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NACCC AGM & Conference 2011

Accreditation and CRB returns: why are they so important?



The NACCC trustees, regional support managers and the NACCC office staff want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended the recent AGM and conference at the Royal Courts of Justice in London. The focus was on

the forthcoming family justice review and the impact on child contact centres. Please see a summary of the conference on pages 3 and 4.

NACCC has been commissioned by the Coalition Government's Department for Education to improve outcomes for children and their families affected by separation. The main task over a two year period is to ensure that each CCC is fully accredited and working to National Standards, which includes CRB checks being in place for all staff, volunteers and Trustees. Every member of NACCC's staff are working together, along with a new database, to have an accurate picture of the current situation and Action Plans in place for those centres that may need help to achieve National Standards. CAFCASS and the Department for Education requested a snapshot of the current situation in mid-November and regular reports up till the end of the year to demonstrate that NACCC is making progress and that we have robust systems in place to protect and safeguard children. Those centres which are not able to work with us to achieve National Standards will have their membership of NACCC removed.

"If I can help just one person... then this will be worthwhile"

Julia has used a number of contact centres and has shared her experience with us. Her article on page 5 highlights a range of issues for families who use our child contact centres. We hope as members you will read Julia's story and think about your own service and how you are supporting similar families. NACCC is aware that all services strive to provide a first class service, despite the pressures of funding, training, paperwork and safeguarding. We do recognise there is an enormous amount of good will that oils the wheels and keeps many centres open. It is important that we all understand what it is like for the people who use the services provided by centres and we all listen to their experiences.

Mike Dornan, NACCC Chair

Welcome to Kathy...



Hello, my name is Kathy Bayne and I commenced work with NACCC in July 2011. I have had a variety of jobs from catering, cabin crew with the famous Freddie Laker, nursery nurse night duty at a local hospital to 21 years' experience within Social Services and the Early Years Education Department. I have worked up the ranks from nursery officer to Children Centre Manager.

I have experience in child care interventions, child centre management and family liaison, having developed a supported and supervised contact service for

a local authority, going through the process of enhanced accreditation with NACCC. I enjoy providing professional advice on frontline implementation of policies and strategies to deliver value for money and customer satisfaction.

My initial work with NACCC is to liaise with the supported centres in Greater London and to provide some coordinators training within the London area. On my many visits I have enjoyed visiting the variety of centres and taking on board some of the current issues, such as self-referrals, the reluctant child and sustainability, all of which are being covered in forthcoming training events.

My outside interests are tennis, watching and playing and my treasured allotment where I am always battling against the weeds!!!

I look forward to meeting everyone in due course in the London and surrounding areas. I work a flexible 22 hours a week and can be contacted either on my landline, mobile or email.

Kathy Bayne, Regional Support Manager – London

...bye to Wendy



Wendy Hannah has now retired from NACCC – She worked for NACCC for 3 years and managed our IT systems and

website expertly and will be greatly missed. We wish her well in her future ventures and a happy retirement.

Support and resources factfile 7 (to be continued)

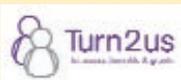


New Telephone Advice Line. The Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) has launched a new telephone line offering FREE legal advice and information to frontline practitioners, provided by a family law solicitor experienced in child protection and safeguarding issues. Tel: 07884 262362. Hours: 9:30am-5:30pm, Monday-Friday.

COMING SOON: New website and training courses. The new advice line is part of the CCLC's Child Protection Project: Legal Advice, Information and Training for Frontline Practitioners. The forthcoming website will include information on relevant legislation and guidance; legal and policy updates; analysis of current issues in child protection; and other specialist legal information. The training services offered will address all aspects of child protection and safeguarding. For more information, contact cpp@essex.ac.uk or **Hayley Millar** at 01206 877 932.



OnlyDads offers on-line support and direction for dads raising children on their own, or for those struggling with limited contact. Our website has up to date articles and information, and a "Panel of Experts" offering FREE advice from a range of professionals and leaders in their field. Contact info@onlydads.org or see www.onlydads.org for more information.

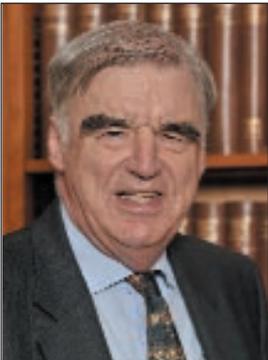


Turn2us, part of the charity Elizabeth Finn Care, offers a free, confidential and easy-to-use website: www.turn2us.org.uk to help people in financial need access the money available to them through welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help. The website's Benefits Checker provides a step-by-step, guided facility to estimate how much you might receive from means-tested benefits, based on information you provide, other benefits you might be entitled to, and how to make a claim.

The Grants Search on the website gives access to over 3,000 charitable funds for people who are in financial need and have welfare needs, or who require help with education and training costs. There is also information on the website on a wide range of subjects including managing money plus resources such as budgeting tools and 'Find an Adviser' to locate someone to speak to in your area.

