



## Time4Us: evaluation report

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# Time 4 Us

## Evaluation Report

November 2008



The **One** Foundation



Department of Social and Family Affairs  
An Roinn Gnóthai Sóisialacha agus  
Teaghlaíoch



National University of Ireland, Galway  
Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh

## **COMMISSIONING AGENCIES**

This Research has been commissioned by a number of agencies involved in the management of Time4Us. These agencies are:

- Health Service Executive (HSE)
- Galway City and County Childcare Committee
- The One Foundation
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Mr. Frank Fahey, T.D.
- Representatives from the Business Sector in Galway

## **RESEARCHERS AND AUTHORS OF REPORT**

This research has been conducted and the report authored by Liam Coen and Dr. Noreen Kearns of the Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Chapter 1 Introduction**

#### *Background to the Evaluation of Time4Us*

Time4Us Play Centre was opened in March 2007 on a pilot basis in response to a need identified by a number of key actors and organisations in Galway City. The absence of a place where non-resident parents could meet and play with their children in a safe, secure, conducive environment was the particular need identified by this group. The aims of the centre are numerous, and include the facilitation, development and deepening of relationships between non-resident parents and their children through the provision of a non-expensive child-friendly facility with suitable activities and equipment. The centre also provides information on a wider range of services available in Galway. It operates as a universal free service and is funded under a public-private partnership arrangement by a number of public organisations and private donations. The agencies involved are:

- The Health Service Executive (HSE);
- The Galway City and County Childcare Committee (GCCCC);
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA);
- The One Foundation;
- Representatives of the Business Sector in Galway;
- And Mr. Frank Fahey T.D.

As part of the pilot process Time4Us management tendered for an evaluation of the centre as it operates in Summer 2007 with a view to further developing the service while also documenting the impact of the service on its users. The Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC), NUI Galway undertook the evaluation, producing an Interim Report in November 2007 and a Final Report in August 2008. The overall aim of the evaluation was to undertake a formative study of the centre and make preliminary recommendations regarding the value of the Time4Us intervention and to learning necessary to improve its effectiveness.

The evaluation team devised a multi-method research strategy to complete the process, comprising of:

- A literature review focusing on changing family life in Ireland and the development of services relating to such change;
- Self-administered questionnaires completed by Time4Us non-resident parents, resident parents, and legal guardians;
- Interviews with service users i.e. non-resident parents and children;
- Interviews with key stakeholders, including Time4Us management, staff and key referrers;
- Observational sessions of the service in operation.

## **Chapter 2. Theoretical and Policy Review**

### *The Changing Pattern of Family Structures, Implications for Child-Parent Relationships, Welfare Discourse & Service Provision*

In line with trends in other developed countries, family life in Ireland is undergoing significant change in the past two decades or so, with an ever-increasing move away from the traditional nuclear family structure of children being reared in married households, towards alternative patterns of parenting whereby more and more children are being raised in one-parent households, or cohabiting households. Based on the 2002 Census figures, just over four out of five children aged under 15 (81%) were living with both parents, with most of the remainder (14%) living in a lone parent family. While the reasons for this changing family type are complex and varied, in terms of the focus of this report, the implications of parental separation in terms of affecting poor outcomes in children is a central concern of this report. The loss of contact with the non-resident parent, which in the main tends to be the father, is one of the core outcomes of parental separation. It follows that the role of fathers in the lives of their children comes under immense strain following marital or relationship breakdown.

In Ireland, very little if any relevant legislative or policy discussion on the complex issues surrounding post-separation and post-divorce parenting has occurred to date. It is not surprising therefore, that service provision facilitating non-resident parent – child contact is quite limited. Hence Time4Us represents an innovative service in this regard.

## **Chapter 3 Overview of Time4Us Project Implementation and Monitoring**

The Time4Us pilot programme commenced in December 2006 and was service opened to service users in March 2007. The service operates at purposely equipped premises in a Retail Centre on the Tuam Road, Galway city, and can operate on a seven day a week basis, with flexible working hours, to meet the needs of families. An operational committee is responsible for the day to day running of the service, including financial arrangements and support and supervision of Time4Us project staff.

