time is running out!

April 2006 is the last time that you will be able to renew your NACCC full membership unless you are accredited. Some of you only have until April 2007 to achieve your accreditation – but time is running out fast.

Not only is it important to standardise any work carried out with children, but also there are implications for those Centres not becoming accredited. CAF/CASS will not continue to fund you and may not refer clients on. Solicitors may also not use non-accredited Centres for their clients. You need to be accredited to be a full member of NACCC, receiving all the related benefits of full membership.

We know that the idea of putting together the evidence portfolio may be daunting, but in most Centres much of the paperwork is already in place; it just needs gathering together. Here are a few tips to get you going:

1. Purchase a ring binder and clear plastic wallets
2. Use the checklist and model evidence portfolio (copy available from NACCC head office) to guide you
3. Ask other volunteers/staff/committee members to help
4. Get together all the paperwork you have to hand and check if any needs to go into portfolio
5. Complete one section a week – that way the task will not seem so onerous
6. If you have an Accredited Child Contact Centre near you, contact them and ask to see their portfolio. How did they complete it? They will be only too pleased to share this with you.
7. NACCC can send you model policies and forms electronically – so contact us if you need these.
8. If you are struggling with anything then please contact us – we are here to help you.

Getting together!

Over the last year NACCC has held regional training days all over the country.

We started off piloting the scheme in the South West of England last April and progressed round the country throughout the year, with the last one being held in Oxfordshire in March 2006.

Part of each training day included splitting everyone up into groups, which gave people a chance to exchange views and discuss how things happened in their Centre. This was a very important time as it allowed Centres to interact with each other. Lunch breaks also allowed valuable discussions with colleagues, as we know that some Centres work very much in isolation and they value this time. Evaluations from all NACCC events include numerous comments asking for networking time with their contemporaries from other Centres.



The same topics were covered in all the training days:

- **Domestic Violence**
What is domestic violence? Trust, myths & stats. The 'Duluth Wheel' and how that impacts on Child Contact Centres. How children are affected
- **Child Protection**
What is child abuse? How can you tell if a child is being abused? What do you do if a child tells you of abuse?
- **Health and Safety**
What is health & safety? Role of the volunteer.

Our three Support Managers, Judy Birchall, Duncan Gore and Barbara Majumdar delivered the courses. The Support Officers and some of the NACCC Trustees also helped out.

The training days have proved to be very successful throughout the country.

The comments were constructive and overall very positive. NACCC would like to extend a very big thank you to those people who attended the events and to the venues for their hospitality. It was a great team effort and demonstrated what has in the past and continues to make Child Contact Centres such valuable places for families and especially children.

And looking ahead...

The numbers of centres and people attending the regional training days have made them very successful events.

NACCC wants to continue providing training for its member centres that is accessible, relevant and well supported. The evaluation forms showed that numerous Centres requested regular and similar events. We also need to make the best possible use of the limited resources available to NACCC. All of this means that we are planning to hold more regional training days in the future to make the best use of reduced training time and to avoid unnecessary duplication and travelling time for the field staff.

Any suggestions as to what Centres would like to have covered would be welcome. Similarly any offers of accommodation would be well received. We look forward to hearing from you.

**Duncan Gore and
Judy Birchall,
Support Managers.**

Welsh Network of Child Contact Centres



For a number of years NACCC has supported Child Contact Centres in Wales and tried to access funding for these centres from the Welsh Assembly. However as NACCC is classed as an English organisation they were not able to access any money from the Welsh Assembly for our centres in Wales. We had been told that Northern Ireland had faced a similar problem and they had decided to set up their own Northern Ireland Network while still being affiliated to NACCC. It was felt by many that this should be the way forward for Wales. In order to take this idea forward it was necessary to arrange a meeting, which all Co-ordinators from Welsh Child Contact Centres were invited to. The meeting was arranged for Thursday February 23rd 2006 in the Holiday Inn in Cardiff.

