Every Child Matters specified five outcomes essential for the welfare of children, giving clear guidelines to work to. The basis of our work in NACCC member centres has always meant that every child matters.

Our training programme for the first part of this year looked at "The Reluctant Child". Sometimes – and perhaps inevitably – the reluctant child has most of our attention during the time that child and his or her family is with us, but all the children coming to our centres matter and with the work that we do in our centres week by week we make that very plain. The welcome a child receives coming to the centre for the first time, probably wondering why they’re there and what it will be like, the readiness of volunteers to chat to a child, meanwhile reassuring the anxious parent that we can help, can be an exhausting, if rewarding, way to spend our time.

Sometimes, of course, we can lose sight of what the children feel. I know of one family where the parents decided to meet for the first time in several years ... fed up with their parents chatting! Would the volunteers stop them please? Those on duty hadn’t worked out exactly what the children wanted!

What we’re about is making contact work for the children’s sake and sometimes we have to struggle to see their point of view.

Nevertheless, this Annual Review demonstrates that every child coming into our centres really does matter to all of us keeping our centres running week by week. Thank you for all you do supporting children and their parents at a very difficult time in their lives. I wish you every success next year!
Three years ago the theme of our Annual Review was Every Child Matters. Since then, as NACCC has developed it has focussed on its primary function – to enable children of broken relationships to meet one or both parents and/or other family members in a comfortable and safe environment. So the focus for our conference in 2008 is Every Child Still Matters, highlighting the importance NACCC continues to place on the children who use our centres.

The number of children who attend our centres continues to increase year by year. There are now over 350 centre venues – 79% providing supported contact, 8% providing supervised contact and 13% providing both supported and supervised contact sessions. The work of supported centres benefited from the introduction of national standards in 2003 followed by the accreditation process which began in 2004. Many centres are now being re-accredited which is a further indication of the importance NACCC places on ensuring centres work to the same high standards. Supervised centres now also have national standards, which reflect their particular situations. The accreditation process for supervised centres is well under way and there is an expectation that all supervised centres will be accredited by the end of 2009.

NACCC is committed to ensuring that all the children who attend our centres are safe and enjoy themselves. In order to support centre co-ordinators, a new training course has been introduced this year. Not only has this course given co-ordinators the information and help they need but it has provided an opportunity for them to share experiences and talk with other co-ordinators about common dilemmas.

The support that our centres receive comes mainly from a dedicated group of staff, most of whom have worked for NACCC for many years. Our office staff are always available at the end of the phone and are now responding to an increasing number of requests via email. The field staff have again spent most of their time visiting individual centres and running a variety of training courses. We have been extremely fortunate in securing additional funding this year, which has enabled us to appoint two additional support managers to look after the southeast and southwest of England. Our chief executive has continued to promote NACCC and to raise the profile of the organisation.

I have been extremely fortunate in working with a group of dedicated trustees, who have given so much time, all in a voluntary capacity, to ensure that NACCC is in a strong position to face the challenges that lie ahead in the provision of child contact. Earlier this year the trustees met to review NACCC’s strategic objectives prior to the production of the new business plan which will take NACCC forward over the next three years.

As I reach the end of my term of office, I would like to thank everyone, trustees, staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly for the child contact centres throughout the country, I feel privileged to have been Chair of such a wonderful organisation and wish NACCC well for the future. Through your commitment and dedication, thousands of children have been able to maintain contact with their non-resident parent(s).

Every child really does still matter.

"There is a well-researched advertising phrase which says ‘every little helps’ and in many ways I think that phrase could be applied to NACCC. It has over the years been a very great help to so many people, enabling children to make contact and most importantly form a relationship with their non-resident parent in a safe, caring and friendly environment. I have been involved with two Child Contact Centres for fifteen years and there are indeed moments as a volunteer that one can become downright by the seemingly intractable attitude of parents towards each other and contact, but, with the help of volunteers and the knowledge and support that NACCC provides, more often than not contact takes place enabling families to move forward. Long may NACCC continue to play its supportive role.”

Prue Bray, Vice-President

“Child Contact Centres make a positive contribution to building bridges between children and a parent whom they might otherwise never see enabling them to grow up knowing both of their parents. A balanced upbringing in this way is clearly in the interests of children, aiding the emotional wellbeing of a child and having a positive influence on a child’s development.”

