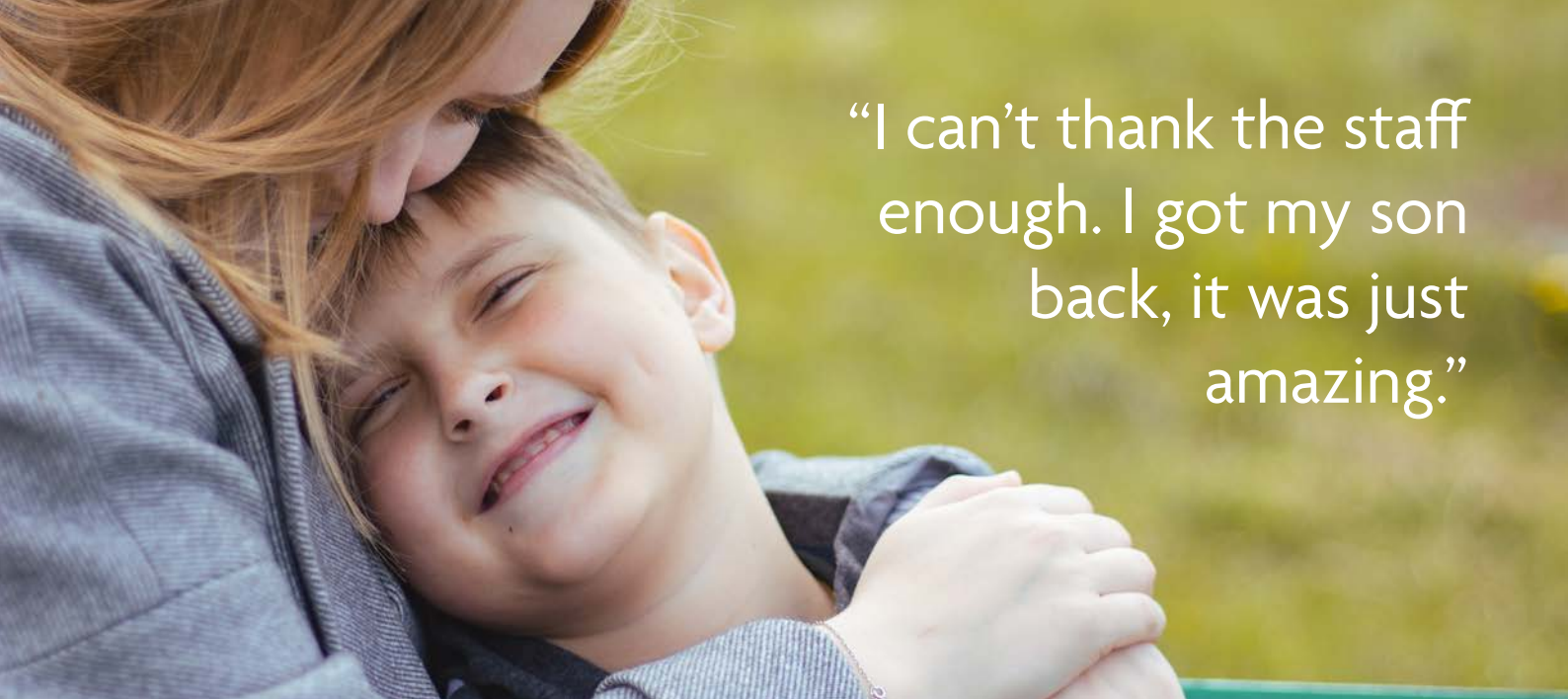


CHILD CONTACT CENTRE CASE STUDY



“I can’t thank the staff enough. I got my son back, it was just amazing.”

The parents were referred to the Family Mediation Child Contact Centre by the court. The parents had not been together since their child was born. Initially, contact was regular, with the child, now 11, residing with Mum and having consistent visits with Dad. However, disputes arose concerning parenting styles, leading to significant conflict and allegations between parents. Conflicts resulted in the child living with Dad, and all contact with Mum ceased. According to Dad, this decision was based on the child’s expressed desire not to see Mum anymore. Conversely, Mum claimed that she and the child had shared a close and positive relationship.

For several months, Mum had no physical contact with her child and had only a few phone calls, which she described as strained and uncomfortable. She believed this was due to the conversations being monitored, with other family members present during the calls. Mum was deeply distressed by the lack of contact with her child and the perceived impact on their bond. Mum also expressed the effect the situation was having on the child’s maternal grandmother, whom she claimed had been significantly involved in the child’s upbringing and shared a very close relationship with them. Mum had concerns about the potential effects of all of this on the child’s wellbeing.

There were concerns that conflicting opinions and messages from both parents were causing confusion and stress for the child regarding contact with Mum, so it was recommended by the courts that the child have visitations with Mum in a neutral environment, away from other family members and potential sources of conflict or pressure for the child. The case was referred to the Family Mediation Child Contact Centre.

Eight supervised contact sessions were arranged which took place over the course of two months, with one supervisor present in the room with Mum and child, and another nearby. The supervisor would closely observe various factors before, during, and after each contact session, recording observations for a report that would be passed onto the courts.

Dad and child attended a pre-visit at the centre, before which Dad expressed that the child was anxious about the arrangement and had many questions for the staff. Child Contact Centre staff assured that the child was free to ask any questions they may have, and staff would do everything they could to answer their questions and ease their worries. By the end of the pre-visit, the child felt substantially less anxious.

The child entered the first contact session feeling more confident and comfortable than they had done at the pre-visit and was happy to see Mum, a sentiment that persisted throughout the subsequent supervised sessions. During these sessions, Mum and child engaged in various activities, such as board games, basketball, and football. They caught up, laughed together, and the child shared updates about school, their football team and their interests, telling Mum fun science facts and phrases they had learned in another language.



The contact supervisors were able to reflect the positive interactions between Mum and child in the supervised contact sessions, which facilitated a transition to six pick-up and drop-off sessions taking place over 1 month. These sessions allowed Mum to have two-hour contact periods with the child outside the supervised centre, with handovers taking place at the contact centre. These sessions continued successfully for the duration.

The family has now moved on from the contact centre, with Mum having weekly contact with the child. Mum feels that the child contact centre was instrumental in repairing her relationship with her child. She commended the staff for their friendly and welcoming demeanour, and for creating a safe and comfortable environment for her child. She believes that the centre had a positive impact on her child's wellbeing and has helped her own wellbeing and ability to cope with the situation. She would recommend the service to other families in similar situations, specifically praising the staff for going **“above and beyond”** in their efforts to facilitate the pick-up and drop-off arrangements just shortly after having it court approved.

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