Interim Chief Executive Gordon Anderson. President Mary Lower, Vice Chair Pauline Bond and two staff members Judy Birchall and Duncan Gore attended the meeting to support the centres in the decision making for the way forward for Wales.

Muriel Orr and Vera McElhorne came over from Northern Ireland to tell us why Northern Ireland had set up their own network and how they achieved this. In Northern Ireland the Health and Social Services Trust works together and has one pot of money. There was a Children's Fund and NCH were asked to look at Contact Centre provision for children. This study showed the Government that there were already centres in Northern Ireland offering provision for these children, which they were not aware of. At this time there were four centres. They were asked to make a presentation to

the local Government about the work they do. The Child Contact Centres got together and designed a presentation and this saw the start of the Northern Ireland Network. They began as an informal network and drew up a constitution and applied for charity status. They are now considering becoming a company limited by guarantee. They discussed who should have voting rights and it was agreed that Child Contact Centres should have the majority vote with a few solicitors and judges etc given votes. They state the main advantages of the Network are:

- Regional identity.
- They can lobby local Government.
- They support new Child Contact Centres.
- They share practice issues.

After the ladies from Northern Ireland gave their talk the people present were split into two groups to discuss this further. It was agreed by those present from Welsh centres at the meeting that this was the way forward for us. We need to establish our own identity in Wales so that we can gain support from our own local government and raise funding and the profile of contact centres in Wales.

A main concern amongst all present was that with the development of this network NACCC would be cutting their ties with Wales. We were assured that this was not the case and that at no time did NACCC intend to lose the Welsh Child Contact Centres. The hope for Wales is to set up its own network that can access the Welsh Assembly while still having all centres and the new network affiliated to NACCC.

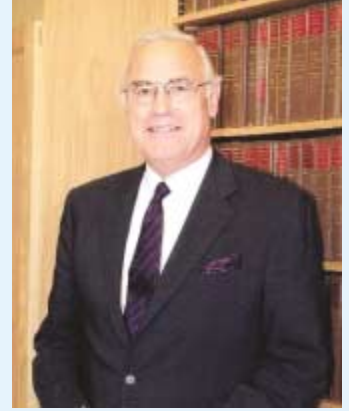
(from left to right):
Vera McElhorne (Mid Ulster CCC),
Jenny Jones (Bangor CCC), Mary
Lower (NACCC), Muriel Orr (Knock
CCC), Gordon Anderson (NACCC),
Carol Cooper (Porthmadog CCC), Carol
Peeke (NACCC and Aberdare CCC).

Our first meeting to discuss the Network and what we want to achieve is being arranged for Saturday April 1st 2006. It is hoped that representatives from all Welsh Centres will attend. It is very important that all support the setting up of this network and that we all work together to secure the future of Welsh Child Contact Centres.

Welsh Centres would like to thank Muriel and Vera for coming over from Northern Ireland to help introduce the idea of the network to the Welsh centres. We would also like to thank Gordon, Mary, Pauline, Judy and Duncan for attending the meeting and supporting the setting up of the network.

**Carol Peeke, Regional NACCC
Trustee Wales & Allan Thomas,
General NACCC Trustee**

Following the successful launch of the Northern Ireland Network of Child Contact Centres (NINCCC) in May 2005, they will be holding their first AGM in Belfast on 8 June 2006. Yvonne has been invited to the AGM to represent NACCC.



FAMILY COURTS AND HOW THE CHANGES MAY AFFECT CHILD CONTACT CENTRES

The Rt Hon Sir Mark Potter, President of the Family Division

I believe that the contents of this article (which is a re-edited version of an address I gave in September 2005 to the London Conference for Resolution – formerly the Solicitors Family Law Association) are fundamental to the better working of the Family Justice System and therefore will impact on the work of the Child Contact Centres both Supervised and Supported.

