

CHILD CONTACT CENTRE CASE STUDY



Mum and Dad had a difficult relationship and separation, causing Dad to lose contact with their two children. Dad's journey in rebuilding his relationship with them was challenging in many ways. However, the contact centre has been there to support the family in their most difficult times, benefitting the parents and children in the process.

Mum and Dad separated after 7 years together when Mum was pregnant with their daughter due to a range of irreconcilable differences between the two. Due to the emotionally turbulent separation, Dad lost contact with both their children – a 7-year-old son and 2-year-old daughter. As a result, Dad initiated court proceedings, where the court ordered supervised contact between Dad and the children. at Family Mediation West. Eleven sessions were to take place weekly, for one hour per child.

At the contact centre, Dad was able to get the chance to bond with their young daughter. She was initially unsure of Dad due to her young age and not having seen Dad in some time, however, Dad was always ready to calm her when she showed discomfort. She began to settle in over the course of the sessions, stretching out her arms to Dad for a hug, and leaning in for kisses. Dad would encourage her development by engaging in lots of imaginary play, exploring the textures of soft toys, and singing nursery rhymes. In their last supervised session, she reciprocated Dad's "I love you" – marking a major milestone in their bond.

Their son was excited to see Dad, and was always chatty and smiling during sessions. Dad would ask him about his school and friendships, becoming more involved in his life. He let their son lead most of the playtime, with the two happily playing with cars and Lego sets together. Each session always ended with a hug. In one of the sessions, their son told Dad that he was the best dad in the world, a special moment in their relationship.

The supervisor provided her observations of their sessions to the court, which facilitated a transition to supported contact. These were less strictly supervised, and took place weekly. They were going smoothly for a few months, however, health issues prevented Dad from attending these sessions, necessitating a pause in contact. After a challenging year of coping with these issues, Dad initiated proceedings to restart contact with their children. The centre was once again there to offer a safe and welcoming environment for the children to spend time with Dad.

Mum felt that the contact centre was good for the children as they loved and missed Dad and wanted to spend time with him. This had been difficult due to external factors, but the contact centre could provide a setting for both Dad and children to spend time together away from these complexities. In addition, both Mum and Dad felt at ease knowing contact centre staff were there to support them when needed. This highlights the invaluable support that the contact centre provides for parents and children to bond, especially during difficult life circumstances.



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