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Congratulations! NACCC member receives Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2006



Ann Baker, Co-ordinator receiving the award from the Lord Lieutenant.

NACCC would like to congratulate St Paul's Child Contact Centre, Bracknell (formerly known as St Paul's Family Meeting Place) on receiving **The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2006**.

This award is given for outstanding achievement by groups of volunteers who

- regularly devote their time to helping others in the community;

- improve the quality of life and opportunity for others;
- provide an outstanding service.

The crystal award and certificate were presented by the Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire **Mr Phillip Wroughton** at a celebratory service, which took place on 12 October 2006. Several volunteers had attended the royal

garden party at Buckingham Palace in July.

Co-ordinator Ann Baker said 'We are absolutely thrilled to have been given this award. Voluntary work so often goes unnoticed, and so for us to be recognised and for our work to be appreciated and valued is a real honour. The Centre would like to thank all the volunteers who give up their time to serve the community, without whom the Centre would not be able to facilitate meetings to such a professional standard, and St Paul's Church, who have supported and encouraged us from the beginning.'

Celebratory service – see page 2

Conference report 2006 with this issue! See page 7.
NACCC AGM 2007 will be held in September. Look out for further details.

Hot press! Sustainability Fund for NACCC Centres

All NACCC Centres providing supported contact should have received details by now of a new pot of DfES funding, to be spent by 31 March 2007. If you have not heard from NACCC about this, please get in touch.

Telling our dream...

In a recent research report for the DfES we were asked to include a strategic view of how we would like to see the ideal world of NACCC and Child Contact Centres. In other words, we were invited to tell them our dream. Seasonally it's a time of magic, new starts and looking forward, so a good time to share with you that vision. Imagine...

Children have the right to see both parents if it is in their best interests. Where this cannot be facilitated privately, Child Contact Centres are available within reasonable reach of their home. These Centres are accredited to high quality and agreed national standards to best meet the needs of the children. The Judiciary, CAFCASS, solicitors and other referring and partnership agencies are able to refer confidently and appropriately to available

supported and supervised Centres, working to agreed protocols. Because Child Contact Centres are recognized as a part of the system, although independent, and as an essential service for children, Centres are sustained through adequate statutory base-line funding. The accessibility of contact services, which meet the needs of all children, can potentially be met through specialist or tailor-made contact services. New initiatives are tested and good practice shared.

The whole infrastructure is supported by NACCC, through its accreditation, support, training and information services and liaison with key agencies to maintain this. Existing non-member Centres join NACCC to become accredited and fewer existing Centres close through lack of funding. NACCC is seen as the

expert voice on all matters to do with Child Contact Centres, highlighting ongoing and emerging issues and liaising as equals with CAFCASS and other agencies. It is adequately funded centrally to provide this through regional and head office staff and volunteers who are able to develop Centres and respond to referrers, parents and others. Quality child contact is better understood and acknowledged and primary care needs of children are met.

In the same report we made recommendations on how to move towards making this vision a reality. But perhaps we could still do with a magic wand?

Season's greetings to you all, and many thanks for all you do for families and in support of NACCC.

Yvonne Kee, Chief Executive

(continued from front page)

Queen's Award celebrated with a hug

Ann Baker, Co-ordinator of NACCC Member Centre in Bracknell sent in the following report on the celebrations.



Volunteer Helen Branchley congratulated on 3 years' service.

Many people took the time to travel to attend the service. Mary Lower MBE, President of NACCC took part and Duncan Gore, Regional Support Manager attended. Local

dignitaries, including the Centre's nominator, Councillor Jacqui Ryder, (former Mayor of the Borough and Voluntary Champion), Councillor Cliff Thompson, Mayor of Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Councillor Shelagh Pile, Mayor of Bracknell Town Council, also joined volunteers past and present, Church leaders and members, retired CAFCASS officers and friends and family to celebrate this achievement. We could not miss the opportunity to present long service certificates to some of

our own important people, our volunteers. Refreshments were served after the service and we had a chance to catch up with old friends and familiar faces. One of the highlights of the evening was the arrival of one of our families from several years ago. Rachel, who was just a very small girl when we saw her last, had grown into a beautiful teenager and spent a good part of the evening hugging us all. It was a great evening of celebration and will be remembered by all for a very long time to come.



Volunteer Karmanie Ashley congratulated on 3 years' service.

**Ann Baker, Co-ordinator
St Paul's Child Contact
Centre, Bracknell**

Thanks to the 7K+ Robin Hood Marathon runners and the 45 marshals helping to raise money for NACCC



Over 7,000 runners completed the full and half Robin Hood Marathon on Sunday 10th September 2006. Each entrant helped to raise money for NACCC and the other three official Marathon charities with many runners raising additional funds for the official charities or a nominated charity.

Duncan takes it in his stride!



Duncan Gore, Regional Support Manager with his medal after completing the half marathon – well done Duncan!

NACCC would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the 1,120 runners who completed the full marathon, the 6,806 runners who completed the half marathon, the wheelchair competitors and the many fun-runners (including hundreds of young people) who completed the 2.5 mile fun run. Amongst the crowd of marathon runners was NACCC's own Regional Support Manager Duncan Gore

– who completed the 13 mile half marathon in the top 1200 with an impressive time of 1 hour 42 minutes and 45 seconds – a personal best by over 5 minutes!



Competitors in the full and half marathon.

Thanks to all our supporters!

A special thank you should go to our senior marshals who donned bright yellow bibs and helped direct runners and traffic along the marathon route – Gordon Anderson (NACCC Honorary Treasurer), Carol Meunier (shared with Chris Meunier) (Regional Trustee – South) and Prue Napthine (NACCC supporter). Thanks also to the 42 volunteer marshals (Fiona McGill (Chair), Fiona Moffat (Company Secretary), Richard Sant

(Regional Trustee – Central), Yvonne Kee (Chief Executive), Judy Birchall (Regional Support Manager), Child Contact Centre Volunteers, Nottingham High School pupils and other friends and relatives) – without these volunteers the race could not have gone ahead. NACCC would also like to thank the staff at Experian, Nottingham who donated over £1000 direct to the official charities and volunteered in droves to make the day a spectacular event.