Philip Sudworth, Co-ordinator, Wigan Child Contact Centre

Volunteers awarded new platinum certificates

NACCC has launched a platinum certificate that can be awarded to volunteers for over 15 years’ service and since its launch it has been awarded to 8 volunteers. This in itself shows the tremendous length of service given by volunteers and indeed the length of time the centre has been serving the local community. 471 centre volunteers have been awarded long service certificates this year. 144 received bronze certificates for 3 years’ service, 128 received silver certificates for 5 years’ service and 199 received gold certificates for over 10 years’ service. This represents an amazing dedication of 3,257 years’ service given by these volunteers. This generous commitment helps children round the country maintain valuable links with their family.

"As social workers at Families’ House all too often we witness how children suffer following the separation of their parents and the effect this has on their wider family. The complexity of their situations and the range of emotions they experience should not be underestimated. We feelprivileged to work with these children.”

Amanda Marshall and Margaret Howe, Senior Social Work Practitioners, Norfolk & Norwich Families’ House

"The Easter weekend session was the first visit for a four-year old, who hadn’t seen his father for over a year. The mother hadn’t expected her son to recognize his father. Yet, when the father came into the playroom, the boy who was at the far end of the room looked up and then hurled himself across the room to bury himself in his father’s arms."

Sue Hewitt, Chairman, Aylsham Child Contact Centre

"As I reach the end of my term of office, I would like to thank everyone, trustees, staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly for the child contact centres throughout the country..."
A further highlight has been the growth and credibility of the special interest groups. Northern Ireland received government funding, Wales had full representation at its meeting for the first time and the Professional Network has consolidated its work through responding to changes.

Those changes have been internal and external. NACCC’s involvement has been to work closely with CAFCASS in England to formalize a continuum that centres were already working within - from the dedication of volunteers in supported centres right through to supervised, assessed contact services offering parenting programmes. Each stage has its own distinct value for children and families. Similar links have now been made with CAFCASS CYMRU and there is a further sense that our movement can review its practice and embrace the changes. Relationships with the judiciary, family lawyers and other voluntary organizations have been a key area for us to build upon.

Alongside these changes has been the continuity. Children lie at the heart of all we do. Child-centredness of centres remains key and at a crucial point in children’s changed lives continues to contribute to their better outcomes. Ultimately, NACCC is here to work with centres to provide quality services. Accreditation has led to the introduction of re-accreditation for supported centres and the move towards enhanced standards for supervised/assessment services.

But one heartwarming ‘old and new’ for me this year has been the demand we have met for a Platinum certificate, to be presented to volunteers who have been with their supported centres for over 15 years. That, too, is a highlight.

"I am very sorry I cannot come to the 2008 conference. I remember saying at the NACCC 2007 conference – and meaning it – that a visit to NACCC restored my faith in the Family Justice System (FJS). That faith has taken a real battering this year, summed up for me at a recent Northern Circuit Family Justice Council conference, largely devoted to funding issues. One of the speakers asked any members of the large and multi-disciplinary audience who had confidence in the future of the FJS to put up their hands. Nobody did.

It is all very well for the government to say that Every Child Matters, but the rhetoric is of no value if the FJS, which is there to serve some of the most disadvantaged children in society, is constantly starved of the resources required to make it work. I simply do not understand the failure properly to resource the system, particularly, as the President of the Family Division has said, when it is served by devoted participants, such as organisations like NACCC, which performs vital services on a shoestring, and certainly isn’t in it for the money. I offer you my sincere congratulations for what you are achieving, and wish all power to your elbow for the battles ahead!"

The Rt Hon Lord Justice Nicholas Wall, Vice President

When Mary Lower first set up a child contact centre in Nottingham, it became clear that a whole new and important movement was to begin. This year has seen it shift further. At the same time it retains its roots, ethos and embeds its focus further on the needs and wellbeing of children. We want the children and families who use child contact centres to see how much they matter.

The old and the new – both the long standing and more recently established centres – continue to respond to increasingly complex family needs, alongside each other. The year has had its challenges for many centres, such as changed funding regimes or threats to existing funding, but there have been many highlights too.

Centres of all sizes lobbied hard to raise the profile and professional knowledge of both their own work and that of NACCC. Visits with influential people have been made to and by centres; professional relationships have been built up. One example? I received a phone call from Sir Mark Potter, Head of the Family Division, to say that The Archbishop of York was interested in hearing about our work. A meeting at Bishopsthorpe Palace resulted in this charismatic Archbishop visiting Pudsey Child Contact Centre for an hour and promising to influence on our behalf.

