



Annual Report presented 5th September 2023

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Contact was in :

**Lagmore Community Forum
12 Lagmore Drive
BT17 0TG
On Thursdays**

And in :

**Mount Eagles Community Centre
Mount Eagles Square
BT17 0XN
on Saturdays**

Contents:

Chairpersons Address	Page 2
AGM 2022 Minutes	Page 2-4
Coordinators Report:	Page 5
Partnership Working	Page 6
Services	Page 7-9
Statistics	Page 10-11
Sessions	Page 12
Referral Methods	Page 13-14
Comments	Page 15
The Future	Page 16
Meet the Team	Page 16
Financial Report	Page 16

Chairpersons Address:

Roisin McKenna Chairperson will make a short statement.

Minutes of AGM 2022 held at 6.pm on 6th September 2022 at 124 Stewartstown Road BT11 9JQ

Attended: Roisin McKenna, Denis Cavanagh, Lyndsay Kerr, Megan McCann, Brenda Tighe, and Tina Gregory.

Roisin McKenna opened the AGM welcoming all for their attendance. Roisin thanked everyone for their continued support and assistance on the Board. She thanked Tina for her commitment and production of the report and her positive attitude throughout this past year.

She congratulated Megan on her wedding this year and noted the continuing impact that Covid has had on people's lives.

She then opened the AGM 2022.

Agenda:

1. Minutes of AGM 2021
2. Matters Arising
3. Ratify Committee and the Office bearers
4. Accounts
5. Coordinators Report
6. Welcome Supervisors and volunteers
7. Supper and Quiz

1. The minutes of the AGM 2021 which were sent out to all by email and hard copies provided were read and agreed as accurate.

Proposed to adopt minutes Roisin McKenna and Seconded by Brenda Tighe. Minutes adopted

2. No Matters arising.
3. Rosin thanked the Board members for their contribution and commitment in attending each meeting and at times by Zoom which was necessary at times. All members of the Board agreed to stay on the Board in their current positions for another year.

Proposed by Roisin Mc Kenna and seconded by Lindsay Kerr

4. Tina presented the Draft Accounts which had been prepared Denis. Denis thanked Tina for her efficiency in preparing the work for him and everything completed in a timely fashion. We are spending according to our budget headings and all is currently within spend but with the increasing costs of fuel with gas, electricity and petrol increasing this year then this is something that needs brought to the attention of the Trust on Thursday at the contracts meeting.

Denis stated the accounts will be filed after the auditor Tony Hennessey has completed them. All agreed to approve the accounts and auditor.

Brenda thanked Denis for his expertise and all concurred.

The accounts were proposed by Brenda Tighe and seconded Roisin McKenna.

5. Tina Gregory presented the AGM Report 2022. Brenda Tighe thanked Tina for the professional report and stated it was great to have the information contained within it as it shows the breath and scope of the work involved.

Tina stated it was great to be able to provide services when other services were still not up and running to their pre pandemic capacity.

She highlighted the change of premises this year and the fact we operate out of two different centres which both are excellent can cause a bit of confusion at times and it would be great to have one facility for all our services.

Tina thanked the various partners, and in particular the SEHSCT, Mount Eagles Community Forum and Lagmore Community Centre for their assistance and support throughout the year.

She highlighted the contribution of the volunteers and supervisors without whom we could not offer this quality service and they are always willing and ready to step up and assist with changing and covering shifts for each other and supportive to her and they are amazing.

The evaluations were noted and the comments were discussed and it was good to have these as real comments from the parents about the services delivered bearing in mind that some do not want to be in the contact centre at all.

6. Tina then welcomed the supervisors and volunteers and did a round of introductions. She highlighted the Board members to all and specified that if there were any difficulties that Roisin McKenna was the first point of call, with Brenda Tighes contact details also contained on the contact sheet which the team have every session.

Roisin stated it was great to welcome them and expressed her appreciation to them for all their effort and contribution this year and was delighted to host this celebration event for them. She also stated Tina was going to organise another celebration event for them before Christmas.

Last year the quiz was won by Joan, Sinead and Alison and they were presented with their prizes by Tina. Supper was served and a fun quiz took place which was won by Lindsay. Well done. Roisin thanked Tina for the food and the quiz which everyone found fun!

Session ended at 8.30 pm and Roisin thanked everyone for attending and looked forward to a better year.

