



# NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN CONTACT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

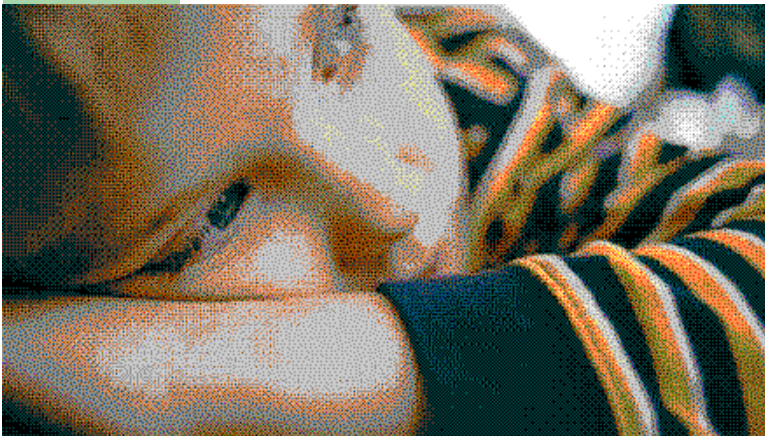
Issues For Professionals

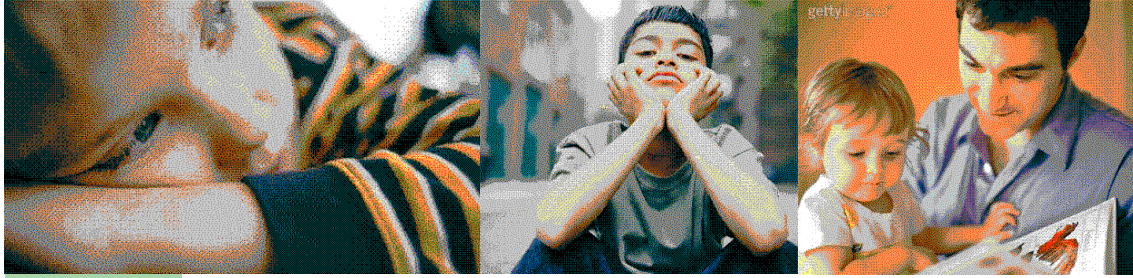
Anthony Douglas

Chief Executive

CAFCASS

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006





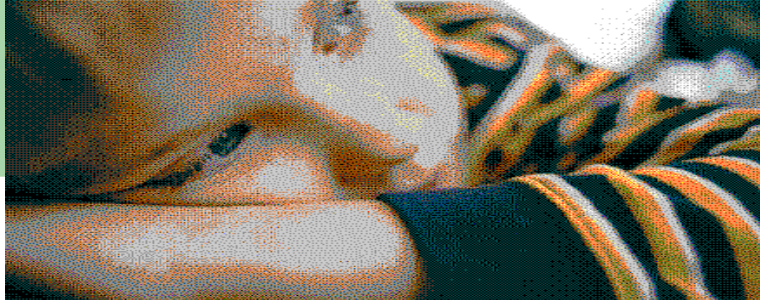
## Key Principles

- **Not making contact work, but making safe contact work**
- **Not making contact work, but making relationships work**
- **Family servitude itself is being modernised**
- **Unless victimisation stops, it will carry on, even after separation**
- **Domestic abuse is an attack on the relationship between mothers and their children, as well as an attack on the individuals**
- **The quality of contact matters as much as the quantity**
- **Emotional intelligence, not practical arrangements, makes safe contact and positive attachments work**

## Risk assessments – the social context (with a debt to Ann Potter)

- Violence and abuse of power perpetuate a means of control
- Domestic abuse takes prisoners regardless of social class, ethnicity, disability and age
- Pregnant women may be particularly vulnerable
- For many adults who live with violence, little changes with interventions from professionals





## Risk assessments – children

- Needs to be carried out by child-friendly staff in child-friendly settings
- Needs to be personalised, informed by research
- Children in private law cases can be as distressed as children in public law cases
- Needs to have collated all possible information
- Needs to carry out an impact analysis of parental violence on an individual child – not all children in the same family as affected in the same way
- Needs to be race and gender equality compliant
- Needs to record the voice of the child, either directly or



