

THE IN-HOUSE
MAGAZINE OF
THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
CHILD CONTACT
CENTRES

Summer ISSUE • 2007/2008

contact

M A T T E R S

PASS IT ON
Why not leave me
on your registration desk
for staff to read?



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TO ALL MPS**
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contact
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHILD CONTACT CENTRES

'We go together like peas and carrots'



So says Tom Hanks in the film, 'Forrest Gump'.

Which leads me to the theme that's running through this issue of Contact Matters – that we do not work most effectively in isolation, but through working in partnership with others.

This same logic is explored in the current Moving Families Forward training, during which participating centres look at signposting families to other sources of support. Working with others adds richness to our work as well as benefiting the children and their parents.

Continued overleaf

Archbishop of York visits Pudsey centre



His Grace the Archbishop of York with Dianne Bell (Founder of Pudsey Child Contact Centre), Judy Birchall (NACCC Support Manager – North) and District Judge John Flanagan.

Having been asked to support the setting up of Child Contact Centres in Anglican premises by Sir Mark Potter, His Grace the Archbishop of York visited Pudsey Child Contact Centre (Leeds) on Sunday 25th May.

He met most of the volunteers, representatives from CAF/CASS and the Judiciary, together with Yvonne Kee and Judy Birchall from NACCC. His Grace was most astute in his understanding of the position of Child Contact Centres and would like to encourage churches in his area where there is a need. He has agreed to talk to Sir Mark again with a view to NACCC meeting with key politicians.

Continued from front page

Extra support and resources are there for your taking and sharing

'Honest differences are often a sign of progress'

(Mahatma Gandhi)

Necessarily there will, of course, be differences. I often quote an early lesson in my first week as Chief Executive of NACCC. I had received a letter from a women's group, saying that our emphasis on non-resident fathers meant that our leaflets could not be distributed to women affected by domestic violence. In the same mailing was a newsletter from Families Need Fathers (FNF), bemoaning the way that dads are forced to use child contact centres. In individual cases, both were wrong and both were right. Since then we have introduced a new poster and attracted funding for a new book, with the mother as the non-resident parent.

We have built up a positive relationship with Families Need Fathers and are looking at collaborative ways of working. Of course, I must mention CAFCASS too – the major player in the world of contact, currently having a huge impact on centres. Here there is a new phase in an existing relationship. Whilst there is much still to be done, we are at least sitting round the table, involved, consulted and able to give both negative and positive feedback.

'Why buy a book when you can join a library?' *(Ricky Gervais)*

In the background I know that those organisations with which we have built up a relationship occasionally do a PR job on our behalf, as we do for them.

We are able to share ideas and practice. We can call on their expertise and views when we need them. It works at both a structural and individual level. Often there is empathy and personal support there, all wrapped up in the organisational benefits.

'We're all working together – that's the secret'

(Sam Walton – founder of Walmart)

So back to the beginning and the reminder that extra support and resources are there for your taking and sharing. In this issue we explore some of the organisations that could benefit your centre and your families.
Yvonne Kee, Chief Executive

Support and resources factfile (to be continued)



Families Need Fathers is a registered UK charity which provides information and support to parents, including unmarried parents, of either sex. FNF is chiefly concerned with the problems of maintaining a child's relationship with both parents during and after family breakdown. Founded in 1974, FNF helps thousands of parents every year. Helpline: 08707 607 496 (6pm-10pm weekdays), www.fnf.org.uk



The **Family and Parenting Institute** is the leading centre of expertise on families and parenting in the UK. Families, in all their diversity, form the basis of our society and the foundation for the future. Our mission is to support them in bringing up children. Tel: 020 7424 3460, www.familyandparenting.org



The **Fatherhood Institute** (charity reg. no. 1075104) is the UK's fatherhood think tank. It collates international research on fatherhood and lobbies for evidence-based changes in national and local family policy; contributes to the public debate on fathers; and trains commissioners and providers of family services in father-inclusive practice. Tel: 0845 634 1328, www.fatherhoodinstitute.org



Mothers Apart from Their Children (MATCH) offers non-judgemental support to mothers and grandmothers apart from children as a result of fostering, adoption, abduction abroad, rows with adult children, and alienation after family breakdown. Support is possible through contributing painfully acquired experience and wisdom to our quarterly newsletter, email support groups, and some local groups. www.matchmothers.org MATCH, BM Box No. 6334, London WC1N 3XX.



Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. Our two websites; www.womensaid.org and www.thehideout.org.uk and the 0808 2000 247 Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership with Refuge), provide women and children with the confidential support and information they need.