### *Analysis of Monitoring Data*

One of the core purposes of the evaluation was to monitor the Time4Us service. This was done by the evaluation team requesting a number of data sources from staff to develop an evaluation monitoring database. The Time4Us catalogue records the number of inquiries made about Time4Us each month since March 2007. The database reveals that over the period March 2007-April 2008 there were 94 inquiries made about the service. These inquiries arose from three sources: professionals inquiring on behalf of a client; resident parents; and non-resident parents. Regarding the former, social workers and the legal domain (solicitors and the courts) made up the bulk of inquiries. The vast majority of

inquiries were deemed suitable and accepted to use Time4Us. The most common sources of hearing about Time4Us were via social workers and the legal domain.

In total, 48 service users have used or continue to use Time4Us over the period covered by this report (March 2007-April 2008). Analysis of the data reveal that service use has increased since the interim report of November 2007, with numbers almost doubling in the intervening six months. Specifically significant here is the high number of professional inquiries made and the resulting service use from such inquiries. It would appear from these figures alone that there is a demand for such a service. The increasing level of awareness of the service amongst a variety of service providers has served to strengthen its base and increase its numbers. Indeed the recent media coverage has also played a role. The growth of service users from outside Galway city and county has also served to further illuminate the need for such a service nationally.

The majority of Time4Us users are male, although the numbers of female service users is increasing. The current status of service users was categorised by the evaluators as follows: 'ongoing', 'ceased', 'closed', and 'yet to attend' the service, with most falling into the ongoing category (59%). For the most part service users are from Galway city or county. When examining *service use per parent* it is interesting to note the great variance in usage hours. For visits per service user the median value is 4. For hours per service user the median value is 8 hours. Turning to examine *service use per week* the disparity between values is significantly less. Examining visits per week we can see that the average is 9.51. The average number of hours per week is 19 hours.

In total, 89 children have used or use the centre with their parents up to the end of April 2008. The number of children varies with each parent. Although ages have not been provided for seven of the children in total, if these are removed the average age of the children using the service is 6 years.

The number of activities available to Time4Us service users, as described in the log sheets, includes: arts and crafts; creative play; tabletop games (e.g. pool, air hockey, board games); reading; sensory play; education (homework); and food preparation.

The log sheets provided to the evaluation team describe many different tasks undertaken by the staff of Time4Us, not only in the 'delivery' of the service but also in providing supports to parents and children, and liaising with ex-partners of service users and referrers. Broadly speaking, an analysis of the relevant information indicates the role of staff falling into three main areas:

1. To provide direct and indirect support to service users and their children;
2. To liaise with referrers regarding arranging access and providing feedback to the relevant authorities if and when required;
3. To liaise with the child/ren's other parent/foster parents/legal guardians.

The evaluation team received information from the management committee regarding the costs associated with the service. The total operational costs for the year 2007 amounted



to €180,000. Capital costs for the renovating and equipping of the building amounted to a further €60,000.

## **Chapter 4 Findings of Non-Resident and Resident Parent Questionnaires**

All non-resident parents who use, or have used Time4Us since it began operation were requested to complete a self-administered questionnaire. In addition, questionnaires were also sent to resident parents/guardians. A response rate of 33 per cent (n=16) was obtained from non-residents parents while the corresponding response rate for resident parents/guardians was 19 per cent (n=9). Both surveys aim to enhance our understanding not only of those who use the service but also how they use it and for what reasons. Moreover, the survey data also serve to detail the reported impact of using the service on service users, their children, and their children's other parent.

