

## Guidelines for Referrers and Parents



**All correspondence should be sent to the Centre Co-ordinator:**

Altrincham Child Contact Centre, The Hub, Pownall Road,  
Altrincham, WA14 2SZ

Our Child Contact Centre formerly based at Altrincham Baptist Church has been operating since October 1990 to provide contact for children to parents, siblings or other family members with whom they do not live. It opens every Saturday from 9.30 until 1pm.

No Court order is necessary before the Centre can be used.

Please note that our Child Contact Centre offers supported contact only. Supported contact takes place in a variety of neutral 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 when 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 consider more satisfactory family venues
- Apart from attendance dates and times, no detailed report will be made to a referrer, CAFCASS, a party's solicitor or Court, unless there is a risk of harm to the child, parent or Centre worker
- An acknowledgement that it be viewed as a temporary arrangement to be reviewed after an agreed period of time

1. Please do not refer a client without contacting the Child Contact Centre Co-ordinator first to check availability.
2. The Centre Co-ordinator should receive a completed referral form at least two weeks in advance of the date, upon which your client would like contact to commence. If the 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. Parents or other family members who are considering using the centre are required to visit on a previous week by prior arrangement with the coordinator to familiarise themselves and/or the children with how the centre operates.

4. Only people named on the referral form will be allowed admittance to the Child Contact Centre. This may be varied by written agreement of both parties.
5. Parents are responsible for their children at all times whilst they are at the Child Contact Centre.
6. 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 and exceptional circumstances.
7. Volunteers should not be asked to give evidence as to behaviour or other matters occurring within the centre as they are not experts and such requests may jeopardise the ongoing running of the centre.
8. Altrincham Child Contact Centre is sponsored by Altrincham Baptist Church & is an Accredited member of the National Association of Child Contact Centres (a registered charity). It operates under its guidelines and in accordance with them has the following policies – Child Protection, Complaints, Confidentiality, CRB, Domestic Violence, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, Health & Safety and a Volunteer Policy, copies of which are available upon request
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 / Centre Manager 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 that person concerned beforehand.
10. 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
11. The Child Contact Centre reserves the right to reduce or terminate contact if it is felt to be in the best interest of the child.
12. 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 in force.
13. Referrers should make arrangements for the provision of an interpreter where English is not the first language of the family involved if problems may arise with communication.
14. 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.
15. Please notify the Child Contact Centre Co-ordinator if the arrangements for contact are going to change or if contact is going to cease. Failure to notify us may prevent another family being able to use the centre.

16. Please ensure both parents have read and understood this information leaflet in advance of contact starting.

The Centre tries to operate with as few rules as possible but for the safety and protection of all concerned some are necessary:

- A The centre is a no smoking environment.
- B No drugs or alcohol are to be brought on to the premises.
- C The centre reserves the right to refuse its facilities to any person who behaves in a violent or abusive manner to any other person or appears to be under the influence of drink or drugs.
- D No person bringing a child to the centre for contact must leave the centre until the contact person has arrived. At the end of the contact period no contact parent or other party may leave the centre until the resident parent or their representative has arrived to collect the child. No child must be left in the sole care of the volunteers.
- E No child may leave the centre during the contact period without the prior written consent of the resident parent or their representative.
- F Taking of videos within the centre is forbidden. Photos may be taken with the help of a centre volunteer provided that prior authorisation is given by the resident parent. Under no circumstances must any such photo be shown on a social media website.

The centre is staffed entirely by volunteers and no one is paid for the work they do nor do any work in the centre as professionals although training in contact centre issues is given. No charge is made for the use of the centre as Altrincham Baptist Church donates all facilities. Tea, coffee, squash, crisps, sweets, toast and biscuits are available to purchase.

When contacting the centre an awareness that all are operating in their spare time would be appreciated.