



Web-based Communication Support for Parents

Briefing Information and Service Protocol for Referral Agencies

Introduction

Respect are taking part in a project funded by the Department of Children, Schools and Families to pilot new ways of:

- Improving fathers access to Online Information and Support
- Facilitating contact between non resident parents and their children: Dads' Space 1-2-1

This is an exciting opportunity to continue to improve the services we can offer every parent. Many parents use the internet as their preferred channel for locating information and accessing parenting advice. The online child contact service is an innovative service with international significance that could provide a dramatic increase in children's autonomy over how they maintain their relationship with both parents.

This collaborative project will be fully evaluated by an independent evaluator (details at the end of this document) and project findings will help inform future commissioning of parent support services.

About Respect

Respect is the UK membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services, and the leading national voice on domestic violence perpetrator issues. Respect also works through a range of services to engage with men on relationships, responsible parenting and gender equality.

The Dads' Space initiative is for all dads, it supports both children and parents in developing strong relationships post separation, not just where there are safety concerns. Through the development of Dads' Space 1-2-1, Respect are keen to work closely with Cafcass to provide a further method of contact that can address safety concerns and enhance children's relationships with the non resident parent.

Dads' Space 1-2-1 Contact Service

Dads' Space 1-2-1 is a web-based communication facility otherwise known as the 'Virtual Child Contact Centre'; designed specifically for separated parents who wish to establish contact with their children; enabling children to stay in contact with their dad, even in difficult circumstances.

Dads' Space 1-2-1 has been developed through wanting to find a way that:

- A. Works for children – through providing them more autonomy over contact arrangements and because children are more familiar with the internet as a way of supporting social relationships.
- B. Allows fathers to communicate with their children in a way that does not place either child or mother at risk. Dads' Space 1-2-1 is a secure on-line service where safety is priority, while still promoting father involvement.

Like child contact in the real world, there are levels of access depending on safety and risk. Dads' Space 1-2-1 only registers families through referrals from professionals, following which a risk assessment will be completed. There are three contact privileges, and following the completion of the assessment, the Dads' Space 1-2-1 moderator will determine what level of contact the child and their father can have. The three levels are:

Indirect – this allows parent and child to play games and exchange preset text; cards; gifts and greetings. There will be no free text permitted and is designed at the most secure level.

Supervised – allowing a broad exchange of information including all that is in Indirect, emails and sharing photos. However, all communication is moderated before it is transmitted.

Supported - this allows free real-time communication which is sampled and post moderated to ensure that the service is being used appropriately.

Dads' Space 1-2-1 aims to be available for all families but initially only professionals can access the service on behalf of the families they are working with. All Cafcass staff wishing to make a referral on behalf of the family should follow the referral process detailed below.

All Dads' Space 1-2-1 moderators are highly trained in child protection and risk of harm procedures and have access to rigorous supervision and training processes.

The Referral Process

Any worker, after talking to the parents, and with both parent's agreement, can refer the family to Dads' Space 1-2-1 using the referral form that Respect will provide either by email or post. All referrers must send a copy of their own risk assessment/chronology/report in order for the referral to be accepted.

The referral will be received by the Dads' Space 1-2-1 Moderation Team either via the secure email address provided, via fax or by post. A member of the team will ring the referrer to confirm the details before contacting both parents and if age appropriate, the child. The allocated moderator will contact each family member within 48 hours of receipt of the referral. The moderator will go through the referral form and ask the relevant contact questions within policy guidelines.

The family can be registered on to the site before the risk assessment is completed, but only on the Indirect contact level. Following receipt of all information and contact with the family, the moderator will determine the permitted level of contact. The child/ren and father will receive welcome packs and be provided their own unique ID and password. Once logged into the site they will each be able to amend their password, access a step-by-step guide on how to use the service and have the availability to contact the moderator if they have further questions.

The resident parent will also be provided with a welcome pack and their own unique ID and password. If agreed by the resident parent, they will be able to facilitate contact for younger children or monitor contact that takes place between older children and their father. The resident parent will also have access to the user guide and be able to contact the moderator if they have any questions. Neither parent/carer can use Dads' Space 1-2-1 as a means to communicate with one another, but can contact the moderator if they have any concerns or questions.

Reporting

The moderator will report back to the referrer on a 3-monthly basis if requested and appropriate. The report will advise how frequently the contact has been accessed or if any concerns have arisen. If a child protection concern arises within these 3 months, the moderator will report back at that time.

The Dads' Space 1-2-1 team will keep a database that is separate to the website, and it is only this that will contain the personal information, risk assessment and case records of the family members. No personal information will be kept within the 1-2-1 website.

The broad evaluation data will be shared and the independent evaluation will provide robust data on how parents and children find the service. Part of the

evaluation will look at the process and local teams will be able to give feedback as the service evolves.

ECOTEC Research & Consulting (www.ecotec.com) has been commissioned to evaluate Respect's Dads' Space 1-2-1 service between November 20-08 and June 2009. Overall the evaluation has two broad areas: the evaluation of outcomes/impact and the evaluation of the processes within the service.

Specifically the research questions to be addressed in this evaluation are:

- How many parents are referred onto the service and from which routes?
- How did Cafcass and local authorities identify or select the parents?
- What was the process for referrals and how effective and efficient was it?
- What was the take-up of the service like? How and why did parents decide whether or not to take up the support?
- What are the demographic characteristics and situations of parents accessing the service?
- What are the outcomes and impacts for parents accessing a web-based service versus other services?
- What was the overall costs per parent and how cost effective were the various referral methods?
- What lessons have been learned for the future rollout of this service?