Children's Centres could meet your needs

Solihull Child Contact Centre recently opened an additional centre at the far side of the borough some 13 miles away, to assist clients living in an area where public transport is extremely unhelpful.

Knowing that church halls etc. sometimes don't provide an appropriate venue, we made efforts to find premises that were tailor-made from the outset. Our centre in south Solihull had moved from local authority hall to CVS premises to church hall until we were lucky enough to find a Family Centre willing to give us a home, so we realised what a difference child-friendly premises could make.

I had heard about Children's Centres being built so I approached the manager of the one in the area where we were looking. What a revelation! She knew about Contact Centres and told me straight away that

her premises were a community facility and should be used by the community whenever possible, especially at weekends when they were usually empty. No obstacles were put in our way and arrangements were soon made to give us keys so that we could use virtually all the rooms we required.

I had spent some time raising the funds to open this second centre, thinking I would need to cover items such as toys, rent, insurance etc., but much to my surprise no rent or extra insurance was required and the centre was bursting with toys for children up to the age of five. I have had to buy books and games etc. for our older children and have been able to use the rest of the money raised on recruitment and training of volunteers. We have the opportunity to use three different contact rooms, two waiting rooms, child and adult toilets and kitchen.

Each week I breathe a sigh of relief that I don't have to worry about disability discrimination or health & safety because I know these have largely been taken care of and the centre has been set-up with the needs of young people in mind. The volunteers love the fact that they don't have to get out toys or put them away at the end of a contact session!

I may have been lucky to find a Children's Centre manager with such an open-minded attitude to voluntary community groups; the centre is run by National Children's Homes for Sure Start. However, if you are managing in less than ideal premises and struggle to make them child-friendly, I would strongly recommend an approach to your local Children's Centre; the opportunity to better meet the needs of all your users is worth the risk!

Ann Hunt, Chair, Solihull Child Contact Centres



Squeaky wheel

squeaky wheel (skwi:ki wi:l) a repetitive scratchy sound created by the NACCC wheel moving in a circular motion through Government to keep in mind the importance of the children's safety using Child Contact Centres.

The track of the squeaky wheel since the last issue of Contact Matters...

April 2008

"The work of Child Contact Centres is as important as the NHS in its effect on the health of the nation"

Mr Justice Coleridge (keynote speaker at the Resolution conference) called on the Government to fund the expansion of Child Contact Centres so that children round the country can continue to see non-resident parents in a safe venue. He said that there is a "terrible shortage of child contact centres. Those wonderful, small organisations staffed often by dedicated volunteers, are unable to provide enough space in a reasonable time so that children can see their non resident parents safely, in cases where there is a risk or other need for some supervision."

May 2008

Harry Bear writes to all MPs

Harry Bear (Membear of Parliament) has written to all MPs to share his experience of the <imaginary> centre in Dudbury and the threat(s) to its funding. He said how helpful NACCC had been and invited them to get in touch, particularly if their local centre was facing similar difficulties. www.harrybearforparliament.org.uk
Graham Allen MP arranged a meeting at Westminster where our CEO was introduced to Harry's Ghostwriter Richard Heller.



Keep the wheel turning and keep letting us know what tracks you have made!

Strong links forge support for the future

Those practitioners registered as learners on the Pro-Contact Award (and others) have had various opportunities to attend training events where inevitably people exchange views and ideas. Most successful was the training in Parental Alienation that was well attended as it coincided with a Network meeting around the commissioning process.

We have not yet returned to using the Network as an agent of support and training but it has been well used as a mobilising and campaigning vehicle. We have maintained strong links, especially locally in the North, through the complex and at times distressing process of CAFCASS commissioning. We met on 6th May in Huddersfield to prepare our concerns and questions for the CAFCASS contracts conference on 13th May. Yvonne and Judy from NACCC attended and took a special interest in making sure the range of opinion was recorded. It was heartening to learn that most contact

Professionals Network

services shared similar concerns, which are around qualification requirements, intellectual property, compact-compliance and specific terms and conditions. Huddersfield contact service is housed in a lovely centre, which was well-worth seeing aside from the purpose of the meeting.

Though our version of North stretches down to Stoke and occasionally beyond, we are conscious of having less input from services in the Deep South. Although travel makes attendance at events difficult we would encourage email communication and certainly extend an invitation to anyone to get involved. Our focus for the next few months will be to keep supporting each other through the CAFCASS commissioning, to return to some of our original objectives and to strengthen and formalise our position as a special interest group within NACCC.