Team Attended: Alison Cameron, Ashley Veighey, Seana Hitchen, Una Bradley

Apologies: Alastair McKinley, Joan McCann, Jenna Diamond, Sinead Quinn, and Jessica Higgins

Coordinators Report for AGM 2023

It is my pleasure to present the report for 2023.

I wish to start by thanking our four regular fantastic volunteers that give of their time freely each time they are asked. Jenna, Seana, Una, and Shauneen you are amazing and we thank you.

We also have 7 Supervisors, Joan, Jessica, Alison, Alastair, Ashley, Seana, and Sinead who work either once per month or some weekly and that is either a Saturday or Thursday evening and sometimes both. Again we could not do this work without the supervisors and the volunteers. So thank you all.

Training: We provide both on the job training and signpost to other organisations for the training which the team can book themselves depending on their interests and availability.

On the job training is provided. This includes support and information during the sessions and also information on families attending and issues needing addressed. At the end of each session we have a debrief which is a necessity as families change and some move on with others developing issues between sessions which the team needs to be aware of. It is an opportunity to discuss any issues which may have arisen during the session and can be a timely support to the team when things have not gone according to plan. It is a time for me to raise matters needing addressed or for information sharing on training or events coming up.

This year we signposted the team to training in Graded Care in Neglect, and Safeguarding Children which was provided by CINI.

We provided First Aid training to the team specifically first aid for babies and children in June 2023.

Every member of the team when at sessions assists in setting up for the sessions. This means the team are in the centre ½ hour before the parents arrive and set out the chairs and tables with the individual family boxes and the other areas of play in the room.

The team contribute to children and parents by assisting them with play and supporting them with training children with toileting, information on how to play some games and art and craft activities.

At the end of the session the team clear away and replace all the toys and games as well as the boxes for the families and the tables and chairs used. They clean the toilets and empty the bins and attend the debrief to discuss and issues which may have arisen during the session. This is always a great opportunity to support the team and the peer support is a fantastic bonus for everyone.

Partnership Working:

We are providing the contact sessions in both Mount Eagles Community Centre on a Saturday morning and Lagmore Community Forum on a Thursday evening. So a big thank you to both management committees in both these centres for their support and assistance this past year.

Thanks also go to the Children Court Officers for their continued support and assistance working with the families and supporting Cloona Child Contact Services. They are available to check up on families and provide support when needed. So thank you all. It is a comfort knowing you are there just a phone call away.

We are a member of the Northern Ireland Network of Child Contact Centres and through this network there has been support and discussion on the way forward for contact centres regionally. They has been very supportive and giving peer support and encouragement. The Network also conducts Accreditation visits to the centres to ensure everything provided is up to the standard expected of an accredited centre and we are grateful for all their support, friendship and guidance.

Thanks goes to the South Eastern Trust as Cloona Child Contact Services would not exist so a big thank you to them. We work closely with some social workers and have developed a sound and trusting relationship with a number of social workers in the Child and Family Teams. So thanks to them.

We are also lucky to have the Suffolk Regeneration RP where our office is based and they have provided a lot of help and support to our services.

Services:

From April 2022 to June 2023 we provided the services on Saturday morning in Mount Eagles Community Centre. We used Lagmore Community Forum on Thursday evenings. This is direct contact between children and their non-resident parents, siblings, grandparents and other family members for up to 11 families each session.

In Mount Eagles we have use of a large hall which can accommodate the families. It is warm and provides a friendly and comfortable experience for the children and their families. In Lagmore we have use of the hall and a small outdoor area which we use when weather is suitable.

The toys are all child friendly and each family has their own box relevant to their children's age and stage of development. We also have a range of games in the middle of the hall that families can chose to play with or some families bring in their own toys and games and take them home after each session.

Some families have 1 child and others have up to 4 children which can make it harder to occupy all the children at the same time. This is where the team assist the parents and try to provide activities which will interest all the family together. Some families are very good at entertaining all the children and others at times need a bit of assistance and direction. The team can occupy a child while the parent can focus their attention on another child. This can be beneficial when the children are varying ages and do not all want to play with the same games and toys. The team are always ready to assist and help out the families and develop good relationships with the parents and children in the centre.