The evaluation methods are:

- Quarterly monitoring data captured from Respect
- 175 before and after interviews with parents accessing the service from the various referral routes
- Visits to Cafcass and the three participating local authorities to carry out short individual interviews with lead partner, and staff and managers from those teams/agencies doing the referring, likely to be in early 2009
- Interviews with Respect to assess the pilot processes (e.g. what worked, what did not work and why).

Comparitive work with face to face services - The final part of the evaluation is a comparison with parents accessing face to face services. Parents will be asked about their experiences of face to face work versus preferences for internet interventions.

Outputs will include an interim (Dec 2008) and final report (March 2009) which will both be made available to all partners.

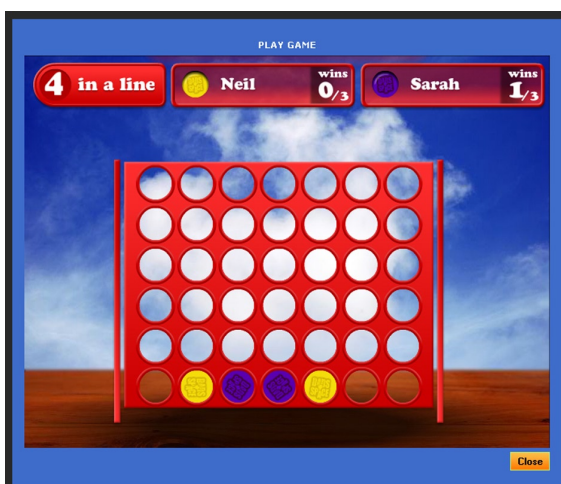
For further information about making a referral, please contact the Dads' Space 1-2-1 Team at:

info@dads-space.org

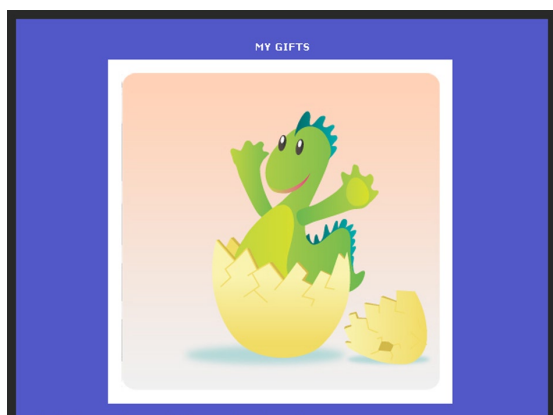
Site Examples:



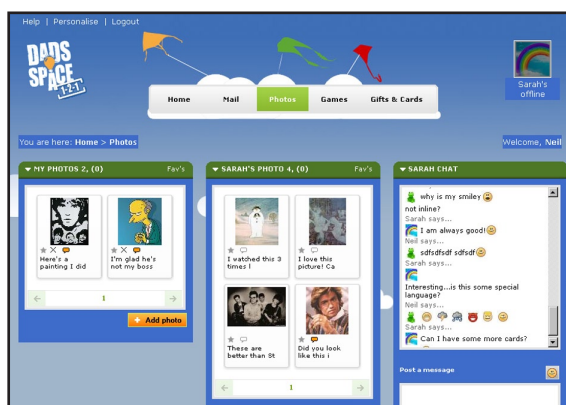
Login Page



2 Player Game



Gift giving

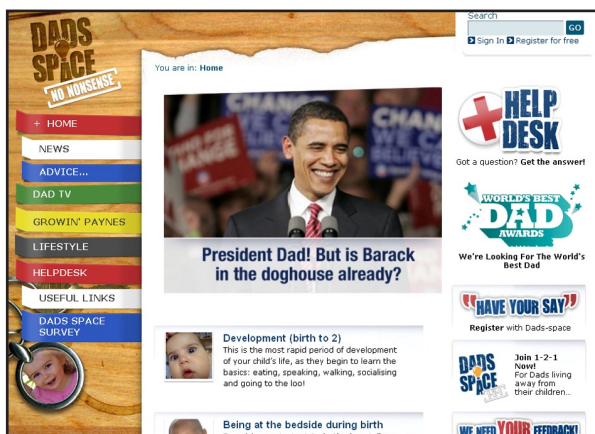


Sharing photos

Dads' Space: www.dads-space.com

Info, help and practical advice for all dads

Dads-space.com is a website aimed at all fathers and offers an entertaining and no-nonsense approach to parenting advice. The information available is based on fathers' own experiences and up-to-date research; ranging from child development through to advice on what activities dads can undertake with their children. Some of the more fun aspects to the site include blogs; reviews on games, books and toys; and competitions. Dads' Space provides links to helpful resources and services as well as hosting its own helpdesk, where dads can email one of our parenting advisors around any issues they may be having as a father. The site will also provide information surrounding the more complex family matters including domestic violence, divorce and post separation parenting.



Other Respect Services

Respect's main website is: www.respect.uk.net, where codes of practice and the Statement of Principals and Minimum Standards can be accessed.

Respect runs two phonelines including:

The **Respect Phonenumber** 0845 122 8609 provides information and advice to domestic violence perpetrators, their (ex) partners, friends and family and to frontline workers who come into contact with perpetrators within their work.

The **Men's Advice Line** 0808 013 327 provides information and support to men experiencing domestic violence, their friends and family and to frontline workers who come into contact with men experiencing domestic violence in their work.

If you would like to discuss anything you have read, or would like assistance with completing the referral form please contact: Lesley Weber T: 020 7022 1854, Maxine Green T: 020 7022 1852 or Sarah Read T: 020 7022 1853 or email: info@dads-space.org