Salli Ward, CEO Pro-Contact

Funding flurry of activity

The last few months have been very busy for the Child Contact Centres in Northern Ireland. Having waited for government funding, there was a great flurry of activity when it arrived, making applications, filling in forms, getting the money spent by the end of March! The DHSSPS have also agreed to fund a media/PR campaign in Northern Ireland regarding Child Contact Centres. This has enabled us to work with a PR company to produce a logo, general leaflet about the Northern Ireland Network and an information leaflet for children. NACCC very kindly allowed us to use the graphics they already had for NACCC publications.

Northern Ireland Network

The campaign will also include advertising on the large roadside billboards across Northern Ireland and perhaps a short radio advertisement that will run for several weeks. The funding also enabled representatives from each of the Centres to attend the residential NACCC Coordinators' training that was very much appreciated (see page 9). Several centres have now opened sessions midweek as well as Saturdays and have also opened outreach sessions in nearby towns. So, it has certainly felt as if a lot has been happening in a short space of time.

Muriel Orr on behalf of the Northern Ireland Network of Child Contact Centres

Whole of Wales represented at Network meeting

The meeting on 15th March was well attended with representation from the whole of Wales for the first time. The meeting was pleased to feel we have better links with NACCC via the Board. We are to explore the possibility of charitable registration for the Network. We identified the need to extend membership of the Network (on the Northern Ireland model) to include some influential members (for example, the judiciary) which would be essential to gain access to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). It is also hoped to have NACCC and CAFCASS representation at some meetings.

Welsh Network

I feel confident that the development of this group will progress within the aims and policies of NACCC, and in consultation with NACCC. There is a feeling in the group that progress should be made in order to respond to the political map of Wales – and the increasing powers (particularly fiscal) of the WAG. The Network is developing a sense of identity – the meeting appointed Alex Jaundrill as permanent Chair (previously alternated North/South) – the minute taking task will continue to alternate.

Alex Jaundrill on behalf of Child Contact Centres in Wales

Thank you again to the many volunteers round the country who help children keep valuable links with their family. Warm congratulations from all the trustees and staff at NACCC to those volunteers who have served their centre for many years and have been awarded their bronze, silver or gold certificates.

NEW Platinum certificate

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new Platinum certificate for over 15 years' service.

Andover Child Contact Centre

13 volunteers – 13 bronze (39 years)

Avenue Child Contact Centre

15 volunteers – 11 bronze, 1 silver, 3 gold (68 years)

Blackburn Child Contact Centre

9 volunteers – 1 bronze, 8 silver (43 years)

Blackpool Fylde & Wyre Child Contact Centre

36 volunteers – 4 bronze, 13 silver, 19 gold (267 years)

Camberley & District Family Contact Centre

8 volunteers – 3 bronze, 5 silver (34 years)

Cheltenham Child Contact Centre

5 volunteers – 2 bronze, 3 silver (21 years)

Eastbourne Family Contact Centre

10 volunteers – 5 bronze, 5 silver (40 years)

Great Yarmouth Family Contact Centre

4 volunteers – 1 bronze, 1 silver, 2 gold (32 years)

Halton Child Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 gold (10 years)

Hemel Hempstead Child Contact Centre

4 volunteers – 1 bronze, 3 silver (18 years)

Lower Early Child Contact Centre

12 volunteers – 7 silver, 5 gold (85 years)

Mid Ulster Child Contact Centre

18 volunteers – 3 bronze, 5 silver, 10 gold (116 years)

Nuneaton Child Contact Centre

3 volunteers – 1 bronze, 2 gold (38 years)

Palmers Green Child Contact Centre

35 volunteers – 4 bronze, 9 silver, 15 gold (313 years)

Shirley Family Contact Centre

2 volunteers – 2 bronze (6 years)

Shropshire Child Contact Centres

22 volunteers – 6 bronze, 6 silver, 10 gold (170 years)

Slough Child Contact Centre

17 volunteers – 17 silver (85 years)

South Bristol Child Contact Centre

11 volunteers – 1 bronze, 4 silver, 6 gold (83 years)

Stevenage & North Herts Child Contact Centres

6 volunteers – 3 bronze, 1 silver, 2 gold (39 years)

The Roberts Centre

6 volunteers – 3 bronze, 3 gold (42 years)

The Crescent Child Contact Centre

17 volunteers – 17 bronze (51 years)

Vale Royal Child Contact Centre

5 volunteers – 2 bronze, 3 silver (36 years)

Congratulations! – A total of 1568 years' service given to local Child Contact Centres. Please do let us know in writing if you have volunteers that you would like to thank and congratulate by issuing them with one of NACCC's volunteer certificates (NEW! Platinum for 15+ years' service, Gold for 10 years' service, Silver for 5 years' service and Bronze for 3 years' service).