### *Socio Demographic Profile of Non-Resident Parents*

All of the non-resident parents using Time4Us were male. Most were aged 30 years or over, with almost even numbers falling into the 30-39 years and 40-49 years age range. None of the service users were over 50 years old. Over half of the fathers were single, while the next largest category comprising a third of respondents were separated. Most (62%) of the non-residents were of were from the Republic of Ireland, while small numbers were from Nigeria, Britain and Northern Ireland. The vast majority (81%) of non-resident fathers lived in Galway, with just three living in other parts of the country. Most non-resident fathers (63%) lived in a house, while just under a third (31%) lived in an apartment/flat. Most (69%) of the non-residents rented their accommodation, while under a third owned their property with a mortgage. The largest proportion (38%) of non-resident parents who participated in this study lived alone, compared to just 19% that lived with a partner, while similar numbers shared with tenants or friends (31%). A large variation was found in terms of the educational background of non-resident parents, with the largest proportion (36%) having some third level education, while even proportions had Leaving Certificate, Inter/Junior Certificate or Primary Level education (19% respectively).

### *Non-Resident Parents' Feedback on Time4Us*

The vast majority (86%) of those who participated in the research started using Time4Us between March and December 2007, while 14% started using the service in January 2008. The legal system, comprising either the courts and/or solicitors, was the most commonly cited source of hearing about the service (42%). Three quarters of non-resident respondents were formally referred to the Time4Us service, while just a quarter self-attended. Of those that were referred, the legal system, comprising the courts or solicitors, was by far the most common source of referrals (72%).

The most common reason given by respondents for using Time4Us was because it is a safe place to meet their child/ren (30%), while to spend more time with one's children was also commonly referred to (26%). Referrals from court in particular, and other

agencies such as social work, accounted for over a fifth (22%) of the reasons mentioned. While a broad variety of activities are engaged in by non-resident parents and their children when using Time4Us, the most common of these include general play, arts and crafts, and games (69%).

### *Impact of Time4Us Service on Relationships, Access & Overall Benefits*

Overall, the data reveal a noticeably positive impact on relationships between non-resident parents and children, and non-resident parents and resident parents/guardians. For instance, there is clear evidence that relationships between non-resident fathers and their children have greatly improved, with all citing positive relationships with their children since using Time4Us. Particular positive changes were documented by non-resident parents with their children since using Time4Us, in terms of having better relationships, finding it easier to play with and talk to them, and the children generally seeming happier. Moreover, the findings reveal a similarly affirmative picture with regards to changes in the relationship between non-resident parents and their child/ren's other parent/guardian since using Time4Us. Additionally, the majority of non-resident fathers agreed that there was less conflict, more trust and better communication with their child/ren's other parent/guardian since using Time4Us.

The situation regarding changes concerning access of the non-resident parent to their child/ren is also very positive. The most striking change is the improved access which the fathers who participated in this study now have to their child/ren since using Time4Us. Most of the non-resident parents indicated that since using Time4Us, they now see their child/ren four times per month or more.

### *Non-resident parents opinions of the main benefits of Time4Us*

The most commonly mentioned benefit by non-resident fathers was that the Time4Us service has provided a physical place where they can have access to their children. Some of the non-resident fathers mentioned the benefit of Time4Us being a conducive environment providing various recreation activities and the facility for their children to play. The suitability of Time4Us was described in terms of being neutral, comfortable and safe. The fact that it is a free service was also highlighted. Finally, the positive role of staff at Time4Us was referred to as a key benefit of using the service.

### *Satisfaction Levels with Time4Us*

All respondents indicated that they were very satisfied with Time4Us, and particularly with support provided by staff. The facilities and location were also positively rated. The most commonly mentioned facilities currently not at Time4Us that service users would like, were an outdoor green / play area and kitchen / cooking facilities.

### *Socio Demographic Profile of Resident Parents*

In terms of the resident parental status regarding children using Time4Us, seven were biological parents while two were legal guardians. All of the resident parents/guardians were female. Most were aged 30 years or over, with almost even numbers falling into the 30-39 years and 40-49 years age range. In terms of marital status, over half were single, while similar numbers were married or separated, and one was cohabiting. Most (67%) of the resident parents were educated up to third level. All of the resident parents were Irish with the exception of one who was Zimbabwean. All resident parents lived in Galway city or county (66% and 33% respectively).

#### *Resident Parents Feedback on Time4Us*

Respondents were asked where they initially heard about the Time4Us service. Over half mentioned the legal system, comprising either the courts or solicitors. Respondents were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction with the Time4Us location, facilities and staff. Most (on average 71%) of the resident parents rated these positively, while none were dissatisfied with any of these aspects.