The importance of child contact centres in the family justice system

The Right Honourable Sir Nicholas Wall, President of the Family Division.



I am going to talk about the importance of child contact services in the family justice system. One has to see it in the present context – we are in for a very difficult few years ahead. All agree in this room that the work done by NACCC is enormously important. The future financial climate during the next 3 years indicates no money:

- No public funding for private law work. The Government has made this clear.
- So, no legal aid for separating parents wanting to litigate. Some see this as an advantage as they do not trust family lawyers. That is not a view I share.

The normal case of a family coming to a child contact centre will not have the benefit of legal advice and I judge this as a great pity.

When parents separate they are not entirely rational. We are increasingly in the area of domestic abuse, drugs etc. Many spend time fighting using children as ammunition. Contact is one of the most difficult aspects of the work we do. Many separated parents are angry and stressed. We know that child contact services provide secure non-judgemental contact to rekindle relationships. How is this going to operate in the future? Some parents may have seen a mediator but will not have received legal advice. A few will have gone through the mediation process. Some may have gone to a

parent information programme. Some will have come to you from the Court.

There are concerns for supervised services – how will these be funded? Who will pay? It is not just the solicitor's advice – there is reporting to court, the funding process. Even if one has the funds – an expert can be hard to find. You may find experts prepared to work at the rate the authorities prepared to pay.

Along with the difficulty with the absence of legal aid – who will be paying for hair strand tests? DNA tests? The litigant will now have to pay – this should be looked at carefully. For those that run organisations reasons will be used by the authorities to withdraw funding. Contact centres will need to be accredited. If not funding will be withdrawn. The powers that be CAFCASS etc will apply strict guidelines to funding. NACCC needs to be alert and aware as to what they will be. Normally speaking I am enormously cheered up by meeting NACCC volunteers, normal people doing normal things of an altruistic nature.

The future is difficult. Parents may have mediators behind them. They may have had their first hearings appointment. They may have come to you with the support of the judge. The judiciary need to be aware of the difficulties you operate to ensure that the people come at the appropriate time etc. There is a fear that the legal system will be unable to deliver justice. Litigants in person take more time in court and are more difficult to deal with; they are often not entirely rational. The legal system may have difficulty in coping with the numbers. More people, more pressure. More people will self-refer. You don't get the easy cases. The Family Interim Justice Review points this out but does not deal really with the issue.

Where do you fit in to this depressing picture?

- Continue to do what has always been done – you have been involved for a number of years. I met a large number of you when I first started as Liaison Judge and was enormously impressed. There is some excellent work going on.
- Read the conclusions of the Expert working group, and see the proposals to the judiciary and mediators and lawyers – debate is important.

Self-referrals – is it reasonable and practicable for supported centres to be able to carry out assessments and allocate work?

CAFCASS currently provide safeguarding checks – this provides an element of protection. If these are not available – if referral directly or different source – should you be expected to deal with on your own? Look at the helpful summary provided by the Expert Working Group. You should receive support with the difficult referrals or with families that have not gone through the safeguarding process.

We are still waiting for the final report of the Family Justice Review – it is important that the work you do should be professionally supported and more protected than in the past.

Family Justice Review update

The Family Justice Review panel published its final report on 3 November 2011 which announced a package of recommendations aimed at tackling delays in the family justice system. NACCC submitted a response to the interim response and will report in full in the next issue and via the NACCC website.

Panel presentation

The panel was chaired by The Right Honourable Sir Nicholas Wall. Each panel member spoke of their relationship with child contact centres before a question and answer session. The panel was as follows:

- Stephen Cobb QC, Chairman of the Family Law Bar Association
- David Allison, Chair of Resolution
- Beverley Sayers, Family Mediators Association
- CAFCASS – Fiona Green
- His Honour Judge Wyn Rees

Stephen Cobb QC Chairman of the Family Law Bar Association



Stephen spoke of the role of barristers in difficult family disputes and the future faced by families going through the legal system: **“It is estimated 75% of private law cases will cease to be eligible for legal aid; the legal aid cuts are estimated to affect 68,000 children and young people.** Quite apart from the likelihood that the courts are going to become so clogged up with litigants in person that cases will take longer and longer to resolve, there is a real question about how referrals to contact centres will in practice be made.”

David Allison Resolution Chair



David introduced the role of Resolution’s 6,000 members – family lawyers and other family law

professionals committed to a constructive, non-confrontational approach to family law. He expressed concern about the Family Justice Review: **“If the Bill**

gets through un-amended thousands of vulnerable parents going through divorce and separation will be forced to struggle by without legal help – creating a serious risk that many children will lose contact with one of their parents or be subjected to unfair financial arrangements that harm their upbringing.”