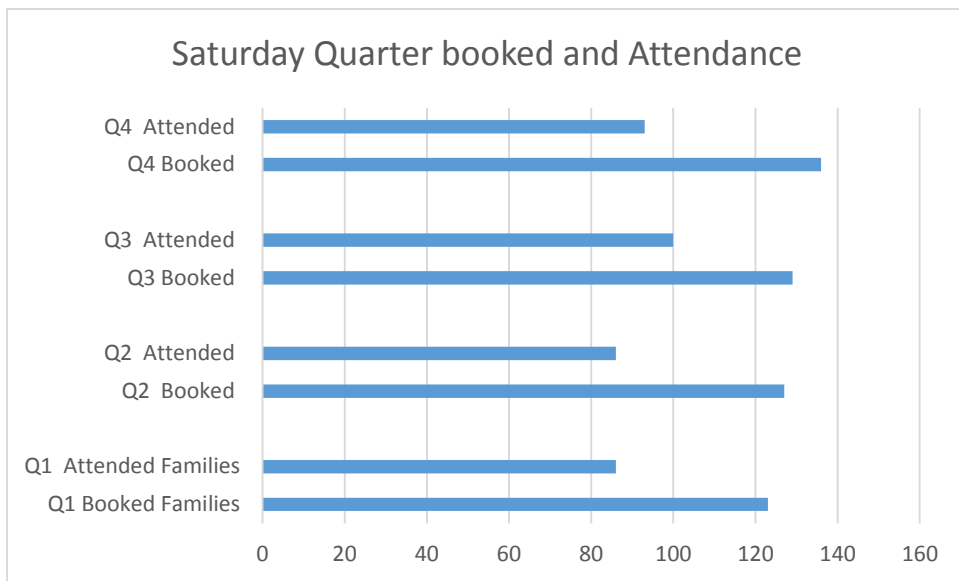
Uptake:

This year 2022/2023 we have provided services for 52 families, with 17 families returning from the past year. And of these 12 are carried over from the previous year too. This is as a direct result of the impact of Covid and the slow reopening of services for some of these families and the lack of services and progression during Covid and the aftermath.

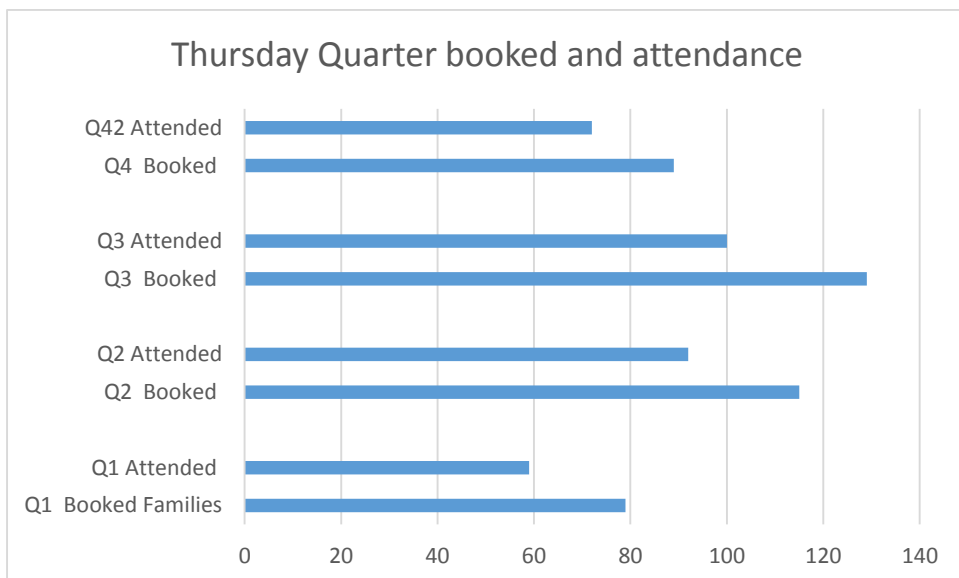
At the end of March 2023 we had 19 families attending with 39 adults and 28 children. The service we provide supports both parents and guardians and it is this which has proven beneficial in assisting the families to move on into the community as both feel supported and encouraged to focus their attention on their children and their needs.

Some of these are a parent, and others attend with another child or a grandparent.

As can be seen by the two charts below not all families that have booked attend when they are supposed to. For some this is resistance and for others there are valid reasons such as illness or work commitments.