It is envisaged that a unified Family Court will operate with three tiers of judges i.e. **High Court Judges**, for the most complicated and substantial cases in public care and private work, **Circuit Judges** hearing the complex cases just below that level; and a third tier consisting of **District Judges** and **Magistrates**.

There will be no increase in the overall numbers of High Court Judges so a process of “cascading down” of work is essential and inevitable.

Since Circuit Judges are themselves already overburdened they in turn will have to unload. Thus District Judges (DJs) and Family Magistrates must be mobilised to help out. Both, subject to appropriate experience and training, will do so on a ‘horses for courses’ basis. Authorised DJs will be able to hear a substantial number of the less complex care cases, which currently have to be done by the Circuit Judges.

DJs in their turn must be persuaded to release much more of their Private Law work to the Family Magistrates, including Domestic Violence cases.

In courts where the Magistrates are in the same building as the

county court or where they are close by, ideally there will be a single listing officer who allocates cases between the DJs and the Magistrates in private law cases according to both complexity and available dates, so as to make better use of court rooms, and judge or magistrate availability.

This increased use of Magistrates is vital. The fact is that in many areas very capable Family Magistrates are not getting enough work despite their willingness and their training.

There is a culture in the professions and the judiciary, which undervalues the Magistrates and fails to utilise their spare capacity in terms of courtroom space as well as their time and expertise.

While I know there are contrary views, particularly at the top of the Magistrates’ Association, I am firmly of the opinion that Magistrates sitting in family work should, if they wish to do so, have the opportunity to elect to specialise in that work after spending a suitable period, say four or five years, gaining general experience sitting in crime.

Family Magistrates should also be encouraged to sit substantially longer than their usual 26 half days in order to increase their availability and build up their expertise. This will assist the necessary change of culture and practice, which has to take place. With extra training and greater experience confident, qualified and specialist chairs of Magistrates Benches will be created.

We need to stop talking about *transferring up or down* from the

Magistrates to the County Court and vice versa. Their jurisdiction in relation to both public and private law work is now identical. Transfer of cases should therefore be seen as *transfer across*. The term “transfer up” should be reserved for transfers to the Circuit Judge, or to the High Court.

It will obviously take time to start seeing substantial results in the transfer of work.

The common jurisdiction of DJs and magistrates will not be of much use to users if courts are not co-located, or are at least within walking distance and a rationalisation of the actual buildings is already being undertaken

With the advent of the Family Justice Council (FJC) and the local Family Justice Councils I am hoping that a collaborative and collectively responsible culture of working will develop. There are now many bodies (including Child Contact Centres) interesting themselves in family justice. We need to ensure that there is communication across the board in order to minimise duplication of work and to create an effective network, which fully debates proposals and follows them through to completion. It will be very important therefore for each representative body to choose members for their local FJCs who have influence not only on the FJC but within their own organisation.

Local FJCs will be a real opportunity to effect recommendations for change. I hope that you all know who your local representative is and how you can communicate your views to the local FJC.

Private Law Programme



The overall package promoted by the Private Law Programme (i.e. Conciliation at the First Hearing, effective court control including judicial continuity, close cooperation with CAFCASS, and flexible facilitation, referrals and monitoring of outcomes) represents a fundamental change in the way private law cases are handled.

Part of this culture change is to encourage the families and the legal profession to avoid the courts and to accept that extended battles through the courts should be the last resort. We are all aware of the adverse effects contested court cases can have on children, in addition to the effects of the relationship breakdown. Where parties do reach the courts, the Private Law Programme sets out a number of principles and key elements, which it is hoped, will improve the court process and experience for the parties. The intention is that increased use of Alternative Dispute Resolution and conciliation schemes should provide an alternative to a fully contested hearing. The Programme is, of course, set in the context of the child's best interests being the paramount consideration and that any attendance at conciliation schemes occurs only where it is appropriate and safe to do so. However, that is the position in a high proportion of cases.