Beverley Sayers Family Mediators Association



Beverley explained her role raising the profile and representing family mediation on

the National Family Justice Council. She explained that the overarching body for family mediation is the Family Mediation Council – in charge of implementing national standards and accreditation for family mediators. She said **“In this changing climate – there is a real need for you and I to work together. Cases that are suitable for child contact centres should be dealt with in a seamless fashion.”** She explained that she had recently been working on a protocol for mediators referring to child contact services and the importance of NACCC’s accreditation system: **“As a mediator representing the mediation community I am aware that the government are focussed on standards and accreditation. You have to ensure that your accreditation is in place. I would like to underline that unapologetically.”**

His Honour Judge Wyn Rees



His Honour Judge Wyn Rees, who has been a judge for 23 years, explained that his relationship with child contact services

began six years ago when he took over as chair of Pontypridd Child Contact Centre. He explained the Expert Working Group had recommended that information

about child contact centres should be provided by the new Family Justice Service and that centres should be appropriately funded, stating **“It is of vital importance that the Final Report of the Family Justice Review fully recognises the service provided by child contact centres and recommends they are properly supported and adequately resourced.”**

NACCC also welcomed **Dr Ravi Thiara, Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for the Study of Safety and Well-being at the University of Warwick** speaking on **“Child contact centre & post-separation violence in the context of domestic violence experience of South Asian and Afro-Caribbean women and children**

Delegates attended workshops on:

- The role of mediation in the new family justice system and how to deal with signposting from mediation (Beverley Sayers, FMA)
- Self-referrals – options for child contact centres in responding (Duncan Gore, NACCC)
- Putting Protocols into practice - your relationship with referrers (James Pirrie, Resolution & Judy Birchall, NACCC)
- Considering children’s perspectives in using your service (Suzanne Teasdale & Mary Hind, IMPACT)
- NACCC’s response to the Family Justice Review – its implications, our findings and recommendations (Mike Durell, NACCC)

Full speech notes can be found on the NACCC website.

What is it like to be referred to and then use a child contact centre?

Creating positive change – a parent's experience



"If sharing my experience can help one person not be so scared and help families have an easier journey, then this will have been worthwhile"

What you are about to read is moving and will give you food for thought. Some centres have chosen to use it as a training tool. It is something that everyone making referrals to and working in child contact services can learn from as we work together to make them safer and better environments for the families that use them.

I feel sharing my story may give some insight into how it feels to use contact centres and this may help to initiate positive change in the future. When I sat down to write this it was hard to find the words, it has been such a difficult time, it all feels very raw and unresolved, but I have a sense, an underlying determination, that if I can help just one person not feel so frightened, help one family have an easier journey, then this will be worthwhile.

I am a single parent of three children: Matthew who's ten, David who's eight and James who's two and a half. Matthew and David's Dad and I divorced amicably. We communicate well and co-raise the children, I feel successfully. They see him regularly and often go on holiday together. I trust Andrew and feel the boys are safe and happy with him. He plays an equally important role in their lives as mine.

Sadly, James's life has been a very different story. I met James's dad, after being a single parent for four years. He was charming and it seemed as if life had treated him harshly, I felt sorry for him and offered to help him get work, help to translate a CV, for he is of middle eastern descent and seemed to struggle with English.

We began a relationship that lasted for about 13 months; it was the most difficult experience of my life, very fast and volatile. During the first few months I fell pregnant by accident and considered having an abortion, as by then I knew how unstable he was. I went to see a nurse but just couldn't do it; something inside

me said it would be okay, I would find a way through this.

Pregnant and frightened he pulled me and my children into what felt like a black vortex of paranoia and control. He tried to isolate me from my mother, father and sister, not passing on messages, hiding my mobile phone, saying they were all against him. I battled to break free, I battled to keep my sanity. He eventually left when James was almost three months old. My major fear being that he would try to abduct him and take him to his native home in the Middle East, as he had threatened, when he was only two days old.

At the first hearing, the magistrate ordered I meet James's father with James out in the community, but this broke down quickly as he was often late and very aggressive. We were then referred to a contact centre.

My first experience of visiting a contact centre

A solicitor gave me a mobile phone number; she had no address or idea where the centre was. I rang and rang leaving lots of messages asking for directions and information on how the

process worked, no reply, searched for centre on internet and couldn't find it. The court had ordered contact to begin the following Saturday and I was really frightened as I could not find the place. The manager of the centre eventually rang late on Friday, the day before we had to go and told me how to get there. It had been a very stressful week, but at least I knew where I was going.

When I arrived by taxi with my six-month old son, there was no obvious sign of where the contact centre was within the large building complex. I asked someone who worked there (I think a security guard, who didn't know) then I went into the library and asked the staff, but they didn't know either. As I wandered around the building, I was frightened I would come face to face with James's father. Eventually I found the room with a small sign on the door.

A letter, a map, information to explain how the system works would have been a great help. Also all solicitors who use contact centres, should have leaflets and information they can give to their clients.

