



Annual Report presented on 5th November 2024

Office:

124 Stewartstown Rd

Belfast

BT 119JQ

Phone: 07887391607

Email: clonachildcontactservices@gmail.com

NIC104601

Co Reg: NI046314

Contact in :

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

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

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Chairpersons Address:

Roisin McKenna Chairperson will make a short statement.

Minutes of AGM 2023 held at 6.30pm on at 124 Stewartstown Road BT11 9JQ

Attended: Roisin McKenna, Denis Cavanagh, Brenda Tighe, and Tina Gregory.

Apologies: Lyndsay Kerr, Megan McCann

Agenda:

1. Minutes of AGM 20220
2. Matters Arising
3. Ratify Committee and the Office bearers
4. Accounts
5. Coordinators Report
6. Welcome Supervisors and volunteers
7. Supper and Quiz

Roisin McKenna opened the AGM welcoming all for their attendance. She thanked the Board members for their commitment throughout this past year

1. The minutes of the AGM 2022 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 Denis Cavanagh. Minutes adopted

2. No Matters arising.

3. Rosin highlighted the Board members contribution and commitment in attending the meetings each month and for all their work throughout the year. She appreciates everyone is busy yet they manage to give their time and it is appreciated. She thanked the Board members for agreeing to stay on again for a further year and all agreed to continue in their present roles.

Proposed by Roisin Mc Kenna and seconded by Brenda Tighe

4. Denis addressed the meeting with the draft accounts. He highlighted the accruals and discussed some of the issues in relation to spend this year. He highlighted how efficient Tina

is in preparing the work for him and everything completed in a timely fashion. All agreed to approve the accounts and auditor.

Brenda wanted it noted how thankful we are to have Denis and his expertise and contribution and all agreed.

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

5. Roisin passed over to Tina Gregory for her report and complimented the production of the report for this meeting.

Brenda stated it was great to have this information and its layout was excellent.

She wanted to note the support of the partners such as SEHSCT, the CCOs and their continued support and availability to discuss some families, Lagmore Community Forum, Mount Eagles Community Centre for their room hire, NINCCS for their peer support and availability and SRRP for our office.

Tina went on to highlight some of the issues facing the families specifically mentioned the mental health of some of the families and how this was a big issue for some of the families.

Roisin thought the inclusion of the comments from the families added a bright touch and Tina paid tribute to the team of supervisors and volunteers without whom we could not operate and they give of their time and energy to the families and each one is brilliant on their own and collectively amazing.

6. Tina 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.

Attended Team building supper:

Joan McCann, Alison Cameron, Ashley Veighey, Sinead Quinn,

Apologies: Alastair McKinley and Jessica Higgins

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.

Supper was served which was enjoyed by all with a variety of dishes on offer and a fun team quiz took place. This while not a serious quiz caused some confusion and assisted in building the team and the Board.

Session ended at 8pm and Roisin thanked everyone for attending and looked forward to a better year.

Coordinators Report for AGM 2024

It is my pleasure to present the AGM report on 5th November 2024.

As our services are a direct provision, we have continued to provide the necessary services for children to stay in contact with their parent or other family member each Thursday or Saturday morning. We are seeing more parents with issues such as poor mental health, poverty, and disabilities. The children too are presenting as more complex with ASD, ADHD among some of the issues for the children. We have had this year 11 children with disabilities in our service and 13 families from minority ethnic backgrounds.

We were fortunate to have had the hall in Lagmore Community Forum each Thursday and Saturday we use Mount Eagles Community Centre. This is a lovely large hall which can facilitate all the families up to the maximum 11 families per session. Both centres are warm and comfortable and have the space for the families to enjoy the services.

We have three regular fantastic volunteers that give of their time freely each time they are asked. Jenna, Seana, Una, 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.

We are getting more introduction visits where children have never met their parent, or it has been a long time, so reintroductions are needed and these tend to take a lot of time and commitment to get up and running and again the team have been fantastic helping the children settle.