Competitors in the 5k fun runners.

And finally, thank you so much to Ros Barney who volunteered as a Trustee, chaired the Focus Group and got NACCC involved in the marathon in the first place – thanks for all your time and commitment over the last three years...

If you are interested in running a few miles or a half marathon to help raise money for NACCC – do get in touch with NACCC, **0845 4500 280**, contact@naccc.org.uk

Are you out there?

NACCC recently received a cheque for £250 as a donation towards our work. No note was attached, so it remains an anonymous gift. Just in case it was a reader of 'Contact Matters', this is a big THANK YOU. Your contribution is really appreciated.

Going for Gold

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

Again it is humbling to see the level of commitment and dedication people round the country have put in as volunteers at their local Child Contact Centre. Warm congratulations from all the Trustees and staff at NACCC and thank you for helping children keep valuable links with their family. The following list indicates the number of each level of certificate awarded since the last issue of 'Contact Matters'. The number in brackets indicates the total number of years' service given to that Centre.

Aire Valley Child Contact Centre
1 volunteer – 1 Gold (13 years)

Derby Child Contact Centre
18 volunteers – 6 Gold, 7 Silver, 5 Bronze (145 years)

Harrogate Child Contact Centre
22 volunteers – 20 Gold, 2 Silver (214 years)

Jimmy's Contact Centre
2 volunteers – 2 Bronze (6 years)

Kidlington Child Contact Centre
1 volunteer – 1 Gold (10 years)

Middleton Child Contact Centre
10 volunteers – 7 Silver, 3 Bronze (73 years)

Milli's Child Contact Centre, Jersey
3 volunteers – 3 Silver (18 years)

Child Contact Centre Accreditation

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

- Abingdon Child Contact Centre
- Altrincham Child Contact Centre
- Armagh Child Contact Centre
- Askham Family Centre
- Ballymena Child Contact Centre
- Bedworth Contact Centre
- Blackpool Fylde & Wyre Child Contact Centre
- Brentford Child Contact Centre (formerly St Paul's)
- Bridge Chapel Contact Centre, Garston
- Brighton & Hove Child Contact Centre
- Burton-upon-Trent Child Contact Centre
- Buttershaw Child Contact Centre
- Central Belfast Contact Centre
- Charles Kane Foundation (The)
- Church Street Child Contact Centre (Slough)
- Chelmsford Child Contact Centre
- Cheltenham Child Contact Centre
- Chichester Child Contact Centre
- Child Contact Centre, Newcastle
- Coventry Children's Contact Centre
- Cowley Child Contact Centre
- Croft Family Centre/Family First (The)
- Devizes Child Contact Centre
- Dorchester Child Contact Centre
- Eden Child Contact Centre (Penrith)
- Edgware Child Contact Centre
- Families First Contact Centre
- Fledgelings Child Contact Centre
- Foci Centre
- Foyle Child Contact Centre, Connect Contact Centres Ltd (Wolverhampton)
- Grassroots Supervised Child Contact Service (Fence)
- Halton Child Contact Centre (Runcorn & Widnes)
- Harmony Project
- Harrogate Child Contact Centre
- Hartlepool Child Contact Centre

Portsmouth Child Contact Centre

6 volunteers – 2 Gold, 4 Silver (46 years)

Shirley Family Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 Bronze (3 years)

South Cheshire Child Contact Centre

21 volunteers – 13 Gold, 5 Silver, 3 Bronze (164 years)

Springfield Contact Centre, Upminster

14 volunteers – 9 Gold, 4 Silver, 1 Bronze (113 years)

St John Ambulance Child Contact Centre, Grantham

3 volunteers – 3 Bronze (9 years)

St Joseph's Family Centre

24 volunteers – 5 Gold, 8 Silver, 11 Bronze (148 years)

St Paul's Family Meeting Place

7 volunteers – 2 Silver, 5 Bronze (25 years)

The Embrace Child Contact Centre

16 volunteers – 13 Silver, 3 Bronze (97 years)

The Salvation Army Child Contact Service Birmingham

7 volunteers – 7 Silver (42 years)

Walker Street (Hull) Child Contact Centre

5 volunteers – 5 Bronze (15 years)

Wycombe Child Contact Centre

13 volunteers – 13 Silver (91 years)

Congratulations! A total of 1,232 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 (Gold for 10+ years' service, Silver for 5 years' service and Bronze for 3 years' service).

- Havant Borough Child Contact Centres
- Hucknall Area Child Contact Centre
- Huyton with Roby Child Contact Centre
- In-Sight Supervised Contact Centre (North Wiltshire)
- Ipswich Contact Centre
- Kendal Child Contact Centre
- Lewisham Welcare Contact Centre
- Loughborough Child Contact Centre
- Lower Earley Family Contact Centre
- Luton Family Contact Centre - Spurgeons Child Care
- Merton Contact Centre
- Middlesbrough Child Contact Centre
- Middleton (Manchester) Contact Centre
- Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre: The Child Contact Centre
- Mr Bee's Family Centre
- Newbury Family Contact Centre
- North Somerset Child Contact Centre (Clevedon)
- Norwich Family Contact Centre
- NYAS House (The)
- Palmers Green Child Contact Centre
- Pudsey Child Contact Centre (Leeds)
- Rotherham Family Contact Centre
- Salisbury Child Contact Centre
- Salvation Army Child Contact Service (The)
- Salvation Army Mansfield Family Contact Centre (The)
- Shared Parenting Contact Centre (The)
- Shirley Family Contact Centre
- South Cheshire Child Contact Centre
- Spurgeons Childcare Contact Centre (Wolverhampton)
- Spurgeons Family Centre (Bedford)
- St John & St Stephen's Contact Centre (Reading)
- St Joseph's Family Centre
- St Paul's Family Meeting Place
- Stephen's Place Children's Centre
- Stockton Child Contact Centre
- Taunton Child Contact Centre
- Trinity Contact Centre (Norwich)
- Uxbridge Child Contact Centre
- Walker Street (Hull) Centre
- Walton on Thames Child Contact Centre
- Welcare Child Contact Services in Croydon
- West Wiltshire Child Contact Centre
- Westwood House Child Contact Centre
- Worcester Child Contact Centre (The)
- Worthing Child Contact Centre
- Wycombe Child Contact Centre
- York Supervised Child Contact Centre

'The Reluctant Child' NACCC Regional Training

"They don't want to see their dad!" "I don't want to go in!"