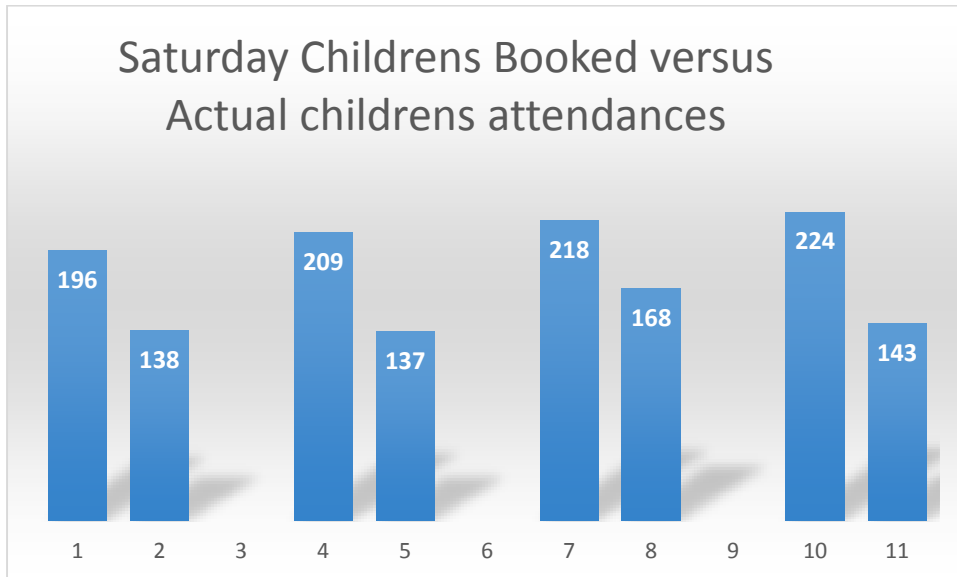


Above is for the Saturday data and the families that have booked versus the actual attendance of the families and below is the same information for Thursday evenings.

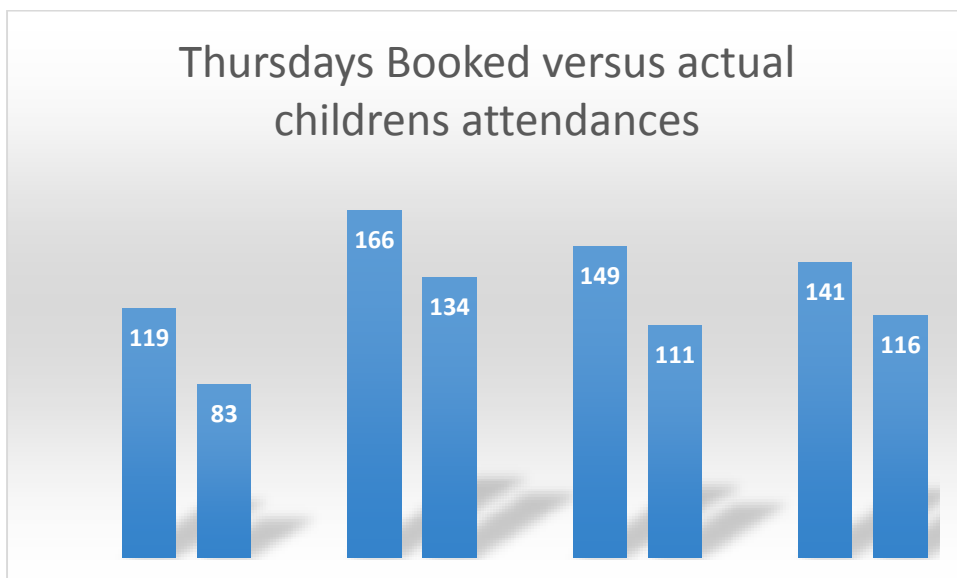


It is rare that all the families that have booked to attend actually do and while we have to have on hand staff to cover all the families it has meant at times that some families do not turn up at all and we are left chasing them up and their referrers too to try and understand what has happened. This is time consuming and involves a lot of phoning and follow ups after each session.

Below is the same information on the children's attendance. This is reading across by each quarter. As is expected we have more children than families attending and this is explained by the fact that not all families have one child but most have multiple children attending the service.