#### *Impact of Time4Us Service on Relationships, Access & Overall Benefits*

A clear improvement was documented by resident parents in terms of their relationship with the child/ren's other parent since using Time4Us. Furthermore, less conflict with the child/ren's other parent was reported by the vast majority of respondents (88%). However, the fractious nature of these relationships was reinforced with two thirds of resident parents reporting no change in the level of trust between themselves and the non-resident parent, and opinions were split 50:50 with regards to perceptions of better communication with the non-resident parent. Over half of the resident parents agreed that 'in general the child/ren seem happier' since using Time4Us.

Resident parents were asked about the level of access which the non-resident parent had to their child/ren prior to and since using Time4Us. The most notable change is the reported improved level of access which non-resident fathers now have to their child/ren.

#### *Resident parents opinions of the main benefits of Time4Us*

In response to an open-ended survey question, nearly all of the resident parents listed ways in which the service has benefited themselves and their children. These benefits can be summarised into four main headings: conducive environment, children's play aspect, Time4Us staff, and contact with the children's other parent.

Terms such as safe, secure, structured, and supervised were variously used by resident parents to describe the conducive environment provided by Time4Us. A number of resident parents mentioned the play aspect as an important benefit of the service. The staff were commended by resident parents, in terms of being "helpful", "flexible",

“professional”, “supportive”, and “caring”. Some resident parents mentioned the benefit of the service in terms of making contact with and in some cases improving the relationship with the child/ren’s father.

A number of diverse issues were raised by resident parents in this regard. The most commonly referred to aspect in need of change was the physical space/building, with suggestions made regarding the need for a bigger play area, and an outdoor play facilities for different age-groups.

### *Summary*

It is clear from this data that Time4Us is meeting a need according to the families using the service. A consensus was found amongst both resident and non-resident parents in terms of the benefits of the service and its impact on their families, with some of the more notable benefits including: increased happiness levels amongst children, and increased amounts of access between children and non-resident parents as a result of using Time4Us. Interestingly, both resident and non-resident parents report less conflict in their relationship since using the service. In addition, both sets of parents are very positive about the service, in particular its layout and staff. Specifically, the professionalism and supportive nature of the staff was mentioned by a significant majority of both cohorts. Any suggested changes to the service relate to the facility rather than staff or the model of support provided in the centre.

## **Chapter 5 The Experiences of Parents and Children Using the Time4Us Play Centre**

The evaluation team was keen to ascertain in detail the views of service users regarding a number of issues. As part of completing the self-administered questionnaire service users were invited to complete a consent form and self-select for a follow-up face-to-face interview. In total, seven non-resident parents participated in one-to-one semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the views of some of the children using the service are documented based on three face-to-face interviews.

What emerges from these interviews is a very positive picture of the Time4Us play centre as portrayed by the interviewees. Having been made aware of the service through two main channels – the legal system and the social work department – Time4Us offered the first real possibility for most of these non-resident parents to have access to their child/ren for some time. It was explained that the service offers a possibility of seeing their children in a secure, safe environment where previously this was not possible. A number of the non-resident parent interviewees described a broadly positive experience of using Time4Us, in particular through its facilitation of improved relationships with children and also the children’s other parent. The possibility the centre offers to participants to be a parent is the most cherished aspect of the service. Additionally, service users spoke very positively about the role staff play in their service use,

describing their role as helpful, non-invasive, supportive and encouraging. The neutral stance which staff maintain between non-resident and resident parents was identified as a key element of the success of the centre. The welcoming and warm atmosphere at Time4Us was highlighted.