NACCC's member Centres are continually telling us about children who are experiencing difficulties with contact. Although there are no easy solutions this training workshop looks at:

- How we can recognise reluctant children
- What makes them reluctant
- How we can help reluctant children

The workshop features an interactive video of common reluctant child scenarios. Further information about the

programme can be obtained from NACCC's Support Managers Duncan Gore and Judy Birchall.

Course dates are as follows:

- Wednesday 13 December 2006, **Norwich.**
- Friday 19 January 2007, **South London.**
- Saturday 17 February 2007, **Devizes.**
- Sunday 25 February 2007, **Altrincham.**
- Saturday 3 March 2007, **Camberley.**
- Wednesday 21 March 2007, **Garston, Liverpool.**

- Saturday 28 April 2007, **Saltney, Chester.**
- Saturday 19 May 2007, **Antrim (tbc), Northern Ireland.**

Member Centres will be sent details of workshops in other areas (including Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Middle Rasen and Sheffield) when the information becomes available. Check the NACCC website for an updated list. To book a place on one of the above workshops, please contact the NACCC office.

Lobbying news roundup

In the last issue of 'Contact Matters' we encouraged you to lobby your MP – and lobby you have! As we said, this is a crucial year for the government in carrying out the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Almost immediately the calls came in from Centres that had visited and written to MPs. Some of you have phoned in for information to aid your discussions and to tell us why you feel so strongly about supporting the work of NACCC and Child Contact Centres. You have also told us your stories, with examples of parents who have had joy and meaning restored to their lives because of contact with their children, or those who have been supported through difficult times. You have made suggestions too, one being to attract an MP with some experience of Child Contact Centres to champion our cause in the House of Commons – a good idea. Please contact us if you know anyone who could fulfil this

role. Next, in came the letters. We have seen a number of similar responses to Centres from Parmjit Dhanda MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families. Some Child Contact Centre volunteers and supporters are still working towards a meeting with him or Beverley Hughes, Minister for Children, Young People and Families. In the meantime Mr Dhanda asked Joe Farrell, our valued contact at DfES, for more information about contact services. As a result NACCC put together a comprehensive research report, which incorporated the many replies from our short emailed questionnaire to centres. Thank you to all who responded. The report will be used as a briefing tool for government over the next two years.

Has NACCC got millions?

There has been some misunderstanding about

NACCC's funding position. The bulk of the Government money allocated for contact services has been given to CAF/CASS. Some, but not all, NACCC supervised Centres were awarded funding, with NACCC receiving a small management fee. Earlier in the year, NACCC was given just 24% of the bid to the Children, Young People & Families grant programme. This resulted in redundancies, an office move and no appointments to vacant positions. *So hopefully we have busted the myth!*

If you want more information to assist you in your lobbying, there are articles within this issue that will be of use, such as the statistics and the vision outlined in the Chief Executive's message. We also have copies of letters sent to and by other Child Contact Centres that could be adapted. Let us know how you get on.

Yvonne Kee, Chief Executive

2006 NACCC Conference report

“NACCC and the Volunteer – What’s in it for you?” “A problem shared is a problem solved”

Over one hundred delegates attended NACCC’s AGM and Conference held on Saturday 1 July 2006 in Nottingham. The event offered an ideal opportunity for delegates to contribute to the AGM proceedings, meet other Child Contact Centres, share good practice and access training.

“Reflections on my motivation and experience at a supported Child Contact Centre”

Rev Clifford Wilton



A summary of the talk given by Rev Clifford Wilton, Minister at St Andrew’s in Castlegate UR Church Nottingham and Volunteer at Nottingham Child Contact Centre.

The word *motivation* implies or assumes that we become volunteers because we have been inspired to do so — either perhaps by hearing about the value of such work, or in some cases have experienced a Child Contact Centre’s support or help: perhaps you are a parent who has needed the facilities of a Centre, or a solicitor who has found the local Centre to be an invaluable help in his or her work among families.

But I have a suspicion that most people are recruited as volunteers because they “just happen to be around” — and when asked why they became a volunteer, they will either say ruefully “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time” or we *hope* what they will say is “I was in the right place at the right time.”

I have seen abundant healing of pain in the 14 years I have been a Centre volunteer. Mind you, I’ve also witnessed — as I am sure many of you have done — fist cuffs, the arrival of the police, baby-snatching, and helped frightened mums to escape by the back door when round the front she would have to confront a vengeful former partner complete with supporting cast. But situations like these are rare, very rare. More often a parent will pop back as you are closing

to say 'thank you' and to make sure the volunteers knew how important the Centre has been to them and to their children, often over many months or even years.

I would guess that a major part of what **continues** to motivate volunteers is the belief that you are taking part in one of your community's most vital channels of healing, in situations fraught with risk and trauma. Children arrive with broken hearts and go out with hope. Children arrive in fear (the fear sometimes generated on the journey there by a parent whose hurts are deep and who them-self dreads the potential meeting with a former partner) — children arrive in fear and go home laughing. Children arrive in tears, and say farewell later with hugs and smiles.

But in my case there was something more. I had been minister of my previous church for 14 years. It was a beautiful church, with rose beds all round it, in a lovely part of Westcliff-on-Sea with wide streets and no parking restrictions and the best organ in South-East Essex! So yes, *everybody* wanted to get married there. But the point of what I am saying is this: that while most of the local Anglican and other churches were pretty forbidding to couples where for one or both of them this was a second marriage, and in the 1970s and 80s the remarriage of divorced people in church was a hot potato for church authorities, in the case of my church it had been the tradition to be more welcoming and accepting to such couples, and of course the news had got round! A great many of the future partnerships my church was being asked to bless, included the children of the first marriages. And I started to find that it was these children's welfare and happiness and security that became the most important part of the marriage preparation classes, including the couple's attitude to their former partner or partners, and the access the children would have to these former partners.