One of the most significant changes occurring is that CAFCASS's involvement in the Programme focuses on their social work skills rather than on writing numerous reports,

Where possible, CAFCASS practitioners, along with case-

dedicated judges, are encouraged to manage each case from beginning to end. In between court hearings it is envisaged that the practitioners will undertake a monitoring role, communicating with families to ensure orders have been adhered to, and, if not, to be in speedy communication with the courts so that the case is brought back before the same judge at short notice.

Judges and CAFCASS practitioners should now be working towards producing more focused reports, which go to the heart of the issues facing a particular child. The need to produce long reports should be rare, and reserved for the most complex of situations.

In some cases where there is a return to court before the same judge, an oral report or a short email should often be sufficient.

This new focus should, in turn, help to free up CAFCASS practitioners to undertake their newer roles as envisaged by the Programme and to adopt a far more flexible approach. Work will be carried out proportionately allowing more time to be spent on the harder, more intractable cases. Practitioners can then use their social work skills to encourage parents to work with each other and their children to find solutions; to promote arrangements that are in the child's interests; and to preserve or re-establish relationships with both parents and wider family members.

As I have said, and as Anthony Douglas (the CAFCASS Director) agrees, practical support to make arrangements work is far more useful than a lengthy report that

explores the issues but which achieves little in changing the child's situation.

Plainly, there is a practical question of the resources available to CAFCASS to enable these initiatives to be successfully implemented. More funds will be needed if the time spent by CAFCASS workers in respect of their conciliation role exceeds the time hitherto spent in report writing.

The Private Law Programme was reviewed in January 2006 with the aim of producing a set of best practice guidelines and to sort out any teething problems. It was also then formally extended to the Family Proceedings Courts.

What may be new for Contact Centres in the future will be that far more, possibly even a majority of referrals, will come from the Magistrates courts rather than the County Court and an increased number of cases come directly from CAFCASS in their earlier stages rather than after court proceedings. All these changes will not happen at the same time in the same way throughout the country and centres will need to be alert to local variations. Those centres which are represented on their local Family Justice Councils and Court User Groups will be well placed to have input into any changes and I am sure NACCC as an organisation will do its best to keep its membership informed. Change is not always easy to embrace but I am confident that these changes I have outlined will improve the workings of the Family Justice System and, most importantly, the outcomes for children.

FAMILY JUSTICE COUNCILS AND CHILD CONTACT CENTRES



The Family Justice Councils (FJs) featured in the last edition of Contact Matters are now almost all up and running. There are 42 of them in England & Wales and

many but not all have Child Contact Centre Representation.

Listed below are the ones where we know there is Child Contact

Centre Representation and who that person is. If you have any alterations or additions please let us know.

Court Area	Child Contact Centre Representative	Designated Family Judge
North East – Mr Justice Bodey		
Northumbria	Angela Graham – Sunderland CCC	Judy Moir/Maurice Carr
Co. Durham & Darlington		
Cleveland	Yvonne Morgan – Cleveland CCC	David Bryant
North Yorkshire CCC	Jane Bramwell – York Supervised and Supported CCC	Graham Cliffe
West Yorkshire		Peter Hunt
South Yorkshire		Trevor Barber
Humberside	Judy Birchall – NACCC	Malcolm Cracknell
North West – Mr Justice Ryder		
North Wales		Michael Farmer QC/David Davies
Cheshire		Kevin Barnett/Philip Hughes
Dyfed Powys		
Gwent		Janet Case
South Wales		Philip Price/Mark Furness
Midlands – Mr Justice Kirkwood		
West Mercia		Helen Hughes/Ian Morris
Derbyshire		James Orrell
Nottinghamshire	Mary Lower – Nottingham CCC	Joan Butler QC
Lincolnshire		Richard Jenkins
Staffordshire		Granville Styler
West Midlands		Donald Hamilton/John Fletcher/ Helen Hughes
Warwickshire		
Leicestershire		David Brunning
Northamptonshire	Lynn Butler & Tina Kitra Fairproject, Supervised CCC & Ruth Readhead – Abington Avenue CCC	Anthony Mitchell
South East – Mrs Justice Hogg Mrs Justice Pauffley		
Norfolk		Philip Curl
Cambridgeshire		Isobel Plumstead/Peter De Millie
Suffolk	No one allocate but the Judge would be prepared to consider an agreed representative. Please contact NACCC if you wish to offer.	Caroline Lodlow
Essex	No representation	Geoffery Gypps
Hertfordshire		Leon Viljoen
Bedfordshire		John Farnworth
Thames Valley		John Altman/Thomas Corrie/ Charles Elly
Surrey		Stuart Sleeman
London	Barbara Majumdar – Welcare Accord CCC	Valerie Pearlman (SCJ)
Kent		Donald Cryan
Sussex		Stephen Lloyd
South West – Mr Justice Coleridge		
Avon & Somerset		Susan Darwell-Smith/Malcolm Cotterill
Devon & Cornwall		David Tyzack QC/Nick Vincent
Dorset		Richard Bond
Gloucestershire		
Hampshire	Carole Damper – The Roberts Centre Portsmouth	Linda Davies
Wiltshire		John McNaught