When you are frightened... knowing what will happen gives you stepping stones to cope



NACCC has produced leaflets and website information for families

After several months, we had to leave this centre because of James's dad's behaviour

and were then referred to another centre. Visiting this centre was a very different, a very positive experience. I was given a letter, a map and came along to an initial induction interview, the ground rules were explained and I had a tour of the facilities. The staff were professional and reassuring and the building was very secure. I was told if my older boys were worried about their little brother, or had questions about what a contact centre was, then they could come in and see the building to waylay their fears.

It was so lovely to experience the opposite side of the spectrum, I immediately felt very relieved. Everything felt organised and structured well. I felt that James would be safe here and if his father was aggressive the staff had experience of conflict resolution.

The centre felt as if it had a good foundation, a good Manager, which then attracted good staff and as they were clear about their role and how their service operated, this then made me feel clearer and safer as a user of this service. When you are frightened and faced with so many uncertainties, knowing what will happen, feeling the environment is safe and secure, gives you stepping stones to help you cope.

Travelling – getting there and back safely

Each time I travelled to the first centre, I worried that my ex would be on the bus as he had to take the same route as us. It was very stressful getting on to the bus then running off at the other end, looking in all directions, pushing the pushchair quickly, to get into the centre. There was no staggered times of arriving; we had to be there at exactly the same time.

Leaving was worst, and I used to try to delay, taking my time until James was in his pushchair, waiting until I saw him leave the room. I would sometimes hide in the toilets, if he had been aggressive in the session, hoping he had caught the bus. But he would often wait at the main door and harass me as I left. I did tell staff but he denied it and no action was taken. Eventually, after several months, my father took time off work to bring me by car as he still does when he can today.



A shy woman who brought two young children, shared her experiences with me in the waiting room. She had never spoken to anyone, but after her ex husband's brother burst into the waiting room, demanding to see his niece and nephew, then was taken out by security, she told me what she was enduring. Originally from West Africa, English was her second language and she had no family or friends here. The only people she knew were her ex-husband's family.

It had been difficult for her to breakaway from a terrible domestic abuse/violence situation. Her only support was her solicitor and local church. Most times when she came to the centre her ex-husband and family would be on the bus or waiting for her at the door and would be very abusive to her. They swore and spat at her. She spoke to the staff after some encouragement and a young girl began walking her to the bus stop at the end of contact. Someone there as a witness did seem to stop the harassment. At the time I was very new to the contact centres and wish I had knowledge of support networks that could have helped her, I still think of her as she was very vulnerable, again this is why a letter, a map, a welcome pack with other resources in, would be a great help. Also if I hadn't been there, she would have no one to talk to. The volunteers at the centre were very young and seemed unaware of her state of mind.

This raises important issues:

- Staggered leaving times, some centres have this, but the time needs to be long enough to get away safely, at least half an hour, especially if travelling by public transport.
- Someone for vulnerable parents to talk to. Also consideration when English is a second language and how these parents could be supported. If there is no one available at the centre to talk to, leaflets of counsellors, other good resources could be available, left in the waiting area.

At the centre we use now, they do have two specific members of staff, one to support the mums and the other the dads. This resource would have really helped the West African mum.

Recently, when I had an accident and hurt my knee and couldn't

walk, my parents had to bring James to the centre. They were both very anxious about this and I was worried how it would be for them. They came home to my surprise, singing the praises of the staff member, who is the mother's support worker. They had both felt very reassured by her presence, as she had sat and talked to them in the waiting area for the whole session. They asked me to contact her and thank her as they were very grateful. They have taken James on subsequent sessions without so much fear having more confidence in the staff and the centre.

The mother's support worker has also escorted a vulnerable mum to her first time in court. This is amazing. I would have loved it if someone could have come along with me, I was so frightened. And although she could not go into the actual courtroom, being in the building listening to conversations with the solicitor gives a real insight into how difficult the whole process is. She was so relieved to have her waiting outside and escorting her from the building. Such a wonderful resource that really helped a frightened parent through this first awful experience and giving insight for staff into the court process without any costs incurred as I know the courts offer training within the court room.

Volunteers / contact centre staff

During the last two and a half years we have visited three contact centres and everyone involved in the running of them have been genuine and caring. My main concern with the first centre we visited was the age of the staff, who were mainly very young girls. I asked what type of training was involved in their role and most had had none. This worried me as I wondered how they would handle a violent outburst or attempted abduction or any other stressful situation. In the waiting area parents often talk about the reason why they are using the centre, the majority

of people I spoke to said it was because of violence or drug or alcohol abuse. So fear for security and safety was a major issue.

On one occasion my ex-partner refused to let my son go at the end of the session. He was crying and was very upset. I was standing at the door very distressed, as he paraded him around the room, making comments about how I had neglected him and deliberately hurt him to all the people in the room. The young girls did their best to negotiate and rang the Manager for support, but it was a terrible situation to be in. Fortunately after a period of about forty minutes, of threats of security and

My little girl believes her father lives at the contact centre one mum told me

police he let him go. I was very worried about returning to the centre after this but fortunately after another hearing, contact was suspended until another centre could be found.

