

What is a Child Contact Centre?

A Child Contact Centre is a safe, friendly and neutral place where children of separated families can spend time with one or both parents, and sometimes other family members. It is a child-centred environment that puts the needs of the children first.

What is it like at a Child Contact Centre?

The most important people in the Child Contact Centre are the children. We aim to create a warm, sociable atmosphere where you and your children can relax and enjoy yourselves. The Centre has an area with a variety of games, toys and books for children of all ages. Tea, coffee and other refreshments are provided. You may want to bring along some favourite toys, special drinks, or other things you might need such as nappies.

The Child Contact Centre is run by fully trained volunteers or staff. They are impartial, so they do not take sides. They work to a strict confidentiality policy and have all been through a Criminal Records Bureau check.

How are the visits arranged?

Visits are by referral. The referral can be made by a social worker, solicitor, family mediator, CAFCASS officer (formerly known as a court family welfare officer), or by a court order. The person making the referral fills out a referral form and sends it to the Centre Co-ordinator. How often you come to the Centre depends on you and when the Centre is open.

It is advisable for you (the parent) and your child or children to come and see the Centre before your first arranged visit. This will help you get to know the Centre and the staff, and make your first visit easier.

Do I have to meet my ex-partner when I go to the Centre?

Not if you don't want to. Parents are responsible for their children at all times while at the Centre so you will have to wait with your child until your ex-partner arrives. However, the Centre staff can deal with the handover of your child so you don't need to meet your ex-partner.

Is there anything I need to do?

As this is a special time for children to spend with the parent they no longer live with, we ask that new partners do not attend the Centre. Also, please keep disagreements out of the Child Contact Centre. Remember that your child is hurting too. Make this a happy time for them.

What happens if I can't come at a time when I've arranged a visit?

Let your ex-partner and the Centre Co-ordinator know as soon as you can.

Does the Centre make any reports about us?

A Child Contact Centre is independent of the courts, social services or any statutory agency. We do not make verbal or written reports about visits, apart from the dates and times of attendance. The only exception to this is if we believe that a child is at risk, or if a member of staff, volunteer or Centre user is at risk of harm.

Are there any rules?

As few as possible! However, the Centre is used by several families at the same time, so we have to ensure the safety of everyone and consideration for others:

- Parents are responsible for the safety and supervision of their children at all times while at the Centre. No child may be left without a parent in attendance.
- You must provide a contact telephone number when leaving children at the Centre.
- A child may only be taken from the Centre during a visit if this is stated on the referral form, or with the written consent of both parents.
- Relatives or friends can only attend if they are named on the referral form.
- There must be no arguing in front of any of the children. Abusive or aggressive behaviour and racist or other offensive remarks will not be tolerated. Any visitor acting in such a way will be asked to leave.
- Finally, please: No smoking in the Centre. Switch off your mobile phone while you're with your child. Don't bring any pets. No taking photographs, video filming, or use of portable computers unless the other party and the Co-ordinator or Team Leader have given their permission. Alcohol, drugs, or anyone under the influence of these will not be allowed onto the premises.



We look forward to welcoming you and your family.