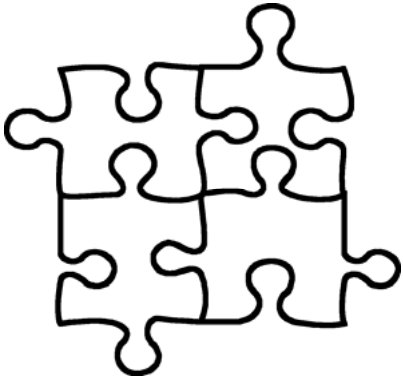
family space+

good news in our community

# Cheltenham Child Contact Centre



St Silas Centre, Hesters Way Road, Cheltenham, GL51 0SE

## what is it like at a child contact centre?

At Cheltenham there are two large rooms and a smaller quiet room with a variety of games, toys, books and art and craft activities for children of all ages. There′s also a waiting room and a kitchen/tuck shop where parents can help themselves to tea, coffee and other refreshments. The Child Contact Centre is run by trained staff and volunteers who are impartial so they do not take sides or get involved in parental disputes. They work to a strict confidentiality policy and have
all been CRB checked.

## how are visits arranged?

Visits are by referral which are usually made by the courts, solicitors, social workers, CAFCASS officers or by the parents themselves.

## what are the different types of contact?

Supported contact involves several families using the centre at the same time with staff and volunteers on hand to offer support and guidance. This form of contact is most appropriate when there′s been some level of breakdown of communication and trust between parents. Families are encouraged to develop mutual trust and consider such contact as a temporary arrangement. With supported contact there is no record kept of details of the session (unless there's been a risk of harm identified to a child, parent or centre worker) except to note dates and times of attendance.

Supervised contact is used when it has been determined that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, harm during contact. Supervised contact takes place with a contact supervisor present at the session recording their observations on the interaction between the parent/family members and the child and this report is made available to the referrer which, in most cases, is the local authority.

Handovers are arranged so the parents do not have to meet. Centre staff/volunteers act as a third party 'escorting′ the child/children safely from one parent to the other.

## who will I meet at the centre?

As far as supported contact and handovers are concerned, a parent does not have to meet with their partner or ex partner if they don′t wish to. However a parent is responsible for the child or children at all times whilst at the centre so someone has to wait with the child until the other partner arrives. As for supervised contact it is anticipated that if the child is in local authority care and both parents are having contact, then they would attend at the same time.

## what else do I need to know?

### supported contact

- The welfare of each child is the responsibility of the parent.
- Children are not to be left in the care of staff/volunteers.
- We encourage the residential parent to leave the child with the parent having contact. If the thought of leaving is too difficult at first, there is a room where you can wait. If you do leave you must give a contact telephone number for the afternoon.
- A child can only be taken out of the centre during a visit if it is stated on the referral form, or with the written consent of both parents.
- Relatives, friends or new partners can only attend for contact if they are named on the referral form.
- If bringing a new partner to the centre, please consider how this may detract from the contact between parent and child/children.

### supervised contact

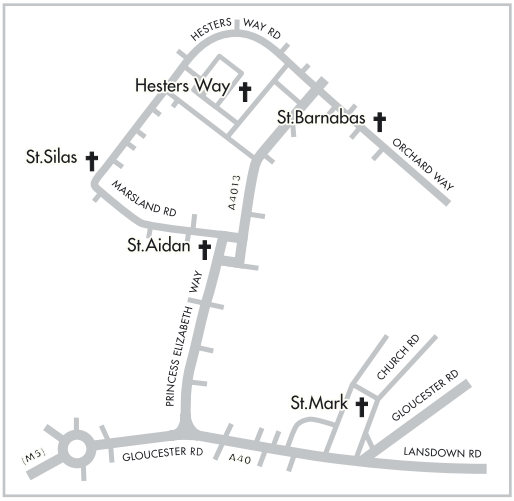
- Is only for those named on the referral form.
- No child will be without a contact supervisor in attendance all the time.
- A child can only be taken out of the centre if it′s stated on the referral form and in agreement with the contact supervisor. All parties must return to the centre ten minutes before the end of the session to allow an opportunity to say their farewells.
- Reports are written after supervised contact sessions and these are forwarded to the referrer, e.g. the allocated social worker, and if a privately arranged session, to both parties′ solicitors.
- All parties should respect each other′s right of privacy especially if there is more than one family using different parts of the centre at the same time.
- Referrers will need to pay for supervised contact sessions.

### and for all contact sessions

- We have no facilities for pets, so please do not bring them.
- Try not to argue in front of the children. Any abuse, aggressive, or offensive behaviour or remark is not acceptable.
- Anyone under the influence of, or carrying alcohol/drugs, will not be admitted. The centre is a non–smoking venue.
- We do not allow the use of video/audio recording or mobile phones in the centre.
- Taking photographs is acceptable once a worker has confirmed the consent of the other parent.

## Cheltenham Child Contact Centre

- Is open every Saturday afternoon for supported contact between 1 and 3 pm.
- Handovers and supervised contact can be arranged by phoning the centre.
- Supported contact is a volunteer run activity that relies on donations raised by Family Space in order to stay open. As such, any donations will be gratefully received.

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**family space** is a joint venture between Cheltenham YMCA, and four local churches in Cheltenham – St Aidan & St Silas, St Barnabas, Hesters Way Baptist Church, and St Mark.

YMCA CHELTENHAM

Accredited contact NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CONTACT CENTRES

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Peter Lang Children's Trust