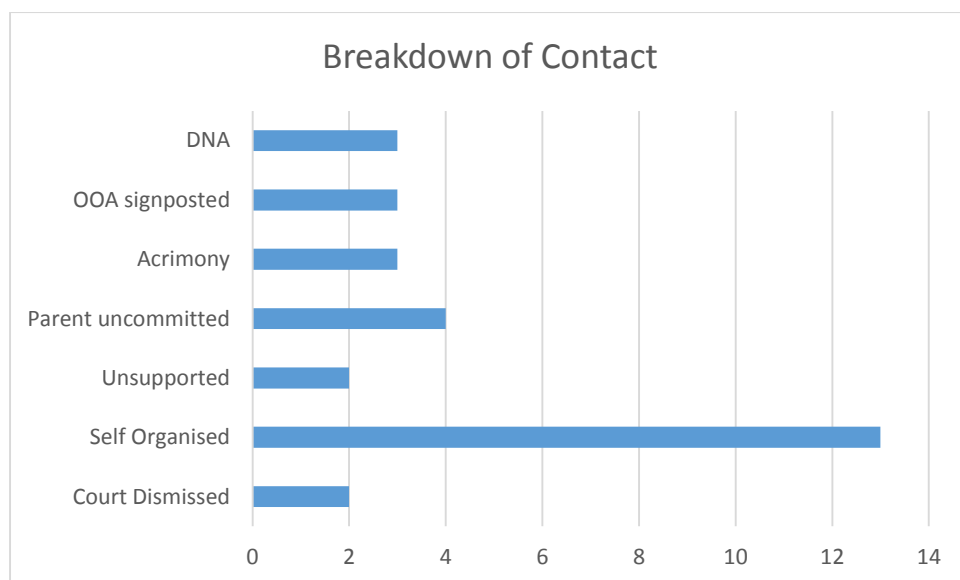


Again below reading across by quarter with the number of booked children and beside it the number that attended



Statistics

As can be seen below with the centres statistics there are varying reasons why contact breaks down. Below is a graph of the reasons why the files on the families have closed throughout the year April 2022 to March 2023.



Some families just need time and space to move on they have been able to organise contact between themselves. The work the team do in supporting them to do this is demonstrated in the comments later recorded in this report. It has assisted the parent to develop trust in the other parent seeing them arrive on time and being dependable and reliable and there for their child/ren no matter what else is going on in their lives and wider community. This is demonstrated for some families with the speed of their ability to organise the contact themselves and progress in to the community quickly.

Unfortunately some families cannot do this and resistance from either parent is a hard issue to navigate through and sometimes we cannot do this despite our best efforts. This has caused the cessation of contact when the acrimony is too great and the parents cannot see the benefit for their child and this can be hard to manage for the children and of course the team too.

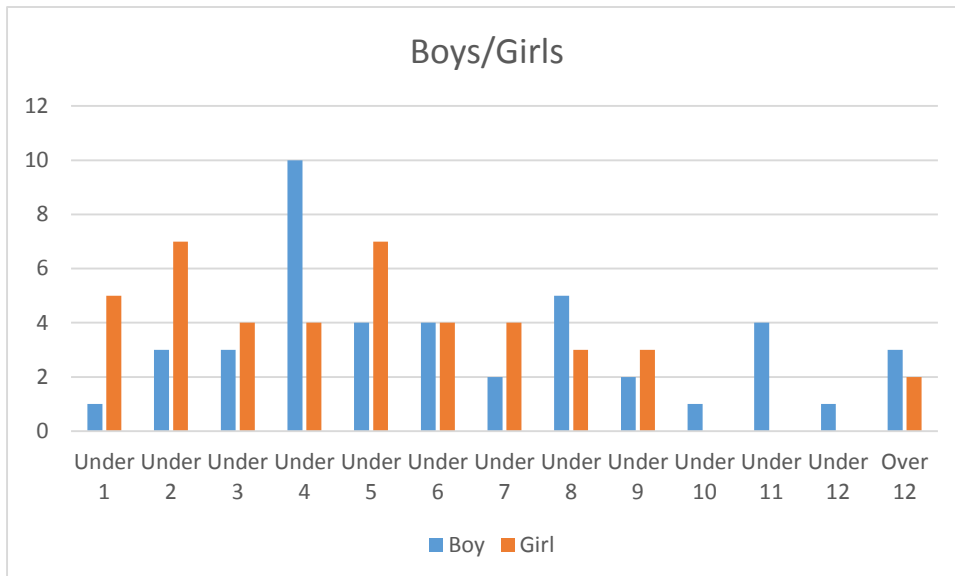
In other cases mental health, addiction and other issues can be barriers to a successful contact arrangement.

Our aim is to assist families navigate through the separation process and to help the separating families see the child and their need for contact with their non-resident family in a safe environment and to start the trust building process whereby they can focus their attention on their child's needs.