I arrived in St Andrew's in Castlegate URC Church Nottingham in 1992, totally committed to the work of my new church's Access Centre (now known as Nottingham Child Contact Centre). My wife and I became immediate volunteers, and we still are. My motivation in one sense arose from the pain that had been revealed to me as I had been privileged in my previous church to hear the stories of couples I had never met before, and been an agent for a healing process that enabled them and their children to enter into their new partnerships with hope...

But like many if not most of you, my motivation at its deepest level arises from a longing that there should be, in our fractured communities:

- places of meeting and reconnecting for badly broken families,
- places for the renewing of trust and the healing of hurt,
- places of hope, and places of love.

As you know, you don't experience all of these things all of the time, and sometimes you go home despairing at the end of a session. But thankfully one little sign of hope can restore our belief that the Child Contact Centre movement is truly worth supporting, and involves our hearts as much as our heads.



Attracting, valuing and retaining volunteers

Sheila Hawkins, Volunteering England



Sheila Hawkins is Head of Volunteering (Health and Social Care) at Volunteering England and volunteers at Leicester Family Contact Centre in her spare time. The key information from her speech follows:

What does research tell us?

Most people volunteer...

- to feel useful
- to put something back
- to feel part of the community
- to learn new skills
- to make new friends
- because someone asks them

Home Office Citizenship Survey (HOCS) 2005

- Half (50%) of all people had volunteered (formally or informally) in the last month
- This translates to 20.4 million people and is a significant increase from 2001 (47% and 18.8 million people)
- 43% of people at risk of social exclusion had volunteered in the last month

How old are volunteers?

(Figures taken from HOCS 2005)

64% of 16-19 year olds volunteer
53% of 20-24 year olds volunteer
49% of 25-34 year olds volunteer
52% of 35-49 year olds volunteer
49% of 50-64 year olds volunteer
51% of 65-74 year olds volunteer
38% of people 75 years + volunteer

Breakdown by race HOCS 2001

39% of white people, 42% of black people and 35% of Asian people participate in formal volunteering.

How are volunteers recruited?

- Word of mouth
- Local Volunteer Centres
- Student community volunteering
- Advertising/articles in local press and radio, including media which target specific communities
- Local business and statutory sector pre-retirement courses
- Parents' groups through local schools

Why do people continue to volunteer?

- Feel valued and appreciated
- Because they enjoy it
- Getting something out of it
- Feel they are making a difference
- Can see the effect of what they do

What helps in a Child Contact Centre?

- Clarity of role
- Recognising individual's strengths
- Opportunities to discuss difficult issues
- Debriefing after specific events
- Thank you and recognition events

Further information

Volunteering England

www.volunteering.org.uk

0845 305 6979

Sheila.Hawkins@volunteeringengland.org

What will be happening inside and outside of your Child Contact Centre over the next five years?

“A problem shared is a problem solved”

Yvonne Kee (Chief Executive), Duncan Gore & Judy Birchall (Regional Support Managers)



NACCC's Chief Executive Yvonne Kee began the conference by outlining its main objectives:

- To heighten Child Contact Centres' awareness of the need for change.
- To highlight the areas in which some of these changes are likely to take place.
- To consider how Child Contact Centres can work more closely with NACCC to introduce, accommodate and manage these changes.

She asked delegates: Where will your Centre be in five years time? Current trends in divorce and separation indicate that the need will have almost certainly increased, but will you still be able to meet that need?

Yvonne then went on to say...

“As you are all aware NACCC has been confronted with the need to change. This process has not been easy and has put our staff and trustees in a position where they have needed to think carefully about what the future holds for them and the organisation. What have we learned from the process? In simple terms that change has and always will be part of our lives but it is how we react to it on an individual and organisational level that is important and dictates much of what might happen in the future.

Some people find it easy to think about, plan for and initiate change but others are often content to remain in the comfort zone and deny that the world is changing around them. Such an approach may have short-term benefits but equally may lead to looking back and regretting the failure to think about and plan ahead. Another response to the need for change is to say “everything is beyond my control and there is therefore little point in attempting to think and plan ahead” whereas we know that individuals have immense power in influencing and changing things. That's why we have over 300 Child Contact Centres, because those involved in setting them up believed in their capacity to make a difference for families and children.

For Child Contact Centres thinking about change it might be that many of you struggle because the demands of today are so great that there is very little time to think about or plan for tomorrow. Sometimes there is an over dependency upon one or two people to run the Centre. Perhaps I should acknowledge that the demands of NACCC's accreditation process for Child Contact Centres has probably not helped the situation!

So that's why the theme for today is “A problem shared is a problem solved”. We will identify the prospective changes and challenges and look together at ways of meeting them.

Internal challenges

NACCC has always and will continue to be an organisation that supports and works with its member Centres. It's important for us to work together to try to identify and seek solutions to some of the problems your Centres are likely to be facing over the next five years. It is sometimes easy to forget about or overlook these problems, but the survival of your Centre is likely to be dependent upon your answers to these questions.

Volunteers/staff

- How many volunteers/staff will you need?
- When will you need to recruit any new/additional volunteers/staff?
- How will you recruit your new/additional volunteers/staff?
- Where will recruit new volunteers/staff?
- To what extent do your volunteers/staff represent the community in which your Centre is located?
- What will happen if you either ignore the need for or fail to recruit new volunteers/staff?

Premises

- Will you be able to continue using your existing premises?
- Are your premises going to continue meeting your needs in relation to the numbers of families you need to provide for and safety?
- What if any increase will there be in the cost of using your premises?
- Is your centre able to accommodate adults and or children with disabilities?
- Will you need to purchase any new or additional toys/furniture for your Centre?

Management Structure

- Will your present management structure be able to continue meeting the demands of running your Centre?
- At what point will you need to recruit new members of your management team?
- What skills will these people require?
- Where will you recruit new members of your management team?
- How will you ensure that any new members of your management team play a full part in the running of the Centre?
- Will you need a new coordinator/manager?
- When and how will you recruit your new coordinator/manager?

Funding

- How much money will you require to run the Centre?
- Will you able to continue using existing sources of finance?
- Will you need to charge referrers?
- Will you need to employ staff/additional staff?