The 'Disneyfying' of the non resident parent



"My little girl believes her father lives at the contact centre and is like a character from Walt Disney or Santa Claus", one Mum told me. "He has lots of money and time to play with toys and has lots of friends who all live there with him", her little girl had said. Lots

of parents have fed back similar concerns. My son too believes his dad lives at the centre and owns lots of toys. I have tried to explain to him the truth but he doesn't believe me, he had a strong initial impression when he made contact with his dad and associates him with toys. It could give an unrealistic view of the non-resident parent, especially if they have not had contact for a long time, or like James have only ever had contact in the centre environment.

If this non-resident parent is unstable, it could give them the false impression of the opposite, of a sense of wealth and security. I can understand that the environment needs to be fun and stimulating but surely the emphasis is on building of relationships. I know this is meant to be a transitory phase and eventually it is hoped the family will leave the centre, but for some families like mine contact has continued at the centre for a long time and this is an issue.

Perhaps it could be explained to the children at the beginning, that the contact centre is a building no one lives in. It's a place used for parents and children to meet. The toys and building belong to the staff, to the centre and not the non-resident parents. Perhaps if contact is long term, then there could be sessions that focus on parenting skills, on developing one to one relationships where less outside stimulation is involved.

The resident parents' waiting room / area

The waiting area for the resident parent or family member is a real issue. It is my experience and the experience of many parents that I have talked to at centres, the parent who brings the child often feels treated like a third class citizen. Sat in a dank room, or corridor, worrying about their child, with no tea or coffee and sometimes nowhere to go to the toilet. Often these parents have

suffered domestic violence/abuse, feel powerless and have very low self esteems and this type of treatment probably totally unconscious on the side of staff really perpetuates this feeling and creates a very negative experience for them visiting the centre. If tea is made for the people in the room with the kids playing then it should also be offered to those waiting.

Centre rules – should they be more flexible?

My ex-partner has been very abusive to me during contact sessions, where I have had to stay in the room, as James was frightened. Some staff members have been witness to this and also James's very distressed state but when I have asked them to write any thing down, to confirm this

My most harrowing, personal experiences have been logged and catalogued

with another professional body, they have refused, stating that in this type of contact 'supported' it is not centre policy.

In one session he threw a toy box off my legs and almost knocked me over, he was swearing quietly and pushing me away from James and telling me he would be coming home with him and he belonged to him, it was so stressful, I went and spoke to the staff. They were sympathetic and sat near by, but nothing was recorded there was no evidence of his abusive behaviour. On another occasion James was climbing up the door to get out of the room. The session ended early because of this, but no one was willing to confirm this with my solicitor to write anything down.

At the end of a session quite recently, he banged on the windows, shouting 'I love you!' to James, but staring at me aggressively. He also ran out in the garden screaming that he loved James but staring at me in a very threatening way. I wonder if

this could have been fed back to the courts, then James and I may not have had to endure so much. His behaviour not only upsetting us but surely having an effect on the other children and parents in the building.

I know under issues of child protection they can make a comment but where does the line stop?

"I feel as if we are a set of random letters on top of a referral form"

As these experiences show it has been a very challenging couple of years, before the relationship broke down, I had never spoken to a policeman, social worker, solicitor or magistrate. These were distant characters, actors on TV programmes like The Bill. I had

never heard the terms 'Harassment, injunction, CAFCASS section 7 report.' I did not know contact centres existed.



Now my life is entrenched in these terms. My most harrowing, personal experiences have been logged and catalogued, written down by so many different 'professionals' all with differing opinions and approaches and seemingly little communication and cohesion between the different parties.

I feel as if we are a court case number. A set of random letters on top of a referral form. Our names and situation punched out by an automated computer without feeling or humanity. We are just part of a vast and often inefficient system.

I have felt shattered and disillusioned by services that I

thought had been set up to help and protect vulnerable families like mine, so many errors and mistakes, misunderstood information, so many hearings, so many different magistrates, inexperienced young solicitors. I would not want anyone to endure this and have felt like curling up in a ball and dying, but always deep inside was this inner resolution, that if I continued to tell the truth, that justice would be done and this would keep my son safe.

In recent months visiting the contact centre has been very difficult, as James has consistently not wanted to go. It's as if a black cloud looms over the weekend, the day and time marked on the calendar. Always as we approach the building, I pray that it will go

well, his mood will be balanced, he will behave himself and respond well to James and he will come out happy... Not tearful, eyes full of confusion and fear, stretching his little arms up and as I lift him, clinging tightly to me.

I hope not to spend the next few nights none of us having any sleep, James crying and telling me 'his daddy is naughty;' refusing to go in his cot-bed, having to sleep next to me, and sometimes his brothers as well, holding our hands tightly, until he starts to relax and drop down.

It's very hard to see my usually strong and independent son, look so anxious and frightened. To revert back into nappies after doing so well potty training and become hysterical and hiding under the table, if I mention the words 'contact, centre or daddy' even if they are in a different context.