We have been successful in supporting 13 families to self-organise this year. We are delighted with this as the families have managed in difficult circumstances to focus their

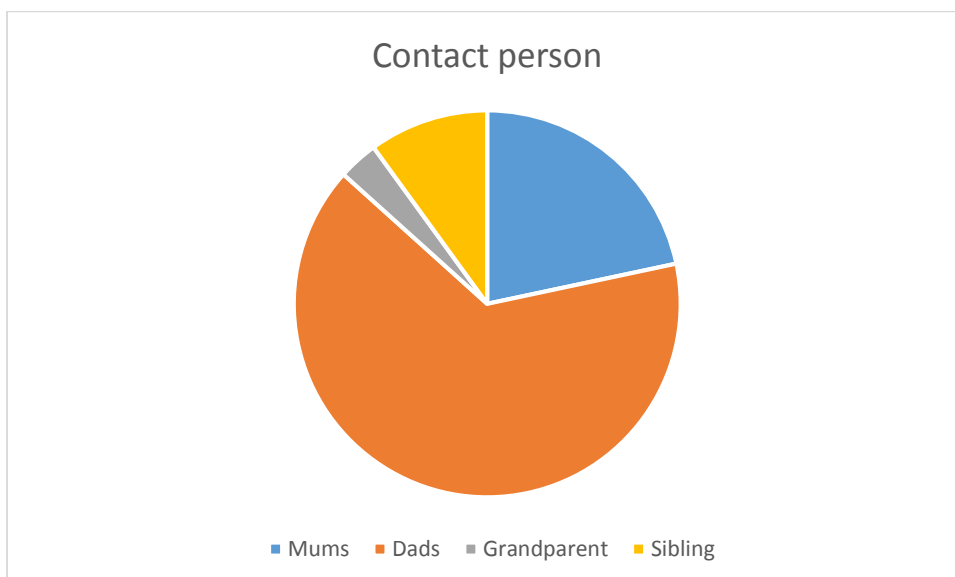
attention on their children and move on. Some only needed a few sessions and others needed over a year's support to be able to move on.

Below is a breakdown on the number of boys and girls attending the centre in 2022 to 2023 and as can be seen we have had 43 boys and 43 girls with age ranging from a few weeks to age 15.



We encourage families to just sit and chat and to catch up on the child's life and for the child to tell the adult what was important in their life since the last visit. This is as important to the children as playing and most parents are keen to hear what is happening and important in their child's life. This enables the parent feel a part of their child's life and helps them to develop further their relationship with their child/ren

The majority of parents at the contact centre are fathers. Each year we receive a number of referrals for mum to have contact with their children too.



Thursday Sessions

Our sessions on Thursday evening were in Lagmore Community Forum and parents arrived at 5.15pm to be ready and settled to meet their child at 5.30pm. Some children are in the contact for the full 2 hours and others for less time depending on their capability and age.

Some parents moved on to handover and return where the parent arrives at the normal time and when the children are brought and the resident parent leaves the area the children can go out into the community for a period of time and return to the centre again before the other parent picks up the children. This enables the parent to spend some time unsupported in the community and is an opportunity for them to see how they will manage the contact in order to progress to self-organised and both parties must agree to this before moving on.

This is a great stepping stone for all involved and enables confidence to be built up.

There is a demonstrated need for this service and parents are requesting this too as some children have clubs and other activities on Saturday morning and it is not convenient for them to have to give up their activities. Others work and the evenings are more convenient for them too.

Saturday Sessions:

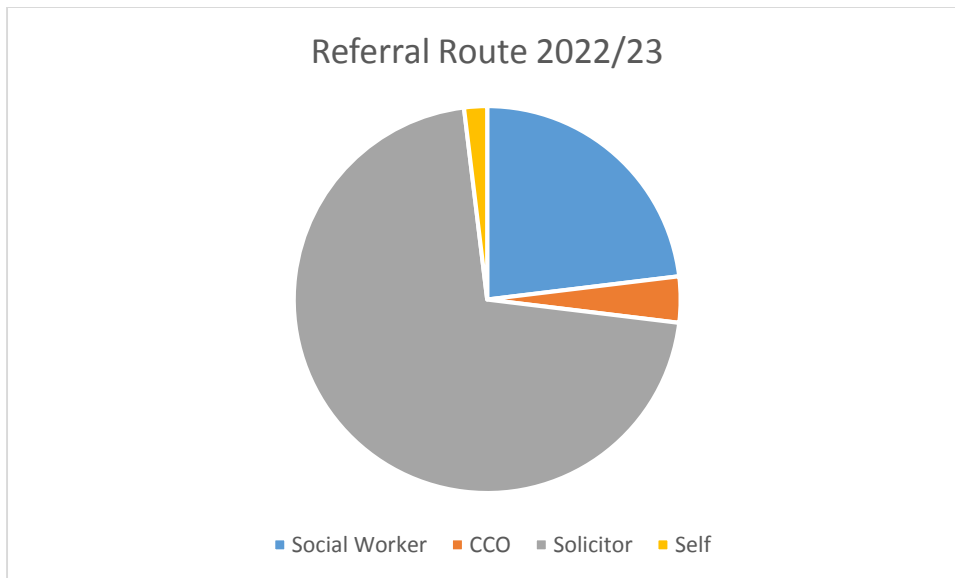
On Saturdays we are in Mount Eagles Community Centre and the non-resident parent arrives at 9.45 to a room set up with tables and chairs and their own family box of games and toys. The rest of the room is set out with a selection of arts and crafts and games and toys they can use if they wish. There is a small tuck shop each session and parents can buy tea or coffee crisps sweets chocolate or fruit drinks for their children. Some parents bring in picnics for their families and but others enjoy the tuck shop and enjoy chatting to their child at this wee shop as they never get the opportunity to bring their child shopping and letting them chose their treats.

Saturdays are usually busier than Thursdays and there is more demand for Saturdays as parents working and other activities make this necessary. As previously stated some children have Saturday activities and this means it is not always available to them.

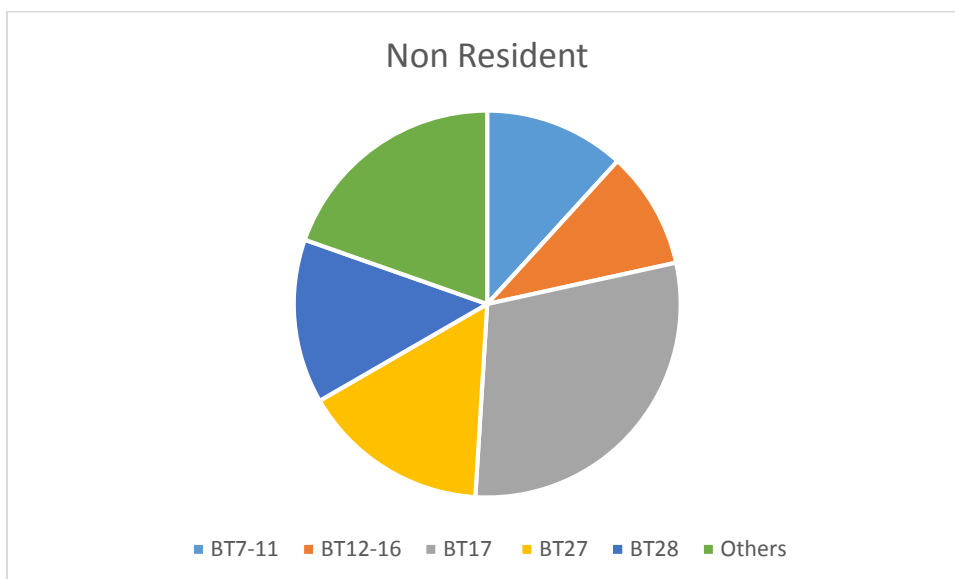
We have been very successful in providing introductory session and meetings between parents when they have never met their child or when there is a long gap in contact. This is done on a gradual basis until all are happy with the setup and are confident and supported in the centre.

Referral Methods and BT codes:

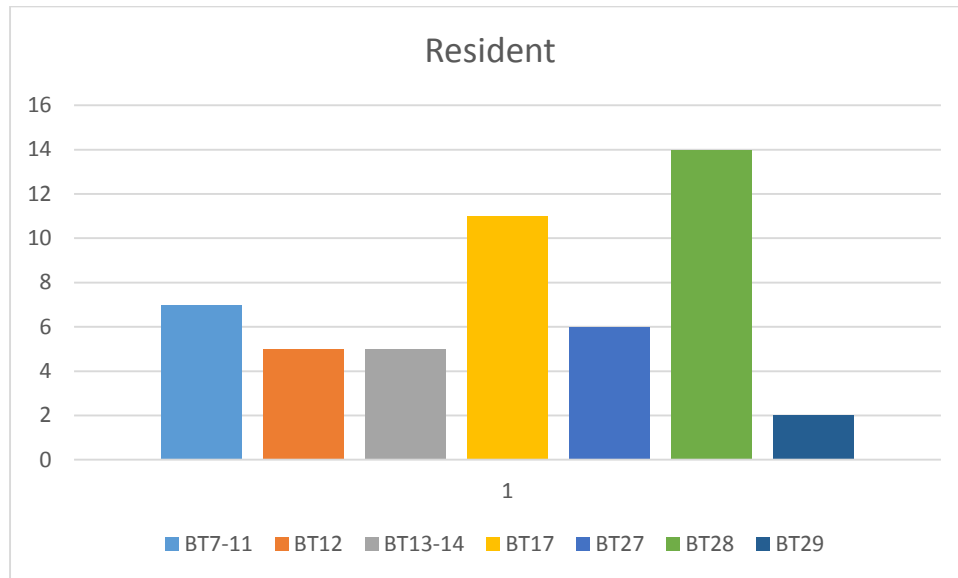
Below is a chart showing the referral method. The majority are referrals by Solicitors and increasingly we are receiving referrals from Children Court Officers (CCO), and Child and Family Teams (C&FT). In some cases the solicitors are tasked to make the referral by the courts as the judge has made a contact order for the service.



We provide services primarily for BT17, BT27 and BT28 but sometimes the families or the non-resident parent lives in other areas too and these are recorded in the graph below. As can be seen the majority of Parents live in BT17, BT27 or BT28 which are all within the South Eastern Trust Area.



Below is a graph depicting the areas the children live in and again the majority are in the South Eastern Trust catchment area. Some children live outside the area but the non-resident parent lives within the area so this is accommodated in the service.



It needs noted that this service is for families that do not necessarily want to be at the contact centre. Some parents do not want contact to go ahead and try to sabotage the contact and arrangement. They do not always see the benefits for their child and because of previous hurt or experience are very resistant to the contact taking place. We try and reassure them that their child is at the forefront of our service and we keep a watchful gaze on them at all times.

Some families are hostile to the thoughts of being in the centre and resistant to using the services provided no matter how well we provide the service and no matter how good the team are in providing a welcoming environment. This is both parents and not just the president parent but resistance from the non-resident parent too.

All our toys are age appropriate and for collective playing within family groups such as Snakes and Ladders, Jenga, Connect 4, Operation, car, road mat, dolls, prams and art and craft which are placed in the middle of the room so families can take and play with whatever they wish as well as having their own family box with age appropriate and relevant toys and games for their family.

This encourages the parents to get up and move about the room which is welcome after the restrictions of Covid. The children can now play in the different areas of the room and interact with other families and children which makes it a more playful atmosphere.

Some comments recorded from parents throughout the past year:

As ever most parents are thankful and below is a small selection of the comments parents have made throughout the year. They have given cards and chocolates to the team in appreciation for their support and this is notes with thanks.

You are all amazing the work you do is fantastic really appreciate all you do

Thank you T A has loved it here and you have been very kind and good to her. Thank you

Thank you so, so much. You are brilliant staff amazing can't thank you enough.

That was great he was fantastic thank you so much can't believe how great that was.

Thank you T You always know what to do. You all do a fantastic job and I'd be lost without you.

That was amazing Didn't think it would go like that. Thank you so much for that Just fantastic.

The future:

Currently the Contact service operates from the community facilities and we are grateful for them. Our aim would be to have our own centre where we could offer more services on a daily basis.

We would like to offer a more diverse range of services from contact, handover and return, supported in the community contact, and mediation.

We could offer support to social services where they could use our facility to provide supervised contact in a friendly setting.

We are currently exploring this option and looking to raise funds to make this a reality but this is over a number of years into the future.

Meet the Team:

Board of Trustees:		Staff	
Roisin McKenna Denis Cavanagh Brenda Tighe Lyndsey Kerr Megan McCann	Chairperson Treasurer Secretary Director Director	Tina Gregory Joan McCann Jessica Higgins Seana Hitchen Alastair McKinley Alison Cameroon Sinead Quinn Ashley Veighey	Coordinator Session Supervisor Session Supervisor Session Supervisor Session Supervisor Session Supervisor Session Supervisor Session Supervisor
Volunteers: Seana Jenna Una Shauneen		Court Children's Service Michelle Casey Joanne Wilson Mags Mooney Alison Dunlop Karen Woods	Team Manager Clerical Officer Court Children's Officer Court Children's Officer Court Children's Officer

Accounts will be presented and scrutinised by the Board.