

Guidelines for Referrers

All correspondence should be sent to the Centre Co-ordinator:
Pauline Muldoon, ACCC, PO BOX 56, Armagh, BT61 0AN
02837 526045 / 07914 959 377

Armagh Child Contact Centre is based at The First Presbyterian Lecture Hall, College Street, ARMAGH and opens for families on the **first three Saturdays** of each month 10am – 12 noon, and Wednesdays, 5-6.30pm.

Supported contact takes place in a variety of community venues where there are facilities to enable children to develop and maintain positive relationships with non-resident parents and other family members. Supported Child Contact Centres are suitable for families where **no significant risk** to the child or those around the child has been identified.

The basic elements of supported contact are:

- Impartiality
- Staff and volunteers are available for assistance but there is no close observation, monitoring or evaluation of individual contacts/ conversations
- Several families are usually together in one or a number of rooms
- Encouragement for families to develop mutual trust and in time, consider more satisfactory family venues
- Apart from attendance dates and times, no detailed report will be made to a referrer, a party's solicitor or Court, unless there is a risk of harm to the child, parent or Centre worker
- An acknowledgement that use of the Centre be viewed as a temporary arrangement to be reviewed after an agreed period of time

1. **Please do not make a referral without contacting the Child Contact Centre Co-ordinator first to check availability of space and time.**
2. A completed referral form should be received by the Centre Co-ordinator at least one week in advance of the date which your client would like contact to commence. This will allow time for either party to visit the Hall in advance of the first contact session. This is especially encouraged for the resident parent and child(ren). Where a Centre has a waiting list, a completed referral form should still be sent, the Centre will then notify you when a place becomes available.
3. Please enclose a copy of all relevant orders with completed referral form.
4. Please do not pass completed referral forms to parents or those with residency, in

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order to protect confidentiality of all those involved.

5. Child Contact Centres providing Supported Contact will not knowingly accept a referral when somebody involved has been convicted of any offence relating to a) physical or b) sexual abuse of any child, unless there are exceptional circumstances and they have sought appropriate professional advice.
6. Only people named on the referral form will be allowed admittance to the Child Contact Centre. This may be varied by written agreement by both parties.
7. Please ensure that both parents have read and understood the Child Contact Centre's information leaflet in advance of contact starting.
8. To try and maintain a friendly, impartial and confidential environment, we would request that you do not at any time ask to see your clients on our premises without prior agreement.
9. Only dates and times of a family's attendance will be disclosed unless it is felt that anyone using the Centre or a volunteer or member of staff is at risk of harm. In the unlikely event of it becoming necessary to quote a Co-ordinator / Volunteer in any report, due to a Centre user, volunteer or member of staff being at risk of harm, the form of words used should be checked and agreed with the person concerned beforehand.
10. Armagh Child Contact Centre reserves the right to reduce or terminate contact if it is felt to be in the best interests of the child.
11. Parents should be informed that because the welfare of the child is paramount, there might be times when contact cannot take place if the child is too upset even if there is a contact order.
12. Referrers should make arrangements for the provision of an interpreter where English is not the first language of the family involved and problems may arise with communication.
13. The Centre should be viewed as a temporary facility to help establish contact. The Child Contact Centre will be asking for your assistance to review the family's progress after six months.
14. **Please notify the Child Contact Centre Co-ordinator if the arrangements for contact are going to change or if contact is going to cease.**
15. All Child Contact Centres are members of the national Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC), which is a registered charity. They operate under its guidelines and in accordance with them have the following policies, which are available on request from the Co-ordinator; ACCESSNI, Child protection, Confidentiality and Data Protection, Health and Safety, Complaints, Equal Opportunities, Domestic Abuse, Rehabilitation of Offenders, Volunteer, Fire Evacuation.

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