Avenue Child Contact Centre (Westcliff on Sea) volunteers are presented with their certificates.

Contact Centre Accreditation and Re-accreditation

Congratulations... to all the Child Contact Centres listed below who have achieved accreditation since the last issue of Contact Matters. Well done!

- A&A Family Centre Limited (Lee, London)
- Bingley Contact Centre
- Bridport Child Contact Centre
- Fleet Family Contact Centre
- Harpenden Child Contact Centre
- Neutral Ground Child Contact Centre (Abbeywood, London)
- South London Contact Centre

And congratulations to those who have achieved re-accreditation success since the last issue. Well done to you!

- Aberdare Child Contact Centre
- Aire Valley Child Contact Centres (Keighley & Shipley)
- Aylesbury Child Contact Centre
- Bath Child Contact Centre
- Chesterfield Child Contact Centre
- Pontypridd Child Contact Centre
- Romford URC Westies Child Contact Centre
- Salford Child Contact Centre
- St James Child Contact Centre (Colchester)
- Springfield Contact Centre (Upminster)

Accessibility

Useful ways to make your organisation more accessible to disabled people

There are lots of websites with top tips on making your venue and service accessible and if necessary, getting an 'access audit' done.

The Department for Work & Pensions' website

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/employers/dda/real-tourism.asp> have some useful 'Business tips' including:

- Do you provide information on how to get to your venue by public transport? Include details about accessible public transport too.
- Can you provide parking for disabled customers?
- Are you unsure how to make your organisation more accessible? Ask a disabled person or organisation and try to act on their advice. Keep the info handy too, so that you can help customers with similar impairments in future.
- Are your toilets accessible to disabled people?
- Do you provide leaflets and other information? Could you make them available in accessible formats such as large print, Braille and audiotape?
- Do people with impaired hearing have access to your services? An induction loop could be invaluable. Keeping background noise to a minimum can help too.
- Are your volunteers and staff up to speed with the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act? Policies and attitudes towards serving disabled centre users are just as important as adjusting your premises. Possibly provide staff with disability awareness training.

The Equality & Human Rights Commission also do a useful document 'Organising accessible events'.

England: 0845 604 6610

Wales: 0845 604 8810

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Centres

CRB Freezes Fees

For the second year running the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) can announce that its fees will remain frozen at 2006-2007 levels for the new financial year. The fee levels for Standard Enhanced checks will therefore continue at their current rate (£36) throughout 2008/09.

The NSPCC has launched guidance to help professionals spot the difference between accidental and deliberate burns on children. Search for more info on www.nspcc.org.uk/inform

Family

Children's Plan

A new report has been published about the wellbeing of children and young people in England today. Amongst the conclusions the report shows that most children feel happy about life as a whole. The way the family functions is more relevant to child wellbeing than family status – 70 per cent agree that one parent can bring up a child as well as two. **The report, together with a summary of responses to the recent Time to Talk consultation is available at** www.dfes.gov.uk/timetotalk
Tel: 0870 000 2288

Encourage & Praise Children's Reward Charts. We have charts specifically designed to assist children and families through unsettled times. For further details and information on bulk discounts please visit www.vchart.co.uk or email info@vchart.co.uk.

Separation and Divorce – helping parents to help children

A4 booklet written for Resolution by Christina McGhee, divorce coach and parent educator (www.divorceandchildren.com), is designed to give parents key information at the earliest possible stage and to guide them in making a positive difference for their children. It supports a child-centred approach – which research and experience suggests will help children to move from being a family under one roof to being a family in two separate homes. Text version available at [www.resolution.org.uk/parenting afterparting](http://www.resolution.org.uk/parenting_afterparting)

The difference a dad makes

The Fatherhood Institute has published new research on the positive involvement of fathers in their children's lives. The report argues that both fathers and mothers need better support and calls for an end to the stereotype of 'absent' fathers. In particular, the antenatal period is key, as fathers who are involved with their children from the start are most likely to remain involved for life. They would like 25,000 more fathers per year signing their child's birth certificate, fathers reading with their children in all primary schools and family professionals confidently dealing with fathers as well as mothers and supporting all family types. Finally, the report calls for particular support for young fathers, disabled fathers, young offender fathers and fathers from black and minority ethnic communities.