It has been so hard on his two brothers. Weekends used to be fun, we would go to the park, to the cinema, do normal family

things, but now they revolve around the centre. After contact on Saturday, Sundays are spent exhausted, bewildered and trying to reassure James, who does not want to go anywhere, he just wants to stay home and make sure everyone stays very close to him.

My boys are both bright and academic and usually full of fun and mischief, but are visibly deflated

each time James comes home crying. They cannot understand why he leaves the house happy and comes home tearful, why he has to go to this 'centre' when he is so unhappy. They are very protective of their little brother and can't understand why he sees his Dad, after he was so awful to them.

In the beginning, they told a social worker that he had bullied and frightened them. That he had thrown David against the wall, because he was angry with him. That he warned them if they told anyone they wouldn't be believed and he would hurt them and me. The social worker deemed this as 'over chastisement' – her words – but noted that if I had not removed him from the family home a full Social Services investigation would have ensued. Even so, they have shown great courage and stand defiant and they inspire me to keep going. We have had our ups and downs but they have now adapted well to a new home and a new school, as we had to leave the old ones behind for issues of safety.

Looking to the future with a sense of unease

A few weeks ago, when I was stressed and worried about James, Matthew said to me: 'The truth will come out, Mum, the people will see who he really is.' The wisdom of children... ironically what Matthew has said

I have sat in the contact centre and yearned to be you... having the choice

is coming to pass and currently all contact has been suspended. Suspended by CAFCASS, because of feedback from the contact centre staff and by a CAFCASS support worker, who had major concerns when she went out in the community with James and his Dad in regards to his behaviour.

Presently, I feel numb. On the one hand I am pleased that James has a

rest from this, but with a sense of unease, I wonder what will happen next. What will the CAFCASS officer in charge of the case decide? In-direct contact until his behaviour issues are addressed? I can only pray so. Life at the moment is full of uncertainty and I sometimes wonder if we will ever have a normal life.

Our story, I'm sure is like countless others you have heard. Our names may sail by your ears when you are tired and distracted at a referral meeting. Or whilst working during contact sessions, you may glance at your watch and be relieved it's soon time to go home... but it is never over for me. This is my life, 24/7 and this is the life of all the people like me who you see within your work.



I have sat in the contact centre and yearned to be you, wishing I was at work, paid or unpaid, having the choice, not being ordered into the building by a magistrate, a legal system I have little faith in.

There have been many positives though, I have during this time,

met lots of courageous parents and amazing children. I have met kind and caring staff dedicated to creating a better and safer environment for families who use their centres, who are open to feedback and actively trying to improve the quality of their service. Also, so many bright volunteers and students who are an inspiration for the future of the service.

As I said at the beginning if sharing my experience can help one person not be so scared, help one family have an easier journey, then this will have been worthwhile.

An update



Since writing these words, almost two and a half years ago, much has changed. Two weeks ago there was a final hearing and the case is now over, James' father withdrew his application for contact, due to reports which came from overseas confirming much of my initial concerns and the CAFCASS recommendation that he pays for the courses recommended for him to do.

So at last we can draw a line under this experience...

I don't feel as elated as I imagined I would. I am a very different person from the one who began this journey, more experienced and less naïve. I still feel in shock, in disbelief, that at last it's over and my child is safe. I am determined to rebuild our lives and use these experiences positively to help and inspire others.

*All names have been changed to protect the identity of the people featured in this account



Thank you again to the many volunteers around the country who help children to 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 (3 years' service), silver (5 years' service), gold (10 years' service), platinum (15 years' service) and diamond (20 years' service) certificates.

Abingdon Child Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 gold = 10 years

Abington Avenue URC Child Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 silver = 5 years

Action for Children

17 volunteers – 7 platinum, 2 gold, 6 silver, 2 bronze = 189 years

Andover Child Contact Centre

9 volunteers – 9 silver = 45 years

Armagh Child Contact Centre

21 volunteers – 16 silver, 5 bronze = 95 years

Bath Child Contact Centre

10 volunteers – 3 diamond, 2 silver, 5 bronze = 85 years

Billericay Child Contact Centre

23 volunteers – 21 platinum, 1 gold, 1 silver = 330 years

Bristol Child Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 diamond = 20 years

Bury St Edmunds Child Contact Centre

4 volunteers – 1 platinum, 2 silver, 1 bronze = 28 years

Carrickfergus Child Contact Centre

10 volunteers – 10 bronze = 30 years

Chichester Child Contact Centre

10 volunteers – 6 platinum, 2 gold, 7 silver, 4 bronze = 157 years

Church Street Child Contact Centre

7 volunteers – 7 silver = 35 years

Foyle Child Contact Centre

22 volunteers – 22 silver = 110 years

Good Shepherd Child Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 gold = 10 years