Centre Administration

- What if, any changes, will you need to make to your Centre's referral and assessment process?
- Will you need to change your Centre's induction programme and training schedule for new and existing volunteers/staff?
- Will you need to provide any additional services for the families that will be using your Centre?
- How will you ensure that your centre continues to be run in accordance with NACCC's National Standards and accreditation process for Child Contact Centres?

External challenges

*Presented by Judy Birchall,
Regional Support Manager*

It is a time of unprecedented change within the family justice system and wider children's services. This cannot fail to have an impact upon all our Centres although the form and extent are difficult to ascertain as yet but it is important that Centres are aware of and looking out for them and NACCC as always will do its best to disseminate information and advice.

Regionalisation – There is a move to focusing on a more regional basis particularly for funding. This may present difficulties with some organisations being too national and others too local.

Alternate Dispute Resolution – Various forms of this are being introduced. CAFCASS is now undertaking far more work with families as they go into court rather than following lengthy court hearings with the aim of preparing fewer and shorter reports. There are an increasing number of mediation pilots, the introduction of Public and Private law protocols have seen increases in referrals to Centres in many areas and many family solicitors are actively promoting collaborative law where families meet round a table with their legal advisors in an endeavour to avoid going to Court.

Contact Activities – this concept is being introduced by the new Children Contact and Adoption Act and can be ordered by a judge. There is still uncertainty as to what exactly constitutes a "contact activity" who will do them, pay for them and monitor them.

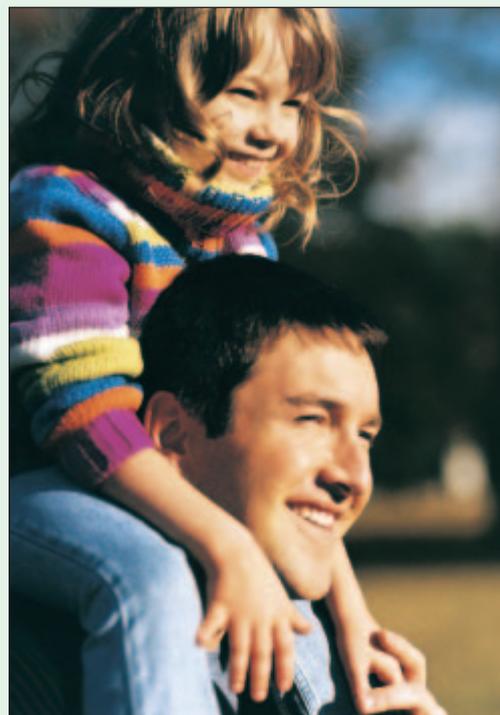
Commissioning – There is much more emphasis on this by organisations such as CAFCASS and Children's Trusts rather than simply giving grants with the consequent need for tendering, contracts and the provision of statistics.

Children's Trusts – These have now been introduced to bring together children services, health and education in order to implement Every Child Matters and run the local Safeguarding Children Boards, which now replace Area Child Protection Boards.

Children's Centres – These are being set up by Children's Trusts and the government aims to have about 3,000 in place by 2010. They will provide a range of activities either on a stand alone or in partnership basis. Many have child contact as a given aim although few know much about them or realise their use in private law as opposed to for social services. They are linked to Sure Start and Extended schools and can provide an opportunity for existing Centres to work in partnership with them but you will have to approach them they are unlikely to know about you.

Children's Rights – Increasingly at the forefront of organisations' thinking with the appointment of a Children's Commissioner for England and an emphasis on obtaining the views and having the direct input of children into services for them.

Family Courts – Increasing role for Family magistrates with the likelihood of far more contact matters being dealt with by them. Each area now has a Family Justice Council, which can be an invaluable source of information and networking.



Workshop: external and internal factors that affect Child Contact Centres

During the afternoon workshop session delegates were asked to identify the external and internal factors that affect Child Contact Centres. As with all workshops at conferences, peoples' comments and feelings were recorded on flip chart paper. It is always difficult to summarise what was said but the major themes that kept arising were:

External Factors

Definitions of Contact

Many referrers do not know about, or simply ignore these. This means Centres providing supported contact find they are often asked to work with families that need supervised contact.

Funding

Many Centres are finding themselves spending increasing amounts of time and resources fundraising. This is because there appears to be no overall strategy for funding Child Contact Centres and the amounts of money that are available are often inadequate.

Training

This needs to be seen as valuable and approached positively. It should not only meet the needs of Child Contact Centres but also be directed towards the judiciary, solicitors and CAFCASS staff.

CAFCASS

The NACCC/CAFCASS protocol has provided a foundation upon which change and consistency can be built. Although there are many examples of good practice based upon the protocol, many Child Contact Centres are still struggling to develop meaningful and productive relationships with their local CAFCASS staff.

Publicity

Child Contact Centres cannot operate in isolation. They need to work together and raise their profile by contacting and enlisting the support of MPs, local councillors, the judiciary, solicitors and the media.

Diversity

Wherever possible Child Contact Centres need to reflect the communities they are located in. This needs to be reflected in their volunteers/staff and the facilities they provide.

Internal Factors

The feedback from the groups is best summarised by these quotes:

"We are busy people with lots of demands upon our time."

"We are often isolated and lacking support. A centralised system with referrals coming through one point might help to overcome the isolation and the problems we have with some families."

"The bureaucracy needs to decrease and be replaced by simplicity."

"We need time to plan and put things in place."

"Local Centres need to know that NACCC is listening to them. This will ensure that new practices/standards are not having a negative effect upon existing volunteers or deterring the recruitment of new volunteers."

"The stronger your internal structure and systems the less vulnerable you are to external factors."



The main messages from the conference...

Thanks again to everybody who came to and contributed to the conference.

Much was said and it is difficult to summarise it all. Nevertheless the main messages that appeared to be emerging for NACCC and its member Centres were:

- Although we can sometimes try to deny or postpone it, change is inevitable.
- It is important for us to think about and then plan for change.
- Child Contact Centres cannot be successful if they are working alone or in isolation.
- We can manage and cope with change better by listening to and working with each other.

Ending as we began – where will your Centre be in five years time?