Further information:
www.fatherhoodinstitute.org
Tel: 0845 634 1328

www.Dad.info New top-quality information service for fathers

The Fatherhood Institute is delighted to introduce a new and absolutely unique information service for fathers: Dad Info. Dad Info is now a separate company solely and totally focused on providing high quality information to fathers and is made up of a

website, an email service for each individual father linked to the birth-date of each of his children, Dad cards, posters and other services working with fathers of young children **NACCC has purchased 40 limited edition Dad Packs which are available to centres at cost at £5 Per pack.**

www.whenparentspart.org.uk
Unique project exploring children's perspectives when parents part. Free resource for mediators, solicitors, family services, parents and young people. Site explores and promotes child-centred practice, with a wide range of research alongside advice and ideas from young people.

Funding

Good news for centres in need
Legacy funding from the George Barnes fund means that NACCC is in a position to give grants to struggling centres. The criteria and the application process have now been decided. See the back page for further details.

Round Tables
Round Tables are known for their

efforts to assist local communities and to help that community's less fortunate members; for its concern for the quality of life and for the help it gives to various charitable causes. **For details of your local Round Table contact: www.roundtable.org.uk Tel: 0121 456 4402**

www.easyfundraising.org.uk
Provides a FREE fundraising service where you can raise funds for any charity, trust, school, club, good cause or community group you support when you shop online. Choose from over 500 of the UK's best-known retailers including many popular names such as NEXT, Amazon, Debenhams, John Lewis and HMV, and when you shop using the links on the site up to 15% from every purchase you make is donated to the cause you choose to nominate.

www.simplefundraising.co.uk
A new affinity shopping website, enables charities to set up branded web pages that include links to retailers. When supporters click on the links, the charity receives donations.

Legal

Health & Safety Myth: All office equipment must be tested by a qualified electrician every year
The reality. No. The law requires employers to assess risks and take appropriate action. The Health & Safety Executive's advice is that for most office electrical equipment, visual checks for obvious signs of damage and perhaps simple tests by a competent member of staff are quite sufficient. **For more info contact HSE Infoline 0845 345 0055 www.hse.gov.uk**

Volunteering

Excellence in Volunteer Management (EVM)
EVM is designed around your needs and will enable you to gain an accredited qualification in volunteer management. The programme features e-learning opportunities, FAQs, a good practice bank, publications and information sheets. **Volunteering England Tel: 0845 305 6979 www.volunteering.org.uk**

Oxfordshire Half Marathon £350 fundraising success for Abingdon Child Contact Centre



Michael Thomas completed the Oxfordshire Half Marathon on Sunday 16 April, raising more than £350 for Abingdon Child Contact Centre. They were dismayed to wake up that morning to find there had been quite a heavy snowfall during the night, and that snow was continuing to fall! Fortunately, the snow and the roads quickly cleared as the sun came out. Michael completed the course in 90 minutes 27 seconds, beating his previous best time by 5 minutes; he was really pleased.
Derwent Swaine, Treasurer, Abingdon Child Contact Centre

Good ideas, funding ideas to share? Please let us know



News flash! Duncan Gore, Regional Support Manager joined ten others in June to cycle 1,034 miles from Lands End to John O'Groats! They are hoping to raise £20,000 for children's charity Toybox helping street children in Latin America. Well done Duncan! www.toyboxcharity.org.uk

Child Contact Centres and why Families Need Fathers should support them



Charles Kenyon, Chair, Families Need Fathers



Families Need Fathers (FNF) has been supporting separated

parents and their children for 34 years so that children may be brought up with the love and guidance of both their parents. We lobby for changes in law to make shared parenting the presumption should families split. We help around 100,000 people a year through our meetings, media and helpline.

Good parenting when you are not living with your child is the hardest parenting. Just keeping going is a mental and financial effort that can destroy lives. Contact Centres are one of those vital ingredients that offer succour for the parent that needs the strength to keep going. In an article in the last issue of our own magazine, McKenzie, I asked our members to support you all. However, there are three issues that affect us specifically and it would be good to discuss them both at local and national level.

A couple of hours in a Child Contact Centre, some costing up to £80, may be in addition to some hundred miles travelled and a day's loss of earnings. Costs limit the frequency of visits in many cases and when you are four years old, two weeks is a lifetime.

We must get these costs recognised.

Getting people through contact centres and out to proper unrestricted parenting can take a long time. There are safety reasons, sometimes, when meetings have to take place in contact centres but the majority of parents do not pose any threat and have to use centres because there is no other agreed option; very often because court processes take years. We can work together to lobby to relieve this log jam.

I have helped in a Child Contact Centre and seen the frightened, bemused parents and the scared children. You do a tremendous job in putting people at ease but in the parent's mind every minute that goes by is a minute closer to saying goodbye. Helping people to make the best of the short time available is vital. Again, we can work together on this.