Jimmy's CC

4 volunteers – 1 platinum, 3 bronze = 24 years

Littlehampton Child Contact Centre

15 volunteers – 11 silver, 4 bronze = 67 years

Maidenhead Child Contact Centre

8 volunteers – 4 platinum, 4 silver = 80 years

Merthyr Tydfil Child Contact Centre

4 volunteers – 3 gold, 1 silver = 35 years

Nuneaton Child Contact Centre

6 volunteers – 2 diamond, 1 gold, 2 silver, 1 bronze = 63 years

Oswestry Child Contact Centre

2 volunteers – 2 platinum = 30 years

Pontypridd Child Contact Centre

8 volunteers – 5 silver, 3 bronze = 34 years

Rochdale Child Contact Centre

13 volunteers – 5 platinum, 3 gold, 6 silver = 157 years

Shrewsbury Child Contact Centre

2 volunteers – 1 platinum, 1 gold = 25 years

Solihull Child Contact Centre

19 volunteers – 8 platinum, 2 gold, 8 silver, 1 bronze = 183 years

South Bristol Child Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 bronze = 3 years

Springfield Child Contact Centre

6 volunteers – 2 platinum, 2 silver, 2 bronze = 46 years

St James Child Contact Centre

8 volunteers – 3 platinum, 2 gold, 3 silver = 80 years

St Matthews Child Contact Centre

14 volunteers – 3 platinum, 1 gold, 8 silver, 2 bronze = 110 years

Torquay Child Contact Centre

13 volunteers – 6 diamond, 3 gold, 4 silver = 170 years

Trinity Child Contact Centre

10 volunteers – 2 platinum, 2 silver, 6 bronze = 63 years

Wellingborough Child Contact Centre

15 volunteers – 6 gold, 9 silver = 105 years

Whitchurch Child Contact Centre

1 volunteer – 1 bronze = 3 years

Woking Family Child Contact Centre

2 volunteers – 2 gold = 20 years

Wrekin Child Contact Centre

5 volunteers – 3 platinum, 2 bronze = 51 years

To order, email/post a list of volunteer names and years' service to the NACCC office

Contact Centre Accreditation and Re-accreditation

Congratulations... to all the child contact centres listed below that have achieved accreditation since the last issue of Contact Matters. Well done!

- Craigavon Children's Contact Centre Cordomus
- All Saints New Haw Child Contact Centre
- Newry Child Contact Centre
- Salisbury Child Contact Centre
- Hall Green Churches Child Contact Centre

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

- Aylesbury Child Contact Centre
- Bath Child Contact Centre
- Chesterfield Child Contact Centre
- Cove Child Contact Centre
- Embrace Child Contact Centre (The)
- Enfield Family Contact Centre
- Frome Child Contact Centre
- Gloucester Child Contact Centre
- Hall Green Churches Child Contact Centre
- Harpenden Child Contact Centre
- Jimmy's Contact Centre
- Knock Child Contact Centre – Bangor
- Knock Child Contact Centre – Belfast
- Newry Child Contact Centre
- Romford United Reformed Church Child Contact Centre
- Salisbury Child Contact Centre
- Solihull Child Contact Centre
- Springfield Child Contact Centre
- St Andrew's Child Contact Centre
- St John Ambulance Child Contact Centre – Spalding
- Woking Family Contact Centre

*List correct at time of press

Many congratulations to these centres who have achieved Enhanced Accreditation

This system gives referrers and families reassurance that supervised child contact services have shown that their service meets the national standards for supervised child contact.

- Active 8 Support Services
- Christian Family Care Manor Farm
- Contact Care UK Ltd
- Family Contact
- Guernsey Child Contact Centre
- Isle of Man Children's Contact Centre

Child contact centres' share corner



Nuneaton Childrens Contact Centre has to report some very sad news. We have lost one of our founder

members. Mr Ken Perry who passed away on 5th of July 2011 after suffering from stomach cancer. Back in 1986 Ken Perry and Ian Daniels a local solicitor and now Vice President of NACCC, with the help of The Rev. Graham Hardwick had the idea to start a contact centre in Nuneaton. With the help of Ken and his wife Dot and other church members our contact centre flourished. Ken and his wife Dot (who passed away two years ago) spent many years of dedication at the Centre and they helped thousands of families through hard times. Ken was a real character, and as a couple they were loved by many people in the local community.

Janet Tilson, Nuneaton Children's Contact Centre

Derby Child Contact recently held its first Open Day, to which we invited local solicitors, magistrates and judges, as well as representatives of

the City Centre Churches and others, such as Derby Lions, who make donations to us. The main aim of the event was to help those who refer families to us to better understand what we do, and judging by the feedback comments received we succeeded in doing just that.

Geraldine Galloway, Deputy Coordinator, Derby Child Contact Centre



Torquay celebrates 20 years and new contact suite funding

Louis Ruddlesden (NACCC) was guest speaker at the celebrations and presented several volunteers with long-service certificates before giving a valedictory speech and urging

members to meet the challenges of the future. Founder member Sheila Nelson was guest of honour and Coordinator Sue Norman and Chairman Barry Meteyard thanked everyone for their huge fundraising effort over the past twelve months, announcing that the £60,000 target for the new contact suite (first suggested in 1996) had been reached and that building would commence in early December this year.