## Case Plans

- **Need to specify what needs to change to keep a child safe**
- **Needs to specify how each individual parent, extended family or professional network will need to act, behave or change to make a difference**
- **Safety planning is emotional and practical – who drops and collects? Get out of my head as well as my life, or come in and out of my head in a better way**
- **Biggest change to make is in the way people think**
- **The knowledge base of professionals is the biggest part of any professional toolkit**
- **Service partnerships can make a difference too: ie, safe learning programmes (Save the Children and Womens Aid)**



## The cases keep coming

- **Aaron O'Neill (3 months old, killed by his father on 10/2/05)**
- **Women are still being killed – Kim Fuller in Suffolk**
- **Some local authority duty teams only go out on the third referral for domestic abuse where children are in the household**
- **CAFCASS has been criticised by its inspectorate for poor risk assessments in s8 cases**
- **Most specialist services for victims and survivors of domestic violence are provided by the voluntary sector**
- **Good services cost a lot and take time to deliver change in perpetrators and families**
- **Key individual professionals set a tone for their agencies, in**



## Some facts and some realities for children

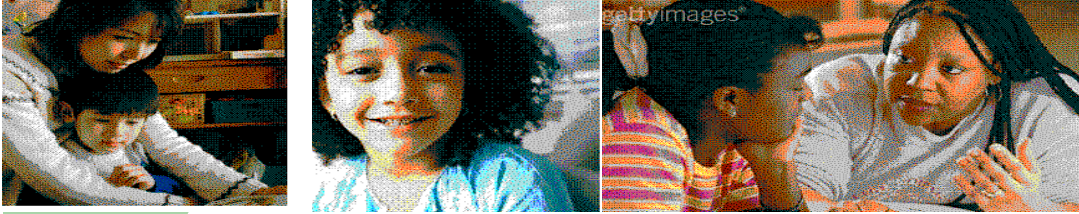
- **Police in the UK called to a DV incident every minute – every minute counts**
- **In 90% of DV cases, children are in the same or next room**
- **60% of children who witness DV are likely to be physically abused by the same perpetrator**
- **Worldwide, at least 60 million girls are ‘missing, and an estimated 4 million women and girls are bought and sold (WHO figures)**
- **In the UK, DV accounts for 17% of reported crime**
- **DV kills more women aged 19-44 than any other single cause, including RTAs and cancer**



## Key changes in legislation and practice

- The 2006 Equality Act places a stronger gender equality requirement on agencies
- New PACE Code of Practice (Code G) drops the 'seriousness' principle in police powers of arrest
- New specialist integrated Domestic Violence Courts are being developed
- Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 widened the definition of harm to include the witnessing of domestic abuse
- Sentencing Guidelines Council has published new guidelines
- Consultation exercise on Forced Marriage has recently closed
- CAFCASS being mandated to carry out risk assessments in private law cases
- Move in rape cases to allow expert witnesses to explain victim's behaviour to juries
- New provisions in the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act being implemented, like making a breach of a non-molestation order a criminal offence
- Home Office consulting soon on Domestic Homicide Review Panels (like serious cases reviews in child protection cases)





## The child's experience: unanswered questions

- We only know a fraction of the child's experience and usually only in a crisis
- How do we teach children protective skills?
- Where are the therapeutic resources to meet childrens' needs?
- Are we protecting children properly?
- How are we identifying children at the highest risk?
- Research continues to challenge professionals ie, resilience in children is linked to mother's mental health and recovery (Moore and Pepler, 1998)
- 'Will anyone ever find out what's happening to me?' Does the increasing openness in society means family relationships

## Some common voices amongst children (with thanks to Oxfordshire Family Mediation)

- Try not to argue in front of us
- We don't want to make decisions, but we do want our voice to be heard
- Remember, we have our own lives and friends to see, so please ask us about our ideas
- We can cope and get along with our lives, as long as you do too. If you don't, we can't
- We need to be close to both of you