Thank you to all the professional workers who are responsible for the safe environments and thank you too to all the kind and dedicated volunteers who started the Network and continue to provide the warm and informal welcome. Families Need Fathers recognises that without the facilities that you offer, many more children and parents would lose their link with each other.

Private Law Pathways and Contact Activities... changes on the horizon

The majority of Child Contact Centres providing supported contact currently receive a high proportion of their referrals from family law solicitors. CAFCASS have been given responsibility for developing a new system for managing cases when they first enter Family Courts. It is called Private Law Pathways and is based on early interventions and dispute resolution. The system already operates in some CAFCASS regions and will be extended to the remainder over time. Although we cannot be certain it is possible that these changes will in time result in more referrals to Child Contact Centres coming directly from CAFCASS practitioners as opposed to solicitors.

Another change that Child Contact Centres may see later this year is families they are working with being involved in Contact Activities. Detailed information about Contact Activities is unavailable at present. However, we do know that people will access them through the Family Courts, they will be based on promoting co-parenting and parents failing to comply with them could risk a fine or imprisonment.

More information will be provided on both these changes in the next edition of Contact Matters.

Duncan Gore, Regional Support Manager (Central & South)

A descriptive view of the Coordinator's residential training, Northern Ireland

The morning of 3rd March brought a blanket of snow across Northern Ireland, difficult enough to travel in, but we were going to the foothills of the Sperrins. Would we all make this training event?

22 people arrived for the start at 10.30 and a few strays made it before 11am leaving us with a full house, some 24 people plus the trainers. Each centre was represented and some people took annual leave in order to attend. Judy Birchall and Duncan Gore divided us up into tables of four, ensuring not only a mix of centres, but also coordinators, management committee and volunteers.

Despite the long schedule Judy and Duncan made the course interesting with small group work, large group work and some interesting worksheets, they built in humour particularly Judy's challenge to our stereotypical views.



Each presentation asked us to look at our centre from the viewpoint of families, referrers, volunteers and management committee as well as funders and ourselves as

coordinators. Primarily the material challenged us to look at our operational policy from the child's perspective. There was a high degree of debate and discussion and some of us left to re-look at our policies and procedures and what needed to be altered. Discussions with the more established centres identified useful systems that would help as we strive towards good practice.



Events like this are a great opportunity to learn not only in the formal training but also in discussion with each other. Taking time out focuses the mind on the tasks on the agenda, and despite the demands of our own busy lives and that of our families, it is important to reflect on our roles in developing and maintaining Child Contact Centres. The whole event was carried out with a high degree of good humour. Participants' expectations were in part realised and none of their fears came to being.

It was somewhat amazing to look around and see how much we had grown in the past ten years; starting with two centres, we now

have 14 sessions per week across the province, with a further 4 planned in the next few weeks. That is not counting the work undertaken by Cloona supervised Centre.

No event like the residential just happens and the Northern Ireland Network of Child Contact Centres wish to thank all who made this possible: The DHSSPS for funding the event; The Management Committee of the Northern Ireland Network of Child Contact Centres; Judy and Duncan from NACCC for their excellent presentations, their experiences that they so willingly share and their easy manner that makes them so approachable; NACCC for all their help and support; all involved in Child Contact Centres across Northern Ireland, management committee, volunteers and their families; all coordinators, assistant coordinators or team leaders and volunteers whose work is invaluable. Finally to Muriel Orr, who brought all of this together, applying for funding, setting the date, liaising with NACCC, taxi drivers, printing the course material etc, etc, etc. Without her work this training would not have occurred. To paraphrase Judge Gillen's comments "I am confident that Child Contact Centres will continue to flourish under your excellent tutelage" All of us present at this residential echo this. Thank you Muriel.

Frances McKenna, Mid-Ulster Child Contact Centre

Co-ordinator training – additional dates

This course has been very popular and contains the following units 1) Referrers, 2) Families, 3) Staff and Management, 4) Funding and Publicity. In response to demand we are putting on our third two-day residential to be held on Thurs 13th November and Fri 14th November, Woodbrooke, Birmingham (Residential, Units 1-4). Further details will be sent to centres in due course.

"Really worthwhile 2 days, full of excellent material. Plenty of food for thought, much to work on!"

"Good relaxed atmosphere, able to speak freely and share with others".

"Very worth while training. Look forward to the next instalment".

"Very enjoyable. Met new friends and got to know other people".