A gratifying part of NACCC’s work has been our success in attracting money to support or distribute to centres. This led to a ‘Centres in Need’ fund (DCSF) and the recent launch of the George Barnes Fund. NACCC’s own financial stability has strengthened, resulting in more sessional workers in the regions.

NACCC Accreditation demonstrates that child contact centres are working to the NACCC National Standards for Child Contact Centres and have successfully completed a portfolio of evidence, assessed as proof they have achieved these standards. NACCC is delighted to say that the vast majority of centres that needed to achieve accreditation this year did so. This is a fantastic achievement especially for the number of supported centres who managed this with a voluntary co-ordinator and no ready access to a computer – a real testament to everyone’s hard work. Of course it doesn’t end there. New centres join all the time requiring accreditation. In September 2007 it was time for the first centres that had been accredited to be reaccredited. The process was successfully piloted with the first few and is now being used with all centres as they become due for reaccreditation. NACCC now has five new workers assisting with the reaccreditation work on a sessional basis.

**Accreditation and Reaccreditation achievements**

Many services often reach a point where they need to review what they have done and consider how they are going to move forward. The process can be driven by a variety of factors including finances and the need to provide more unified and accountable services. Child contact centres providing supervised contact have found themselves in this position over the last year and NACCC has been working with them and CAFCASS to develop a new system to deliver supervised contact. Looking at existing practice and consulting with members, we have devised a system based on a continuum of contact services covering three different levels or tiers. These tiers or levels allow families to enter the system at a point that meets their needs.

NACCC has worked with CAFCASS and service providers to produce the referral form for the new system and the forms required to observe, record on and review the progress a family is making. These forms ensure that centres are recording and presenting information in a uniform and consistent way. They also make safeguarding children a priority and take account of the requirements of the Every Child Matters agenda and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

CAFCASS practitioners make referrals to the service providers. They then work with them to ensure that a family is then working with them to ensure that a family receives the service they require to meet their needs. NACCC has worked with CAFCASS and service providers and the courts to ensure that all children receive a quality service.

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NACCC services to members, the public and referrers

The information line continues to serve on average 224 members of the public and referrers a month with details of local centres and signposting information.

The Reluctant Child training continued to be delivered around the country culminating in an abridged version at the 2007 Annual Conference. It has been very well received.

In September 2008 the new regional training sessions on the subject of Moving Families Forward proved to be more controversial. Some centres were concerned that volunteers were expected to be far more proactive then they felt able. In fact the main thrust of this training has been to recognize that attendance at a centre for most families needs to be for as short a period as possible but of as high a quality as possible. However more and more families coming to centres have a whole range of problems where perhaps there are other organisations and agencies which can help with specific issues such as domestic abuse, drug and alcohol dependency, mediation etc. We looked at how centres could find out about these organisations, carry their leaflets and make their own services known to them and these organisations known to the families.

New for 2008 we have introduced specialist Co-ordinator training for co-ordinators and their deputies. Day long events will be run in each CAFCASS region over a three year period, alongside a rolling programme of two day residential courses for as long as demand lasts. The programme covers aspects of managing referrals, families, staff and volunteers, committees and fund raising. The first residential was held in Northern Ireland in early March and we were delighted to have representatives from all the Northern Ireland centres present as well as some visitors from the Republic. Day courses were held in Manchester and Leeds later the same month.

Next year we are planning to hold our regional training events wherever possible actually on court premises. The training will feature explanations from local judges, solicitors and CAFCASS officers of how the family court works in practice and their respective roles within it. These explanations will include reference to dispute resolution, contact activities, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the Every Child Matters agenda. In order to access the court premises these events will have to take place during early evening on weekdays. We hope that the significant notice given and the fact that these events will not take place in the main until after Easter when the evenings are lighter will enable as many volunteers as possible to plan to attend.

Judy Birchall, Regional Support Manager (North)
Duncan Gore, Regional Support Manager (Central & South)

“I enjoyed working in a small group. Meeting other co-ordinators was useful.”

“Really informative – good to go over basics and to glean peer support about similar issues faced around the world.”

“We really appreciate the opportunity to attend and learn from NACCC and from child contact centre personnel from Northern Ireland – really worthwhile.”

