

Barnardos & One Family Child Contact Centre Service

Guidelines for Referrers

All correspondence should be sent to
Barnardos & One Family Child Contact Centre Service
10 Newlands Business Park
Newlands Cross
Clondalkin
Dublin 22
Phone: 4032085 or 4032080
Fax 4032035 Email: childcontact@barnardos.ie

<u>Our Child Contact Centre are based at</u>	<u>and are open on</u>
Millbrook Health Centre, Tallaght	to be confirmed
Quarryvale Family Resource Centre, Clondalkin	Saturdays 10–2pm
Ohana House, Ballymun	to be confirmed

Office Hours are from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

All Enquiries about new referrals dealt with over the phone on Tuesday Mornings 9.30am to 1pm.

Barnardos & One Family Child Contact Centre Service supports the needs of children and parents who do not live together to establish and maintain positive, safe and healthy contact. This promotes the child's emotional well being and sense of identity. The service supports actual contact and provides family supports to support families to move on to self arranged contact. This is a time limited service.

1) Referral Criteria

1. The service is open to children aged 0–18 years of age and their parent/guardians.
2. This service is suitable for children of separated parents and children who are in the care of the HSE.
3. Where the parent/guardian that is finding it difficult to develop or maintain good quality contact with their child or where parents cannot agree contact arrangements themselves.
4. The children must be living in either:

***South Dublin County Council** area (Tallaght, Clondalkin, Palmerstown, Lucan, Rathcoole, Newcastle, Saggart, Templeogue and Rathfarnham), or

***HSE Dublin North Central Local Health Office** area (Ballymun, Santry, North East Inner City, Drumcondra, Whitehall, Donnycarney, Marino, Contarf, East Wall).

5. Parents/guardians must give informed consent to participate.

6. The family must show a capacity and willingness to move onto self managed contact within a reasonable timeframe, with the support of family support services.

Due to the anticipated high level of demand for the service, we may not be able to meet the needs of all families referred to us. Some families may be placed on a waiting list for a specified length of time.

This service may not be suitable where:

- a child is frightened of their parent because of past experience
- the resident parent and child are in hiding from the non-resident parent
- there have been previous abductions
- the non-resident parent has a history of violence
- the non-resident parent has a history of serious long-term mental illness
- the non-resident parent has ongoing, or a recent history of, alcohol or drug addiction.

If any of these issues are involved in your referral, you may wish to ring the project on a Tuesday morning to discuss the issues before submitting a referral.

2) Referral

As the referrer, the information you provide on the child(ren) and family is of utmost importance to the assessment of their needs. Quality referral information will help us to plan a service which really addresses their needs and properly supports the family. It also speeds up the processing of referrals so the service can be offered quicker to the family.

Guidance about how to make a referral to Barnardos & One Family Child Contact Centre Service is provided below. If you require further information a sample form is available on request.

What is required?

To make a referral please fill out the Referral Form and the Supplementary Information Form and ask the parent(s) to sign it.

Our aim is to better understand the developmental needs of children as well as the significant people and events in their lives. As a referrer, we are asking you to highlight what in your view are the NEEDS and STRENGTHS of the child(ren) within the following areas of their lives: living environment, relationships and attachments, behaviour and social participation, learning education and employment and Identity, self-care and self-esteem. The Supplementary Referral Information form asks for more 'contact specific' information, this enables us to better plan the service and manage any risks involved.

3) Assessment of referrals

For each child referred to the centre, an assessment will be carried out with the family. The assessment will identify the appropriate level of contact and the family support services required to support the child and family. The Contact Centre service review the progress of the family after 8 weeks and referrers will be invited to take part in this with the family and centre staff. When it is appropriate and safe families may move through different levels of contact.

4) Types of Contact service offered

- **Supervised Contact**
- **Supported Contact**
- **Handover**

Supervised Contact

- Supervised contact is normally used when it is considered that there is a risk that the child could suffer harm during contact and it is in the best interests of the child to have contact. Supervised contact aims to ensure the physical safety and emotional well-being of a child during contact by fully supervising and supporting the contact, with trained Child Contact Centre staff carrying out the supervision.
- Supervised contact is carried out on an individual basis with the supervisor always in sight and sound of the parent and child. We aim to do this in a way which is supportive yet providing maximum safety to all concerned and a positive experience for the child.
- During Supervised contact sessions all contact is closely observed and recorded in a manner appropriate to the purpose of protecting children and working in a planned way with parents.

Supported Contact

Supported Contact is where parents and children can meet in a safe and friendly environment with the support of volunteers and staff.

- Staff and volunteers are available for assistance, but there is no close observation, monitoring or evaluation of individual contacts or conversations.
- Several families are usually together in one, or a number of, rooms.
- There is an acknowledgement by all parties that it is a temporary arrangement to be reviewed after an agreed period of time
- The service records:
 - dates and times of attendance/non attendance
 - who attended
 - reasons given for non attendance
 - details of any incident that involve a risk of harm to a child.

Only this information will be provided to the referrer, or a party's solicitor or a court.

Handover

- Handovers take place at the centre and are suitable for families where there is no threat of harm to the child but there is a conflictual relationship between the parents that makes it difficult for them to meet each other.
- Parents do not have to meet as the handover will be done by Centre staff/volunteers. The contact parent will take the child out of the centre for an agreed period of time, bringing them back to the centre afterwards.

5) Family Supports

In order that families move on to self-arranged contact in the future, a wide range of family supports will be provided by One Family. *This is a crucial aspect of the service.*

One Family Support Services in the Barnardos & One Family Child Contact Centre Service will include the following:

- Individual parent mentoring
- Parent mentoring for parents to support the development of a plan around cooperative or coordinated parenting
- Group-based adult education parenting courses for people who are sharing parenting using our bespoke parenting courses – Positive Parenting; Family Communications; Communicating with the Other Parent; Stress Management; New Parent Child Development; Cooperative Parenting; specialist modules as required
- Workshops/support group for fathers who are sharing parenting (or for other specialist groups as needed)
- Counselling for individuals
- Counselling for adolescents and teenagers
- Practical information services on a wide range of areas including legal issues, social welfare, signposting to local supports, childcare etc

6) Duration of service:

The aim of the Child Contact Centre service is that the family can resolve any issues between them and move towards a more normalised arrangement for contact that does not require the support of a Contact Centre and that is in the best interests of the child. Therefore service will be offered on a time limited basis determined by the circumstances of each individual family.

7) Contract

An initial contract will be for 12 sessions with a review after eight sessions. The contract can be adapted to meet the needs of individual families. Families will be encouraged and supported to progress towards self arranged contact with the input of family support services appropriate to their assessed needs.

8) Important points

- The Child Contact Centre reserves the right to cancel, reduce or terminate contact if it is felt to be in the best interest of the child.
- Referrers and parents should understand 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 court order.
- If contact is court ordered then it requires that the Child Contact Centre staff have access to all relevant court papers and transcripts of any judgments in order to be aware of any risks and court requirements and to supervise effectively. Where necessary the permission of the court may be required to share these documents with us.
- If children are in the care of the HSE, then contact should be a part of their care plan, a copy of which should be made available to Child Contact Centre staff.

Thank you for taking the time to provide this important information.