Every Child Matters to Child Contact Centres

Every Child Matters
Change For Children

Of course it does – always has done and hopefully always will, but Every Child Matters is also the name given to a government initiative that was introduced in 2004 and has caused the biggest shake up in children's services for 50 years. It directly effects how health, education and social services deal with children and applies to the voluntary sector as well. Every Child Matters governs policy and therefore funding decisions by a wide range of organisations including the DCFS, Local Authorities, Health Authorities and CAFCASS.



Every Child Matters has identified five "outcomes", the results it thinks are most important for children to have for their future and every organisation working with children is expected to be doing their very best to help the children it is involved with achieve these.

What are the five outcomes?

1. Be healthy
2. Stay safe
3. Enjoy and achieve
4. Make a positive contribution
5. Achieve economic well-being

Not headings that trip off the tongue or easily stay in the memory I agree! At first sight maybe only the second, staying safe appears to have anything to do with child contact centres but let's take a second look.

Being healthy – this includes mental/emotional as well as physical health

Research tells us time and time again that children's emotional health and behaviour is improved by regular contact with both parents.

Staying safe – this has aims of children not witnessing domestic abuse, not being bullied, having

fewer road accidents, being less likely to go into care and suffering fewer accidents in the home

Centres can enable contact to take place so that parents do not have to meet each other and can provide a bridge to develop or maintain a link to a non-resident parent which can supplement the care of a hard pressed parent, or provide another viable option should the resident parent become incapacitated in some way.

Enjoying and achieving – includes aims that looked after children perform better in school, and more parents support children's learning

Again research tells us that often children do badly at school when they have lost contact with one of their parents or the separation is fraught with hostility. Also retaining and improving the relationship between the non-resident parent and child can lead to a greater involvement by that parent in the child's schooling.

Making a positive contribution – has aims of reducing criminal behaviour, developing self confidence and successfully dealing with significant life changes and challenges

Again there is much research to show a direct link between non-

involved fathers and juvenile crime and the core of our contact centre work is to make the challenge and change involved in breakdown as manageable as possible for the children.

Outcomes are what matter to people

In the past we have tended to deal solely with "outputs" – how many children attended, for how many sessions of contact – rather than "outcomes" (i.e results), what has *changed* for people? What are the effects of our actions? What matters to the people who use our service?

Under Every Child Matters there will be a focus on outcomes, because it is felt without these, services become irrelevant, they won't know how to improve their work and they won't know whether they are making a difference.

As centres may lose funding if we can't show results, our challenge for the months ahead is looking at how we can measure these often more intangible and long-term benefits.

For this year's conference (to be held in Nottingham on 20th September) and 2008/2009 training we are going to be looking in more detail at *Every Child Matters* and the practical ways we can engage with it as well as how its outworking in CAFCASS through the legal system may affect how and when families are referred to us.

Judy Birchall, Regional Support Manager (North)

Additional support for NACCC's member centres

We know that many of you like to literally see 'the face' of NACCC. We have aimed to build up again a team of field workers to work with us on a sessional basis, as and when needed. They will work with and support existing centres covering accreditation, re-accreditation and new centres' support. We still have a need for trainers in:

- South Wales
- Central Southern England
- East Anglia
- London
- Thames Valley
- Northeast England

Salli Ward (of Pro-Contact, Salford) is also available to help out in the Northwest.

Charmaine Bryant



Southwest England

I live near Weston-Super-Mare and I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to support new centres in the South West. I am a trustee and team leader at Weston Child Contact Centre and spent two years as a Support Officer for NACCC at the start of the accreditation process. I currently work in Somerset as an Emotional Health Worker for children and young people and spend much of my time supporting them with the considerable impact of family breakdown. I am looking forward to working with new centres and hope to have the opportunity to catch up with some familiar faces!

Russell Collard



West Midlands

My involvement with Child Contact Centres started 12 years ago as a volunteer with my wife Valerie at the WRVS Contact Centre in Telford (where I continue to volunteer). When WRVS pulled back from contact centres Valerie formed the charity Shropshire Child Contact Centres and now co-ordinates four centres in Shropshire. In October 2004 I took on the task of Support Officer for the Midlands and South helping centres achieve accreditation, visiting centres across the Midlands and laterally farther afield. During this time some 50 centres, within this area, have been able to achieve their accreditation. My contribution has now extended to assist new centres starting up, on-going training for them and established centres.

Paula Gale



East Midlands

About me! I am the mother of two teenage boys and we live in very rural Lincolnshire. I have been coordinator for St John Ambulance Child Contact Centre, Grantham since its beginnings in 2003; I managed the launch, publicity, recruitment of new volunteers, organised training, developed policies and procedures along with all the other duties that go with a new centre. The Grantham centre is now well established within the local community and is well supported by local solicitors and CAF/CASS. In early 2007, St John Ambulance opened another centre in Skegness which I also co-ordinate, having organised the recruitment and opening for that centre. I look forward to assisting new centres and those going for accreditation and re-accreditation.

