

# Child Contact Centres

a guide for children and families



## About Us

AVENUE is the leading provider of Mediation, Counselling and Child Contact Services in Northeast Scotland. We work with everyone from children to grandparents and can support you and your family through times of change and transition.

Over the years AVENUE has helped hundreds of children re-establish and maintain relationships with parents and extended family. For children, contact can be conflicting; happy and sad, anxious and exciting, worrying and reassuring, all at the same time. Our experience has shown us that children cope better when you help us to help your child.

## About Our Centres

Our Centres are situated in Aberdeen, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Banff, Turriff, Huntly, and Elgin and staffed by a team of trained workers.

We provide a welcoming place to support regular contact between parents and children who no longer live together. Siblings and extended family can also use the Contact Centres.

Our workers maintain impartiality and don't get involved in issues of conflict or communication, for example passing messages between family members.

Play materials, games and toys are provided. At centres where there is a garden, it is assumed that children will play outdoors, weather permitting.



## Pre-Contact Visit

It is important to understand AVENUE's role in the contact process and each adult will attend a pre contact meeting to discuss AVENUE'S policies and guidelines. You will also have the opportunity to address any queries or concerns.

Children also attend a pre-contact visit to help familiarise themselves with the centre and address any questions.

## Your Contact Plan

Following the pre-contact visits, we will provide you with a contact plan, detailing ...

- ▶ Roles and Responsibilities
- ▶ Parental Goals
- ▶ Support Strategies
- ▶ Review Arrangements



## Preparing Children for Contact

Your child will cope better when you fully co-operate throughout the contact process, for example...

- ▶ Remind them of where they are going, who they will see and what will happen. Be positive.
- ▶ Use language they can understand - plain, simple words are best. Refer to *Going to a Contact Centre* book to help your child.
- ▶ Try not to be critical of the other parent or family members.
- ▶ Encouraging children to take sides is harmful. It's important you give your child permission to enjoy contact.
- ▶ Give your child positive reinforcement and avoid interrogating them after the visit.

## Handover

The contact workers will greet you at the reception area of the contact centre and will escort your child to the contact room.

Children may find this period of transition difficult. We expect you to be positive and encouraging to help promote an easy transition to contact.

Parents and Guardians are advised, for health and safety reasons that workers may be required to aid children. This may include taking a child's hand or, in the case of young children, carrying them between reception and contact areas.

## Bringing Children to a Contact Centre

It's important that you and your children arrive at the time specified by the Contact Centre Organiser.

As waiting facilities are limited, we cannot accommodate additional family members or friends.

During the first contact session, you are welcome to remain in our waiting room. Following this, you will be expected to leave and return at scheduled times.

At the end of the contact session you will be advised when it's appropriate to leave.



# Coming to See Children at a Contact Centre

Ensure you arrive 15 minutes before your session begins. As waiting facilities are limited, we cannot accommodate additional family members or friends.

Throughout the contact, you are responsible for the supervision of your child. At the end of the contact session you will be advised when it's appropriate to leave.

## Preparing for Contact

Your children will have visited the Contact Centre prior to your first session. But please remember, contact can be conflicting for children. They may feel happy and sad, anxious and excited, all at the same time.

We understand how challenging this can be, but try to remain positive and reassuring. Our workers are there to support you and your children.

- ▶ Think about what you could bring to the Contact session. Family photographs, a favourite toy or game can be fun activities and provide a point of focus.
- ▶ Give your children space to come to you when they are ready as they may feel shy or awkward initially.



- ▶ During the visit, be flexible; allow your child to choose the activities, follow their lead and join in.
- ▶ Be mindful of the topics you discuss throughout the sessions. Children may become confused and uncertain about adult issues they don't understand.
- ▶ When it's time to go, you may feel emotional which is understandable. However, try not to upset your child as they need to know you are okay.

This is a good time for a hug if your child wants one, then a quick, positive goodbye.

- ▶ After your session, give yourself time to reflect and plan ahead; what did your children enjoy, would you like to bring something to the next session. If you made promises, please remember to keep them.



# AVENUE Policies

Our Contact Centre staff work hard to provide a professional service to you and your family and deserve to be respected.

Disregard for our staff or policies may result in withdrawing the service.

## Zero Tolerance

AVENUE has a *Zero Tolerance Policy* for dealing with incidents of inappropriate behaviour against workers.

The policy applies to all and alleged incidents of harassment, intimidation or violence.

## Alcohol and Drugs

If any client appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs, immediate action will be taken and the service will be withdrawn.

## No Smacking

AVENUE operate a 'no smacking' policy, in accordance with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Any incidents will be reported to the appropriate agency and the service withdrawn.

## Electronic Equipment

These guidelines are intended to protect children and client confidentiality.

## Video and Sound Recording

The use of video or recording equipment, including digital cameras and mobile phones is not permitted.

## Mobile Phones and Electronic Equipment



Mobile phones are not to be used during contact sessions, including texts, video calls and games. They may be used to take photographs if agreed with the Contact Worker.

Tablets or other electronic game devices are permitted but should not be the focus of the contact session.

The contact adult is responsible for age appropriate usage and AVENUE reserve the right to monitor this.



# Find Out More ...

- ▶ relationship counselling
- ▶ individual counselling
- ▶ cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
- ▶ psychosexual therapy
- ▶ sex addiction
- ▶ family mediation
- ▶ child contact centres
- ▶ parenting apart
- ▶ young people's counselling
- ▶ play therapy
- ▶ consulting children
- ▶ advice and information

member of Relationships Scotland

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**AVENUE**   
a new direction