The need for it will almost certainly still be there but will those people running the Centre at present still be in a position to meet it?

Making a difference...some ideas from Centres that attended the conference

- **Pre-Visit forms** have helped over issues like photographs and mobile phones.
- **Children are encouraged to actively participate** in their Centre by having a voice and the knowledge that they are listened to.
- We have a **fathers' worker** and a **mothers' worker** not involved in contact.
- We have the **same staff** on duty each session. This gives the children **security and a face to recognise**.
- **Smile 😊 on first contact** with both adults and children – it always makes people feel at ease and therefore in a better frame of mind despite their problems.
- **Involving students** as longer term volunteers and taking up student volunteering offers of practical input to improve our facilities.
- Our Centre has built a **partnership** with the other Child Contact Centres in Northamptonshire – enables a sharing in training, expertise and for giving support to co-ordinators.

Looking for the “win win” for families



Jane Robey, Chief Executive Officer,
National Family Mediation

National Family Mediation (NFM) and National Association of Child Contact Centres share a common interest in helping children maintain links with their families following family breakdown. Both achieve their aim through different routes. Some NFM mediation services manage contact centres and they are fully aware of the links between our organisations. Some mediation services use the services of Child Contact Centres to facilitate contact during the process of mediation and all mediators would say that a contact centre is a great resource and a stepping-stone for families at a time of crisis.

I recently heard of a case in mediation that highlights the value of our different organisations and yet paints a familiar picture. Mr and Mrs Smith had separated, and between them they had managed to arrange contact between Dad and the children. This was working fine until financial problems for the parents became critical. There were a couple of ugly rows about money that happened in front of the children. Mr Smith stopped paying the mortgage and child support, Mrs Smith was desperately anxious about money and was repeatedly phoning him.

Mr Smith tried to get a loan secured on the house to help them out whilst they sorted out their separation, but Mrs Smith was advised by her solicitor not to sign the loan agreement papers lest it affected her later. Mr Smith was enraged and on the next visit to the children lost his temper with Mrs Smith. Another ugly row took place. The following day he failed to turn up for contact and she was making angry phone calls because he hasn't turned up and isn't responding to her calls. Out of sheer desperation and financial worry she went to see her solicitor. The solicitor asks questions. Was he violent? Is she worried? and the solicitor writes a letter saying he can no longer come to the house and contact is suspended.

Contact is re-established with the help of the local Child Contact Centre, which provides a safe neutral environment for contact with managed handover. At the same time Mr and Mrs Smith start mediation. Within a short space of time they both understand the concerns of the other and are able to work towards resolving their pressing issues to bring about resolution.

These misunderstandings and negative interpretations of behaviour are common and understandable in the context of relationship breakdown. I'm sure that contact centre workers will be only too familiar with the individually expressed concerns of parents but will recognise both parents trying to work through their difficulties in a climate of hostility, mistrust, pain and anguish. It is certainly a familiar set of circumstances for mediators and yet in this case, between the mediator and the contact centre, life was made more

bearable for the parties and in particular the children who had experienced real conflict between their parents. They too are living through the uncertainty of their family's changing circumstances. Parents in conflict can lose sight of their children's needs. They need the support and assistance of our respective services to be able to achieve their goal of being actively and positively involved in their children's lives. We already make a difference; together we make MORE of a difference.

To find out more about your local family mediation service please contact National Family Mediation on 01392 271610 or email general@nfm.org.uk or visit our website at www.nfm.org.uk

NINCCC AGM



Yvonne Kee, NACCC's Chief Executive spoke at the Northern Ireland Network of Child Contact Centres' first ever AGM on 8 June 2006. This was a great opportunity to meet local Centres, members of the local Judiciary and to hear about the national picture.

Photo from left to right: Nuala Judge (Armagh Contact Centre), Yvonne Kee (NACCC), Judge Philpott, Judge Gillan, Mary Caldwell (Armagh Contact Centre).

Centres

Coram needs help with some research they are undertaking: 1) what informational material do you provide and is any translated? and 2), do you have a safeguarding protocol that could be shared (Coram are looking at the extent to which ethnicity and religion are seen as relevant to approaches to safeguarding and providing clarity for service users). Contact **Ashley Goos**, Coram Family, 020 7278 5708, ashley@coram.org.uk

Do you have links with Children's Centres, Trusts or Extended schools? Can any Centres who are based in or have strong links with these get in touch with Yvonne Kee, Chief Executive who would be interested to hear any feedback you may have. Yvonne Kee 0845 4500 280, ykee@nacc.org.uk

Do you have vacancies on your Board? The Governance Hub's recent survey revealed that 93% of boards have between 1 and 5 vacancies, and 43% find it more difficult to recruit trustees now, than five years ago. *Get on Board* recruitment campaign aims to inspire more people to consider becoming a trustee. Participate or register trustee vacancies at local Volunteer Centres or at www.doit.org.uk/needvolunteers.

More info and trustee recruitment resources at www.governancehub.org.uk or 0800 652 4886.

Every Child Matters Commissioning Guidance Booklet of commissioning guidance for

services provided by children's trusts. Designed as a resource for those with responsibility for commissioning services for children, young people and maternity services through children's trusts. View and download the document from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk (search for 'Industry techniques and inspiration for Commissioners').

Fatherhood Quality Mark (FQM): a new badge of excellence for working with fathers. Award for agencies – or services within an agency – demonstrating good practice in working with fathers. Father-friendly services are defined as services that take fully into account the impact of fathers on children's lives, and are firmly based on evidence about local needs. Further info at www.fathersdirect.com, or contact Liz Rand, 01604 630194 l.rand@fathersdirect.com

Letting the Future in celebrates innovative community projects that have been supported through the Local Network Fund for Children and Young People. Many small organisations have made big differences and this book tells some of their stories. Tel: 0845 602 2260 for your free copy (quoting ref LNF/LTF1). Full text available www.community-links.org and from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/localnetworkfund

NACCC info on email. Relevant information on funding opportunities, resources and events is sent by NACCC to Centres that are on email. If your Centre is not currently included

(or if you think we may have the incorrect email address as we always get some emails bouncing back!), please send your email address and Centre name with the subject 'Email network' to k.lockett@nacc.org.uk

Family

7 out of 10 teenagers say that parents getting on well together is one of the most important factors in raising happy children, yet only 1 in 3 parents thought so. One Plus One's new website www.theparentconnection.org.uk encourages parents to think about the importance of their relationship and its effects on their child.