Alice Sharville



Central Southeast England

I first became interested in issues around child contact at university after researching the motivations of members of Fathers 4 Justice. After leaving university I became coordinator of the Brighton and Hove Child Contact Centre and have been there for two years now. I am very interested in the ongoing development of Child Contact Centres, nationally and locally, inspiring me to become a General Trustee for NACCC and recently to represent Sussex Child Contact Centres on my Local Family Justice Council. I hope this training will help the volunteers and staff of the new centres to provide an excellent service and to get as much out of their experience of running and volunteering in a Child Contact Centre as possible.

Margaret Windeatt MCM



Southeast England

Having worked for an Independent Fostering Agency in Kent for many years I was asked in 2003 to set up and manage a Child Contact Centre in Herne Bay. The centre offered Supervised and Supported Contact, Parenting Assessments, Training, work with non-resident fathers and much more. We were successful in securing Service Level Agreements with Kent County Council and built and secured a firm foundation for the future of the centre to be developed further. I always was and still remain extremely proud of what not only I, but also my staff team achieved. I have now moved on to pastures new, supporting families for Kent County Council.

For more details on accessing the training pool and the vacancies please contact the NACCC office.

Dear NACCC



Please send your comments, letters and emails 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.

Pre-visits – the advantages are great!

Dear NACCC

We are surprised to find out how few centre coordinators actually use the 'pre-visit scheme' with clients at their contact centre. We at the Vale Royal Contact Centre, in Winsford, Cheshire, find it an invaluable tool to make an appointment, to be held at the centre, with one or both parties prior to their first contact visit, and we would urge others to try it. The advantages are great. My coordinators use your NACCC pre-visit checklist which, when completed, is signed by the parent(s), thereby assuring us that we have got to know them and have their full information which can so easily be referred to when necessary, and that they in turn will have seen the venue, met us and know what is expected of them when they come for contact with their children.

The advantages seem to well outweigh the time spent. I trust this will help others.

**Philippa Appleby, Chairman,
Vale Royal Child Contact Centre**

Whether to deal with self-referrals?

Dear NACCC

At the moment, here at Coventry, we don't accept self-referrals. However, I would be very interested in receiving feedback from those centres that do take them. I am concerned, with the current awareness of domestic violence and/or abuse and how it may manifest itself, not necessarily in physical violence, but in manipulation and emotional abuse, that taking self-referrals might bring some difficulties. For example, how do centres satisfy themselves that domestic violence/abuse is not an issue in a self-referral? A solicitor, mediation service, CAFCASS or Social Services referral can indicate on the referral form whether this is an issue and the organiser can arrange contact accordingly. I suppose my concern is that we might, unwittingly, put a parent who might have been pressurised into referring to the centre, at risk of harm. How do centres deal with this?

Janet Jones-Legg, Chairman, Coventry Child Contact Centre

Dear Centre

There is no easy answer to this, even where the referral comes via a solicitor or CAFCASS officer there is no absolute guarantee that either the existence of domestic violence or its extent will have been disclosed. The NACCC Guidance Manual contains a section on Self-Referrals (Section 12 page 131). The basic points are that both parties must be interviewed, any other involved agency contacted before the contact takes place and the contact limited initially so that the situation can be further assessed. Self-referrals are much more time consuming, however the stark truth is that more and more families are unrepresented. Articles concerning the problems self-referrals cause centres have recently been submitted for publication in the District Judges' magazine and Resolution's.

Judy Birchall, Regional Support Manager (North)

NACCC AGM & Conference 2008

Saturday 20 September,

Trent Vineyard, Nottingham

Theme: **Every Child Still Matters**

Would you be willing to show other centres round your centre?

If so, please do contact the NACCC office so that we can publish a list in the next issue of Contact Matters.

Many thanks to:

Resolution for enabling Yvonne Kee, CEO and Judy Birchall (Regional Support Manager North) to attend their conference in Brighton and for funding the development to the NACCC website.

Bill Vincent (ex District Judge) for his generosity in endowing Child Contact Centres with legacy funding, to be known as the George Barnes fund for Centres in Need. *Stop Press!* – we have just heard that further funding from the same benefactor will fund NACCC regional support for members for five years.

'CONTACT MATTERS' EDITORIAL STAFF MAINTAIN THE RIGHT TO EDIT LETTERS PUBLISHED.
THE NEXT COPY DATE FOR ARTICLES IS 26 SEPTEMBER 2008.

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