Dear NACCC



Please send your letters to Ruth Miles at the NACCC office. NACCC staff and trustees will be pleased to answer any queries and include them in the next edition of Contact Matters.

JUDICIAL PRAISE



Halton Child Contact Centres held a 10 Year Celebration last year. The event was well attended and was thoroughly enjoyed by all who were there. The local Mayor was invited and presented the long service certificates to the volunteers. It was all the more special due to the receipt of the letter below, which was read out to the 'party goers' by District Judge Little.

"Child Contact Centres have become an integral part of the family justice system and have a well-deserved reputation for assisting many families in maintaining parental ties in the painful aftermath of the breakdown of adult relationships. What is not always fully recognised is that this vital resource depends for its continued wellbeing on the service of its volunteers.

I am delighted that this special event has been arranged to mark the contribution of volunteers. It gives an opportunity not only to recognise your service and achievements but also a chance to thank you for what you do, which can sometimes rather be taken for granted by the system. It is certainly very much appreciated by the judges and magistrates who have to hear these difficult family cases.

I am very sorry not to be able to be with you on this occasion, which I trust will be both memorable and enjoyable. I very much hope that all of you who have given so freely of your time and skill will feel that your contribution is deeply worthwhile and truly appreciated. I hope too that you will allow yourselves a feeling of real pride in all that you have done and achieved."

Mark Hedley
(The Honourable Mr Justice Hedley,
Family Division Liaison Judge – Wales and
Chester Circuit)

Dear Everyone at NACCC

We have been battling on at our Centre with the accreditation process, lack of funding, the usual difficult moments on Saturdays etc, etc. Sometimes we wonder why we do this at all? Then yesterday, I had a letter from a father who is using us at the moment. It was such a lovely letter that I felt I had to share it with

you all, because you might sometimes feel the same; after all it is NACCC that supports the Centres and I wouldn't mind betting that you get more complaints that compliments, and I feel this is a compliment to all of you as well. I hope that the letter cheers you as much as it did us.

Carol Nicholls, The Reigate & Redhill Contact Centre

Dear Carol

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and each and every one of your staff at the Contact Centre. Without yourself and your team I would not have been able to have any contact with our daughter.

The understanding of your staff, despite the very difficult circumstances in which I have had to maintain contact with our daughter under, along with the friendliness and helpfulness displayed is simply humbling.

The Centre is a clean, bright happy place with lovely toys and I simply cannot express my gratitude enough. If my daughter had perception of what is happening, then I'm sure she would want to thank you as well! Indeed it is her right to see her father, which through your efforts running the contact centre you are helping to uphold.