Understanding Childhood distributes a series of 14 solution focussed leaflets on the emotional and behavioural development of children from birth to adulthood. Insight into a child's feelings and view of the world and the affect on their well-being, behaviour and relationships as they develop and their family changes. Free from www.understandingchildhood.net, 01303 261000

www.getconnected.org.uk Free confidential help for young people. Registered charity providing a free, confidential helpline that gives young people support and information on relationship problems, emotional issues, school bullying, drugs, rape, mental health, abuse, housing and suicide. Publicity materials available from admin@getconnected.org.uk, tel: 020 7009 2500. Helpline: 0808 808 4994

Legal

Legal Aid: a market-based approach to reform by Lord Carter recommends that fundamental change must be made in the way legal aid services are obtained. The report sets out detailed and costed recommendations for a new procurement system for legal aid in England and Wales and is available to view and download from www.legalaidprocurementreview.gov.uk.

The consultation period is now closed but final decisions are yet to be made and lobbying continues, as there has been considerable criticism from all sides of the family law arena.

Working in the Family Justice System: The Official Handbook of the Family Justice Council. Approved by the Family Justice Council, this explains how the system is organised, what the different responsibilities are and how they interact. Available at £30 + P&P from **Jordan Publishing Ltd, 0117 923 0600, www.jordanpublishing.co.uk**

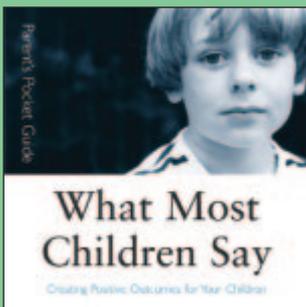
Volunteering

Free lunch for volunteers on benefits. New rules, which took effect from 9 October will mean people on benefits who volunteer will no longer have to bear the cost of their lunch-time meals. As with all such expenses, they should be genuinely incurred as a result of volunteering, and must be a direct reimbursement of the actual cost of the meal.
Public enquiries: 020 7712 2171
Website: www.dwp.gov.uk

Volunteering hub learning loop. Ever wished you could talk to other volunteer managers on a regular basis to discuss tricky issues, learn from each other and build partnerships? Volunteering England are creating a cross-sector network of 'learning loops'. www.volunteering.org.uk/managingvolunteers and go to the EVM pages to register your interest.

Volunteering information sheets – these are available on a variety of topics (including new sheets on definitions of volunteering, involving ex-offenders, saying thank you to volunteers, monitoring & evaluating a volunteer programme, problem solving procedures) at www.volunteering.org.uk/information

What Children Say



16 page pocket-sized guide *Pocket Guide* for parents published by Kent Family Mediation Service containing clear and simple messages from children of separated parents and is backed up by extensive research findings from both the United States and the UK. Common themes have emerged from a range of findings and research with children whose parents live apart. Copies may be ordered from Kent Family Mediation Service for 60p each or 50p each for orders of 100 or more, plus postage. Kent Family Mediation is a not-for-profit service and is a registered charity. For more information please telephone (01795) 429689 or email, contact@kentfms.co.uk



Reading Centre notches up 15 years

St John & St Stephen's Contact Centre, Reading celebrated its 15th anniversary on 10th October with an open evening attended by a variety of different groups and representatives. **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Photo from left to right: Iris Fletcher (previous Co-ordinator), Laura Eades (Chairman), Ian Maynard (Co-ordinator), Carol Meunier (Volunteer & NACCC Regional Trustee – South) and Eleanor Gibson (Solicitor).

Pro-Contact qualifying course: accredited training for professionals in supervised & assessed contact



If you have ever stood in court before an eager barrister and left shaken and bruised after an attack on your credibility you will know how easy it is to begin to lose confidence in your expertise and experience. Unfortunately, despite a huge number of skills and qualifications amongst people working in supervised and assessed contact, there is very little that proves we can do the job! In public law you will find respect for a social work qualification – especially with post-qualifying experience – and legal people, more used to contact work within a local authority or undertaken by CAFCASS, tend to use a Social Work qualification as *the* measure of suitability for your post.

Of course a social work qualification is a huge asset – not because of the qualification but because of the level and breadth of learning it indicates about its owner. But that is all it is. Social work does not directly train a person to observe, analyse and report on child contact. Come to think of it...nothing does! There is no significant training course or qualification for what many of us do. Training that we do undertake contributes to the experience and learning we amass over time and those of us doing court reports add it to

our CVs at the bottom but there is no short hand way of saying, "I'm a qualified Contact Worker with X years' experience".

Well, it's time that professionals had their learning formally accredited and that those new to the world of contact had a standard way to acquire appropriate training. If we are not recognised as appropriately qualified for the jobs we do then our conclusions and recommendations will not be taken seriously and, as a result, we will do a disservice to the children and families with whom we work. As NACCC works towards developing the extended accreditation for supervised centres, demonstrating that staff are suitably experienced and trained will be ever more important. A training course is needed for the benefit of the children and families with whom we work, NACCC and the cause of contact and ourselves as professionals. We are planning to run the first training course as a pilot with Pro-Contact staff – hopefully after a successful bid for some funds – and thereafter offer the training to professionals in other centres or related fields, possibly as a package for centres to run themselves.

The course is based around 22 Open College Network units. The OCN offers an array of accredited units including Mental Health, Child Psychology, Assertiveness, Working with Parents, Report Writing, Child Protection, Family Law, Communication Skills and Attachment – to name but a few. We have divided them into 5 separate modules (Theoretical Studies,

Assessment & Supervision, Practical Studies, Personal & Professional Development and Optional units). The units identify learning outcomes and suggest ways in which these outcomes can be demonstrated in the individual learner. Like you, Pro-Contact staff already know an awful lot and some of the learning will be easy to demonstrate; newer or more rusty members of staff will no doubt find the training useful and quickly pick up skills as they study on-the-job.