The team assist new parents to settle in and they ensure that the families have what they need and are supported throughout their time within the sessions. They all assist in setting up for the sessions and clear up afterwards. They contribute to the debrief afterwards and discuss issues of concern and are as always good to have their comments and thoughts as they can see things which can be missed.

We discuss issues which may have caused concern for the team and any incidents are dealt with. The team are supported to discuss in a friendly manner anything which may be concerning for them and solutions sought to enable the team to build on existing relationships and provide a peer support network. These notes are written up later and filed away so we can at a future date look back and see if any issues had been discussed

previously. These sessions are so very beneficial to the team and assist with them not bringing home concerns and having to deal with issues themselves. They can leave them in the centre and walk away and not have an impact on their daily lives.

Partnership Working:

Thank you to Mount Eagles Community Committee and Lagmore Community Forum for all their help and support. These facilities enable us to provide the services in the local area for the families. These facilities are very helpful and supportive, and we appreciate their assistance.

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. They have been able to come into the centre and conduct observed sessions for some of their clients which has assisted in the families moving on to handover and eventually moving out to self-organised. 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 tremendous support and discussion on the way forward for contact centres regionally. They have been very supportive and giving peer support and encouragement. This Network also conducts Accreditation visits to the centre 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 several 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:

Currently we are providing Supported Contact each Saturday in Mount Eagles Community Centre and on Thursday in Lagmore Community Forum. 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. 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, alongside art and craft, cars and road, dolls etc. 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.

In Lagmore Community forum we have a large hall. Again, each family has their own table and chairs and in the middle of the room thy can access art and craft, cars and road or other games and toys suitable for their age range. We are very happy with the facilities on offer.

Uptake:

This year 2023/2024 we have provided services for 66 families, with 20 families returning from the past year. This is mainly because there were no court or other progression for these families, and they were stuck in the system. Some families are content to remain in the service which while it is a compliment to our service is not what we are trying to do.

At the end of March 2024, we had 23 families move to self-organised which shows how well and how hard they have worked to get to that point. They can now focus their attention on the child and recognise the importance of the other parent in the child's life. This takes time and a willingness to progress. At the End of March, we had 14 families using the service each week split between the Saturday and the Thursday sessions.

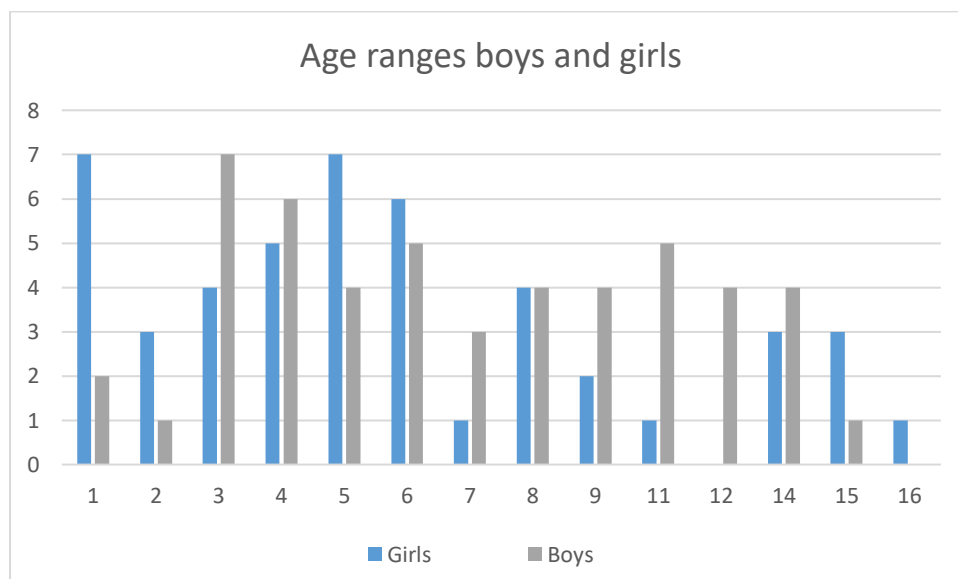
There is always two parents or other adults involved and we are there for both parents, resident and non-resident and provide these services for the benefit of both parties and of course the children themselves and this year we have some grandparents attending one session per month to see their grandchildren with the parent.