As a token of my appreciation please accept £100. I thought very hard about what amount would

constitute a suitable donation and bearing in mind that it's not the solicitors or the legal system that have provided a place for my daughter and I to get together, it's yourselves. I've already spent many times this amount trying to allow my daughter to maintain a relationship with her father within the legal system.

In addition I would like to volunteer my time to repair and refurbish any toys which you need repairing. I also would like to build the centre a new PC out of my 'bits' bin, as it would be a big improvement on what you have for the children. I would also like to volunteer my time to support your PC should it ever need fixing. I would just like the opportunity to give something back to the centre.

Once again thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

*Contact Father –
Name withheld*

Telephone Information Line Call



Please send your letters to Ruth Miles at the NACCC office. NACCC staff and trustees will be pleased to answer any queries and include them in the next edition of Contact Matters.

Dear NACCC

Please can you let me know whether my 4-year-old daughter has been treated correctly at the Child Contact Centre that she has attended twice so far to see her father? The court ordered that Supervised contact was to take place due to a range of previous incidents between my daughter and her father plus domestic violence towards myself. To add to the situation, my daughter has very bad asthma and becomes very distressed in situations where she has no control, which could cause her to have an attack.

Unfortunately, my daughter does not want to have contact with her father and I had a real problem getting my daughter to the Child Contact Centre. Once there she was put at his ease by being told that she could come out of the contact room if she asked to. Sadly during the contact session both her father and the centre worker physically restrained her from leaving the contact room.

Consequently she does not wish to return and the Child Contact Centre told me that I had to get the child to the Centre by any means possible or they would make a note in their report to the court that I would not bring my daughter to the session.

What normally happens at a Child Contact Centre when a child really does not wish to attend a contact session?

Regards, Concerned Mother

Is this a scenario you are familiar with at your Child Contact Centre? NACCC is receiving an increasing number of calls from parents in the same or similar situations. We normally tell callers to take the matter up directly with the centre concerned but what is going wrong? In this instance perhaps such a question can be answered by considering:

- Has the centre carried out a risk assessment prior to the contact starting?
- What does it show in relation to the nature, frequency, intensity and effects of the violence the mother is referring to?
- Has any work been undertaken with the mother, father and the child in relation to the domestic violence and or any other issues of relevance prior to the contact starting?
- What is known about the child's asthma?
- How much does the centre worker know about the family and what training have they been given in relation to working with children and managing contact safely/effectively?
- The age of the child suggests that she is going to reflect her mother's view of and feelings about contact. Has any work been undertaken with the mother concerning these and how they might affect her daughter/the contact?

Referrers and contact parents often pressurise centres to move as quickly as possible into contact but is this always right for and in the best interests of the children involved?

We only know what the mother has told us however, it should be remembered that in many instances the success of any contact is often heavily dependant upon the issues/problems that have made it breakdown or become unworkable being addressed before it commences again. As this case demonstrates failing to act in such a way will not only hinder the development of the contact but also and more disturbingly put a child in a very awkward and harmful situation.

Child Contact Centres providing supervised contact should be developing and using Contact Plans or Contracts. These need to contain information about the issues/problems that have been identified during any assessment and details of how they will be addressed prior to and during the contact.

And finally, any Child Contact Centre that is promoting itself as a safe child centred environment is likely to have great difficulty defending itself against any complaint arising from the scenario described above.

Best wishes,

*Duncan Gore,
NACCC Support Manager*

'CONTACT MATTERS' EDITORIAL STAFF MAINTAIN THE RIGHT TO EDIT LETTERS PUBLISHED

contact matters is the twice yearly magazine of the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC). Views expressed in *contact matters* are not necessarily those of the NACCC and publication does not imply endorsement.

© Copyright NACCC Publications 2006. (NACCC Child Contact Centres exempt).

Registered Charity No. 1078636

Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3886023 (Registered in England and Wales)

National Association of Child Contact Centres, FREEPOST MID30406, Nottingham, NG1 1BR