Barry Meteyard, Chair, Torquay Child Contact Centre

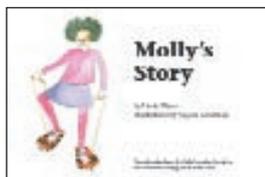
Devon Trustee of the Year

I recently nominated our chairman, Andrew Charles, for an award because of his amazing commitment to establishing and supporting TCCC. At the awards ceremony in Exeter University on Tuesday, he won Trustee of the Year for Devon, organised by the Devon Community Foundation and sponsored by DACVS. A short film about the work that we do was made and will eventually be uploaded to their website.

Sally Langbridge, Co-ordinator Tarka Child Contact Centre

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

Molly's Story launched at Bath's 20th anniversary



Molly's Story is available from the NACCC office or via the online shop. Cost £2.95 non-members/£2.50 members

"This story deals sensitively with the experiences of a child whose mum has had to move away from the family and how the child contact centre provides a way forward for them to spend time together again. Our grateful thanks go to Linda Wyon for her immense commitment to this project and to Angela Goodman for her beautiful illustrations" **Yvonne Kee, Chief Executive, NACCC**



"Molly hasn't seen her mum for some time and is getting worried. Will using a child contact centre help to solve her problem?"



The team at Bath



Yvonne Kee and District Judge Goddard



Linda Wyon pictured with Irene Simms, Chair at Bath

NACCC would like to congratulate Bath Child Contact Centre on its 20th anniversary. Around sixty-five people gathered to celebrate the organisation's achievements including District Judge Goddard and NACCC's Chief Executive Yvonne Kee.

Bath Child Contact Centre was set up in 1991 to enable contact between children and their non-resident parents. The centre opens every Saturday and, with the help of more than thirty volunteers, helps around fifty families a year to maintain regular contact.

The celebrations included the launch of NACCC's new book 'Molly's Story' written by the centre's founder Linda Wyon. Molly's Story, aimed at children living with their fathers who will use the centre to visit their mothers.

Molly's Story has been produced in response to feedback from our services and accompanies the popular Ben's and Lily's Story books written by Linda Wyon (Bath Child Contact Centre) and has been written for parents and children to read together before using a supported child contact centre.

Please order your copies for your local centre!

The NACCC Team

Patrons

Sir Nicholas Wall – President of the Family Division
Lord Alton of Liverpool

President

Mrs Frances Mary Lower MBE

Vice Presidents

Mrs Prudence Bray
Mr Ian Daniels
The Hon Mr Justice Hedley
Mrs Pauline Lowe

Trustees

Chair: Dr Mike Dornan
Vice Chair: Anne Dillon till Oct 2011, *position vacant*
Honorary Treasurer: Sue England
Company Secretary: Claire Bell

Regional Trustees

Wales: Allan Thomas
Central: Amanda Page
East: Samantha Ewing
South East: Vicky West
South West: Gaenor Hannaford
London: *position vacant*
Northern Ireland: Muriel Orr
General Trustee: Fred Devereux
General Trustee: Adrian Cullen

NACCC office number 0845 4500 280, 0115 948 4557* *cheaper from your mobile

Staff



Chief Executive: Yvonne Kee BA Hons, MA
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Field team – Regional Support Managers

Role to advise, guide and support Child Contact Centres and assist through the accreditation or re-accreditation process (telephone numbers are available from the NACCC office).



Senior Regional Support Manager (Central): Duncan Gore
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Regional Support Manager (Northern England, Northern Ireland & North Wales): Judy Birchall
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Regional Support Manager (South West, Wales & Channel Islands): Louis Ruddlesden
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FIT (not Mon)



Regional Support Manager (South East): Ann-Marie Stubbs
am.stubbs@nacc.org.uk
PIT Mon, Tues & Weds 9-5, Thurs 11.30-5.30 on flexible basis



Regional Support Manager (Greater London): Kathy Bayne
k.bayne@nacc.org.uk *PIT flexible basis*

Support Officers

Employed on sessional basis to work with and support centres on accreditation, re-accreditation and new centre support. Contact your regional support manager to access a local support officer.

North England, North Wales & Northern Ireland:

Fiona Jarvie, Peter Nowland, Sue Lightbown

Central England: Russell Collard

Wales: Rebecca King

South England & South Wales: Charmaine Bryant,

Phil Doughty, Margaret Hart
Kent and South East: Linda Underwood
Greater London: Sam Burch, Amy Woods

Accreditation Assessors

Employed on sessional basis to work with and support centres on achieving enhanced accreditation. Contact Louis Ruddlesden to access an accreditation assessor.

David Angus Ann Green Ann-Marie Stubbs
Tracey Brewer Carol Peeke Jill Valenti
Diane Cain Joanne Stewart
Sue Culligan

Office team



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Volunteers

Craig Trembirth
Jackie Ward (jward@nacc.org.uk)

Member of CEPREP (European Confederation of child-Family Contact Centres)



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