“Very useful to re-look at all aspects of the running of our contact centre and see how we can improve things for families and volunteers.”

“Good all round training experience.”

“It is good to keep up with changes and to realise that change isn’t always wrong.”

The field team has been busy with:

11 ‘Moving Families Forward’ training sessions throughout the country with 239 centre staff, volunteers, local solicitors, CAFCASS officers and Social workers attending.

27 ‘Reluctant Child’ training sessions with 747 delegates attending.

3 co-ordinator training sessions (including a residential) with 44 delegates attending 50 general training sessions (including new centre training) on child protection, domestic violence, health and safety, conflict management, centre promotion and volunteer recruitment.

49 visits to centres including accreditation meetings.

61 meetings with external agencies including CAFCASS and Family Justice Councils.

The first print run of 5,000 NACCC’s new Putting your children first leaflet sold out in 6 months purchased at reduced rate by centres, Resolution members and other referrers. This leaflet is ideal for helping parents think about their children’s feelings when using a child contact centre.

“We feel very conscious of the expert way any queries are dealt with and want to say ‘thank you’ for the help and support received.”
Sheila Nelson, Co-ordinator, Torquay Contact Centre

“We really appreciate the opportunity to attend and learn from NACCC and from child contact centre personnel from Northern Ireland – really worthwhile.”

“Very useful to re-look at all aspects of the running of our contact centre and see how we can improve things for families and volunteers.”

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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. They are child-centred environments that provide toys, games and facilities that reflect the diverse needs of children affected by family breakdown.

Most families can access a range of services depending on their situation and needs. Families can be referred to a centre by their solicitor who fills in the forms and makes the arrangements required. Other families are referred by the courts, CAFCA/CASS officers, family mediators and social workers. The majority of these families access centres offering supported contact. These are suitable for families when no significant risk to the child or those around the child has been identified.

When it has been determined that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering harm during contact other supervised services should be accessed. These include:
- Indirect contact
- Escorted contact
- Life story / identity contact
- Supervised contact (observed, recorded and reported)
- Supervised contact assessment

Thanks to Eastbourne Family Contact Centre, Norfolk & Norwich Families House and the Roberts Centre (Portsmouth) for these lovely photos.

The year has been dominated by negotiations around CAFCASS commissioning and contracts. Meetings at Pro-Contact, Contact First, Grassroots and at the National Children’s Centre have spent considerable time sharing common issues.

Two conferences, hosted by NACCC, were held for the purposes of consultation. Difficulties in finalising agreements have rumbled on mainly centred around acceptable qualifications for centre staff involved in CAFCASS commissioned work. As the Network membership demonstrates, there is an abundance of skills, training, qualification and experience within contact services. Many of us see this as a distinct advantage as we operate as multi-disciplinary teams.

As a result, compromises have been possible given CAFCASS’s commitment to the process of incorporating a Qualification Standards procedure into the NACCC enhanced accreditation scheme. By April 2008 it is anticipated that contracts will acknowledge that many workers have skills and knowledge equivalent to a social worker and that this can be demonstrated through the recognition of NACCC accreditation.

Not unrelated to this debate has been the continuing development of the Pro-Contact Award specifically designed for child contact centre staff and volunteers. Fifteen workers have registered for module 1 and 5 for module 1b; the reduction in numbers representing the unexpected time and effort required to complete the training and assignments. Module 2 will be modified ready for training delivery in September 2008.

We have recently begun negotiation with the Sector Skills Council over creating a new qualification from the Pro-Contact Award. This would take us a long way towards proper recognition as a discrete profession and ease the transition to becoming commissioned services where we will have to demonstrate clear standards in fitness for purpose.

Salli Ward, CEO, Pro-Contact

The Northern Ireland Network of Child Contact Centres held its second AGM in October with speaker Patricia Lewsley, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People. The meeting was attended by representatives of all of the centres, members of the judiciary, social services and solicitors.

We were then given the go ahead to apply to the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety for funding to cover training for coordinators. The Department was supportive of the benefit of central joint training for all the centres in Northern Ireland. The DHSSPS also agreed to fund a media/PR campaign in Northern Ireland regarding child contact centres. This enabled us to work with a PR company to produce a logo, general leaflet about the Northern Ireland Network and an information leaflet for children. NACCC very kindly allowed us to use the graphics they already had for NACCC publications. The campaign will also include advertising on the large roadside billboards across Northern Ireland and perhaps a short radio advertisement that will run for several weeks. Several centres have now opened sessions mid-week as well as Saturdays and have also opened outreach sessions in nearby towns. So, it has certainly felt as if a lot has been happening in a short space of time.