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.

Some of the reasons why contact failed this year includes mental health, failed drug tests, parents arrested, children resisted, or parent resisted, parental conflict, inappropriate referral and had to go back to Social services. A lot of work goes into setting up the contact and it is upsetting for all when it does not work out.

Breakdown of Ages:

Below is a chart on the number of boys and girls attending the centre in 2023 to 2024 and as can be seen we have had 50 boys and 47 girls. The oldest was 16 years old and the youngest was a few weeks old. As stated, some of these are introduction visits where it is the first time the child has met the parent, and this can be an emotional and intense session for all.



We have had to buy tables and chairs for both the centres for the families and the children to use and there are always ongoing costs of replacing lost games, toys and batteries.

All our toys are age appropriate and for collective playing within family groups such as Snakes and Ladders, Jenga, Connect 4, Operation, 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.

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.

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

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.

Some of the children are in the session are for ½ hour others are for the full 2 hour session and others have moved to handover and return to the centre.

Currently we operate Thursday evening in Lagmore from 5.30 to 7.30 with the non-resident attending from 5.15 and the children brought at 5.30pm. The children are collected at 7.30pm and the non-resident parent can leave 5 minutes after the child has left the building. This is to ensure there is no conflict between the parties while the child is present.

Saturday Sessions:

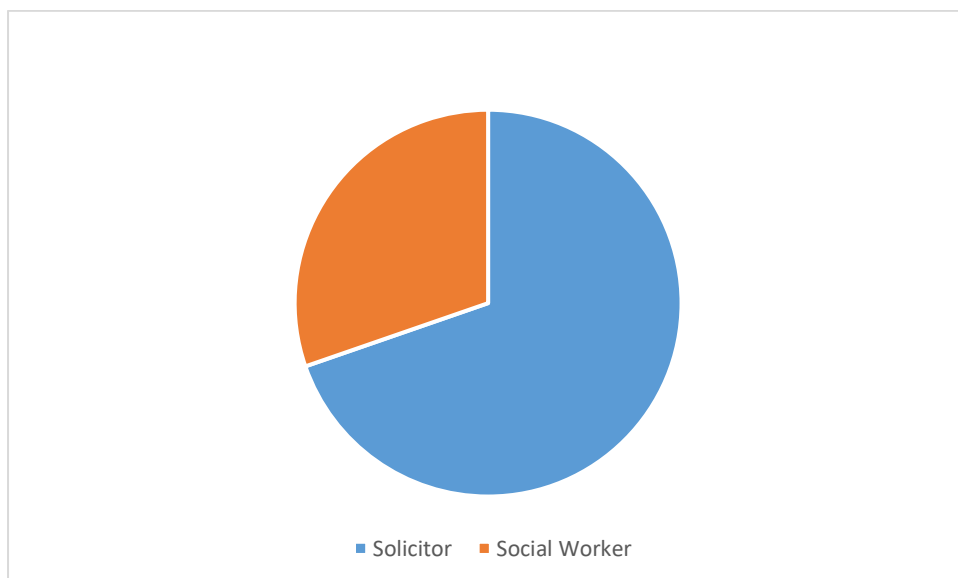
Saturday sessions run from 10am to 12noon for the children with the non-resident parent on site from 9.45 and leaving after the children have left at 12.05pm. 22 separate families were facilitated on Saturday mornings which is 40 children and 44 parents. We have to set up and clean, so the team arrives at 9.30 and finishes at 12.30. Again, some of the children are there for handover and return and others are there for 1 hour with the majority there for 2 hour session.

Referral Methods:

The majority of referrals come in from the solicitors and we are getting increasing numbers from Social services for step down service moving from supervised to supported contact. We are also getting referrals from social services for families they are facilitating family support in the Trust and these can move between supported to supervised and vice versa depending on the issues involved.