Pro-Contact has recently completed a course to become an Approved Centre for delivery of the training and is awaiting the official 'stamp'. The course can then begin in early 2007. Staff will be required to gather evidence of achievement in a portfolio. Although there will be some new seminars, workshops and lectures a good deal of the learning will come from an adaptation of our existing training and staff development programme. There will be work involved but I hope people will take it in their stride. As this is very much a pilot for the first year the whole process is open to consultation. Anyone wishing to take a closer look at the course content or anyone with something to contribute should contact me directly. NACCC will also receive comments and ideas directly or post them on the Professionals email Network.

**Salli Ward, Project Manager,
Greater Manchester Supervised
Contact & Assessment Centre
(Pro-Contact)**

**Tel: 0161 737 8996
pro-contact@btconnect.com**

National statistics on NACCC Child Contact Centres

There are **252 Member Centres** offering Supported contact and **66 Member Centres** offering Supervised contact in the British Isles (excluding Scotland).

Supported contact takes place where there are facilities to enable children to develop and maintain positive relationships with non-resident parents and other family members. A **Supervised Child Contact Centre** should be used when it has been determined that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering harm during contact.

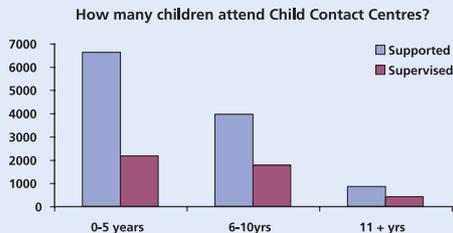
How often are they used?

61,466 Family visits to Supported Centres and **30,628 Family visits** to Supervised Centres... this is an average of **244 Family visits** to each Supported Centre and **464 Family visits** to each Supervised Centre per year.

How many children have contact with a family member at Child Contact Centres?

15,000 children keep in touch with both parents through NACCC Child Contact Centres each year. On average **45 children** will attend a Supported Centre and **65 children** will attend a Supervised Centre each year.

How old are the children?



58% of children attending **Supported Centres** are 0-5 years old and **50%** of children attending **Supervised Centres** are 0-5 years.

When are Centres open?

36% of **Supported Centres** are open weekly, **23%** are open fortnightly and **38%** are open twice a month. **65%** of **Supervised Centres** are open daily, **18%** are open weekly and **12%** are open twice a month.

Who funds Child Contact Centres?

CAFCASS is the biggest funder, funding **67%** of Supported Centres and **50%** of Supervised Centres.

Do Centres use paid or voluntary staff and how much time do they put in?

35% of **Supported Centres** have a paid co-ordinator, working an average of 12 hours a week.

65% of **Supported Centres** have a voluntary co-ordinator, working an average of 7 hours a week.

85% of **Supervised Centres** have a paid co-ordinator, working an average of 26 hours a week.

15% of **Supervised Centres** have a voluntary co-ordinator, working an average of 5 hours a week.

How many volunteers work within Child Contact Centres?

5,800 volunteers work within NACCC Child Contact Centres; on average there are 4 male volunteers and 15 female volunteers at Supported Centres and about 4 male volunteers and 10 female volunteers at Supervised Centres.

Do Centres charge?

8% of **Supported Centres** charge families with 16% charging referrers.

50% of **Supervised Centres** charge families with 44% charging referrers.

*Figures based on membership at 1/04/06, analysed from the 205 Annual Statistical returns from Member Centres received by 9/6/06. Data from Centres offering supervised contact and Centres offering both supervised and supported contact has been amalgamated for the purpose of this article. **The full Annual Statistical Analysis 2005-6 is available on request from the NACCC office.**

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.

Dear NACCC, what is the minimum age at which someone can volunteer?

NACCC Member Centre

Dear Member, as is often the case with volunteering, the law has little to say on this matter. There is no general legal restriction on volunteering by young people in not-for-profit organisations. It is sensible to bear this basic guidance in mind whilst looking on the volunteering opportunity in the light of the other demands in the child's life. For example they will need enough time for homework and a social life. Discuss this issue with the volunteer and between you

work out a reasonable level of commitment. As with all applicants, young people should be judged on their merits. Minimum and maximum age limits for volunteers are extremely arbitrary and the fact that someone is willing and able to do the work is more important than a date on a birth certificate. You should also check that your insurance policies cover volunteers as young as 14 or 16 and also check the level of cover for any volunteers who are over 75 years (personal accident cover may be restricted to volunteers aged between 16 and 75 years).

(Answer made with reference to Volunteering England's website www.volunteering.org.uk)

Dear NACCC, should first aid kits contain plasters?

NACCC Member Centre

Dear Member, basically you can have plasters in your first aid kit as long as they are sterile – individually wrapped, not the long strip that you cut. St John Ambulance suggest that the following items can be used:
Assorted sterile adhesive dressings

(plasters), medium sterile dressings, large sterile dressings, sterile eye pads, triangular bandages, disposable gloves, advice leaflet.

Remember that there is no definitive list and each kit should reflect what it will be used for. For example, ensure that you have some small dressings and plasters if there is the possibility of using it for children. ©EMERGENCY AID

Reference Guide (St John Ambulance)

PS. Did you know that there should always be a nominated person responsible for first aid on duty during contact sessions. St John Ambulance (www.sja.org.uk 08700 10 49 50) and British Red Cross (www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk, 0870 170 9110) run training courses nationwide.

Dear NACCC, I have not seen my four-year old son for over six months. I have not even been granted supervised contact because of allegations of abuse. The judge at the County Court had said I couldn't have contact with him – even at a supervised Child Contact Centre – whilst the allegations are being investigated. This is not just!

Concerned father

Dear parent, the judge is right. Although upsetting and frustrating for you, it is not good practice for a Child Contact Centre to allow any form of contact when allegations of abuse are being investigated. This is to protect the children involved from the risk of any further harm.

'CONTACT MATTERS' EDITORIAL STAFF MAINTAIN THE RIGHT TO EDIT LETTERS PUBLISHED.
THE NEXT COPY DATE FOR ARTICLES IS 23 APRIL 2007.

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