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

CEPREP, the European confederation for contact centre organising bodies, has matured and strengthened in its first year and a half of formal existence. NACCC, and contact centre federations from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Hungary and Spain are CEPREP’s current members, but in Paris at the June AGM we had observers from Germany and a second Spanish federation of contact centres, both of which are in the process of applying for CEPREP membership, as is the Scottish Association. The members are also in touch with, and supporting the development of, centres in the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania.

The AGM in Paris was followed by a workshop day, which continued the comparison of contact centre practice between countries that we started at the meeting NACCC hosted in Nottingham in September 2007. Translation takes up much of the time. Though most of the delegates have a good grasp of English, expressing the nuances of family relationships, law and culture in a language that is not your own is a challenge. So we typically need to have people describe their work in their own language and then work at getting a faithful translation into English and French.

We have had the opportunity to explore and understand, much more clearly, the basis of contact centre organisation, practice and funding in each country and its place within legal and social structures. A detailed analysis has begun of the variety of modes of receiving families for contact — collective or individual — and of the reasons for choosing the service offered. The insights from this work show good potential for being used constructively within the UK and they will also form a basis for the next stage of CEPREP joint exploration. This next stage will look into the variety of ways in which we each currently work with our children and families.

Chris Meunier, on behalf of CEPREP

Thanks to Chris for his continued work with CEPREP on behalf of NACCC
Money matters

How the National Association of Child Contact Centres used its funding

"Thank you for your support. We are a busy centre and always value the fact that we can get advice and practical support from NACCC”

Christine Maton, Centre Coordinator, Camberley & District Family Contact Centre

Costs of governing the charity
£9,527

Grants to member centres including support costs in making and administering these grants
£40,704

Supporting members – general support etc
£261,809

Where the National Association of Child Contact Centres got its funding

£675 Other income

£8,010 Bank interest

£27,000 Consultancy income

£62,885 Membership fees and income from services and publications sold to members

£201,235 Grants and donations received

Thank you

...to those who kindly made grants and donations during 2007 – 2008...

1 Garden Court Family Law
AGM attendees
RD Bromilow
CAFCASS – Consultancy Agreements
Dame Alice Harpur School Staff
DCSF – Centre Funding Grant
DCSF – Field Support Grant
DfES – Children, Young People and Families Grant
L Deaves
Experian Robin Hood Marathon
LE Hawkins
HBOS Community Foundation Grant
PA Jackson

Mark Kay
Frances Mary Lower
RD Mansfield
Methodist Insurance
North West Reform Synagogue
Nottingham Masons Lodge
Philip Richards
Rotary Club of Beeston
Stevensdrake
Stewart and Co

Thanks also to all those who gave through the Charities Aid Foundation’s Give As You Earn scheme and the Charities Trust’s payroll giving and corporate donation schemes. This is much appreciated.

...and finally

Many thanks to the friends and supporters of NACCC. And of course thanks so much to our Patrons, the President, Vice Presidents, Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers for their time and support given in carrying out the aims and activities of NACCC. A particular thanks to Fiona McGill for her three years as Chair through a crucial period.
2007 - 2008

The NACCC Team

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- 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
- Mr Philip Richards LL.B
- The Rt Hon Lord Justice Wall

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- Fiona McGill

Honorary Treasurer
- John Clay (to Dec 2007)
- Aliona Laker (from Jan 2008) previously
- Regional Trustee - East

Company Secretary
- Claire Bell

Regional Trustee - North West
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Regional Trustee Wales (co-opted)
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Regional Trustee - Central
- Mike Dornan

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General Trustee
- Alice Sharville

General Trustee (co-opted)
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- Katie Lockett

Administrator
- Judith Mewse (P/T)

Project Administrator
- Ruth Miles (P/T)

Administrator
- Donna Moreland (P/T)

Bookkeeper
- Alan Tarr (P/T)

Field Team
Regional Support Manager (North)
- Judy Birchall

Regional Support Manager (Central & South)
- Duncan Gore

For more information on supporting the National Association of Child Contact Centres, contact:
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NACCC, Minerva House, Spaniel Row, Nottingham, NG1 6EP. Web: www.naccc.org.uk