We are quite clear we will not facilitate referrals when a parent has a conviction or pending conviction for harming a child.

Referrals:



From point of receiving the referral it can take up to 2 weeks to get all the relevant information and set up assessment meeting for both parties. At times I have to go back to the referrer to get additional information which they had not included in the referral forms. This takes time and stalls the process for the children waiting on the opportunity to see their parent.

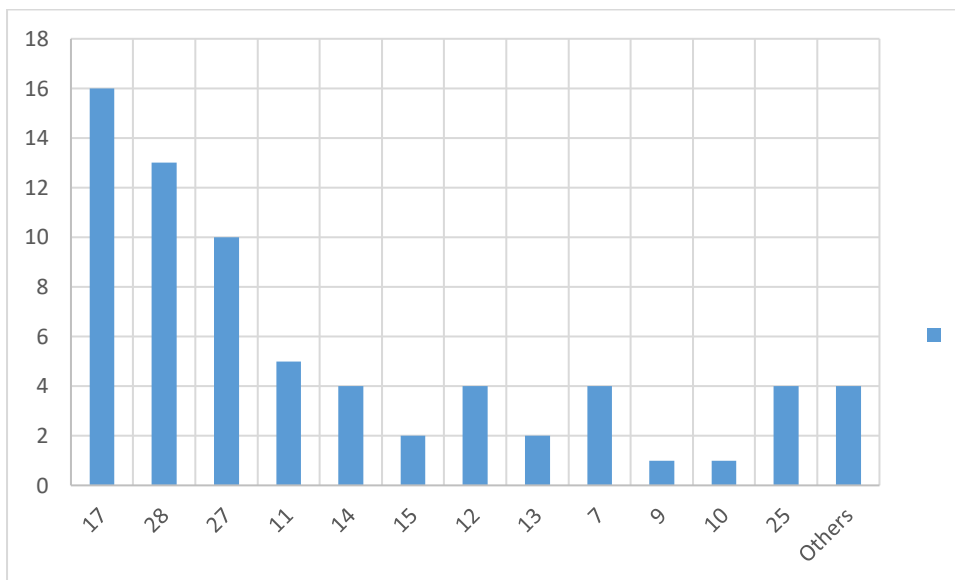
We try to get the contact up and running as quickly as possible and inform all it will be 1 session per week either on Saturday or Thursdays.

One of the hardest referrals we get are re referrals whereby a family have moved on to self-organised and after a while this has broken down and the family get re-referred to the centre. It is difficult to deal with and although only a few reaches this point they mainly break down due to no compliance by the parent.

We provide services for families living in the South Eastern Trust area which is 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.

Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the referrals live in the catchment area and the non-resident parent lives in the other areas.

BT postcodes:



We have had some families travel from England, Derry, Dundalk to see their children which show commitment to their children. We have had other families say its too far when they live in Belfast or surrounding areas which speaks for itself.

Overall, we have had a mixed bag of success this year for families. Some family contacts have failed in the contact service for various reasons as highlighted on Page 8 of this report. The children are amazing and while some bounce into the contact others remain a bit apprehensive and this is where the team show their strength and skills in encouraging and supporting the children and the parents too.

I have recorded a sample of the comments from parents below and these are shared with the team, so they know how valuable this service is to the families and how much they are appreciated by the parents and children.

Some comments recorded from the parents:

You are all amazing. The work you do is fantastic. Really appreciate all you do

Thanks for everything you have done for us. Really thankful to be moving on and excited, tell everyone thanks.

Just want to thank you for all your help and support. Knowing my girls were safe and there were no difficulties really helped...I don't know where we would be if not for you.. so thank you.

I just want to say thank you also the boys have really enjoyed going and you've helped greatly. Its really appreciated.

That was amazing, didn't think it would go like that thank you so, so much for that. Just fantastic.

I just want to thank you personally, you were absolutely amazing, accommodating, corresponding between us. So a big thank you and a big hug from me and E.

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		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 presented by Treasurer.