Interviewees were asked to identify what changes, if any, they would like to see made to the service. A small number of participations suggested changes to the centre, comprising improved kitchen facilities to enable non-resident parents to cook meals for their children when using the centre, extra toys, and an outdoor facility comprising a green area. Others proposed the introduction of feedback from the resident parent to the non-resident parent via Time4Us staff on key aspects regarding their child/ren's in the intervening periods between access. Mediation was also suggested in order to improve non-resident parent and resident parent relationships. In terms of the future scenario, most interviewees were of the opinion that despite the opportunity Time4Us presents to develop bonds and strengthen relationships, the legal situation they currently find themselves in regarding access and financial constraints will limit their ability to develop a relationship with their child/ren outside the Time4Us service for the foreseeable future.

Finally, the interviews with the children using Time4Us, indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the centre. Understandably, the centre is very much associated with positive interaction between the children and their fathers.

## **Chapter 6 Other Stakeholders Views of Time4Us**

In total, four members of staff at Time4Us, four members of the management of the Centre, and three referral actors were interviewed, using a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews, as well as two observation sessions of parents using the service. What is apparent from the interviews undertaken for this evaluation is the overall positive light which Time4Us is viewed in by its stakeholders. It is viewed as an innovative, worthwhile service which offers a solution to the needs of many separated families and improving on access arrangements in child-centred way. The lack of and need for such as service in Galway was identified via a number of sources including the former Minister for Children, Mr. Frank Fahey T.D., the HSE, and Galway City and County Childcare Committee (GCCCC), the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA), and the Courts Service – Galway division. Time4Us was established at the end of 2006 and officially opened to the public in March 2007.

Time4Us adopts a cross-sectoral, inter-agency approach to its governance. Interviewees explained that good contact is maintained with all partner organisations such as the DSFA, the HSE, GCCCC, and the One Foundation, who are all members of the Time4Us management committee.

A public-private partnership approach was adopted at Time4Us whereby private sector individuals were approached with a view to part-financing the centre and becoming members of the board and management structure. The financial situation of the centre is currently in a precarious situation, with private funding sources becoming increasingly

difficult to secure since the inception of the service. Interviewees explained that the future of the service will be dependent on securing funding from additional statutory sources such as the Departments of Justice, and Education.

The staff at Time4Us were very clear about the objectives of the centre and consciously work towards creating a fun-filled environment where access can occur between non-resident parents and their children. In particular, they stressed a trait of the centre as being a neutral ground for parents to arrange access, and for such access to occur in a non-judgemental, non-intrusive manner.

It was explained that the intention was always to provide a universal service, catering predominantly for self-referral or 'walk-in' inquiries while also allowing for a number of referrals from agencies in the locality. However, in practice most of the referrals to the centre come from the legal or social work domains. The degree of contact between the staff and key referral agencies such as the Social Work Department, the Courts Service, or individual solicitors and Time4Us both before and after making referrals tended to vary a lot, with follow-up tending to be more regular for the former as opposed to the latter.

In identifying the role of the Time4Us staff terms like 'facilitating,' 'enabling' and 'supporting' were used by interviewees. Most prominent in these interviews was the role identified for staff to create a positive atmosphere for access to occur so that positive relationships between children and their non-resident parents could develop, as well as maintaining positive links with resident parents. Other key staff roles identified included promoting and publicising Time4Us, supporting service users during particularly difficult times such as during court hearings, and when conflict arises between parents.

Based on a series of discussion with Time4Us staff and management, a detailed description of the criteria used by staff in determining the level of support provided to non-resident parents, and the actual model of support which is provided at the centre can be viewed at the end of this Executive Summary.

With regards to the future of Time4Us, all interviewees agreed that Time4Us was making a difference, irrespective of whether such difference was measured in terms of numbers through the door, numbers who have progressed on to access outside the centre, or whether access visits have increased over the period of service use. However, as mentioned earlier, members of the management committee identified the issue of finance as the defining factor regarding the sustainability of the service.

## **Chapter 7 Discussion and Recommendations**

The overarching conclusion of this evaluation is that Time4Us is delivering a valued, constructive, worthwhile and beneficial service to a population cohort. Indeed, its success is indicated by increased service use since its inception and the views of both resident and non-resident parents, and increasing numbers of inquiries and referrals to the services, particularly by social workers and the legal system. The evaluators have proposed a series

of recommendations so as to assist Time4Us in maintaining and building on the service into the future:

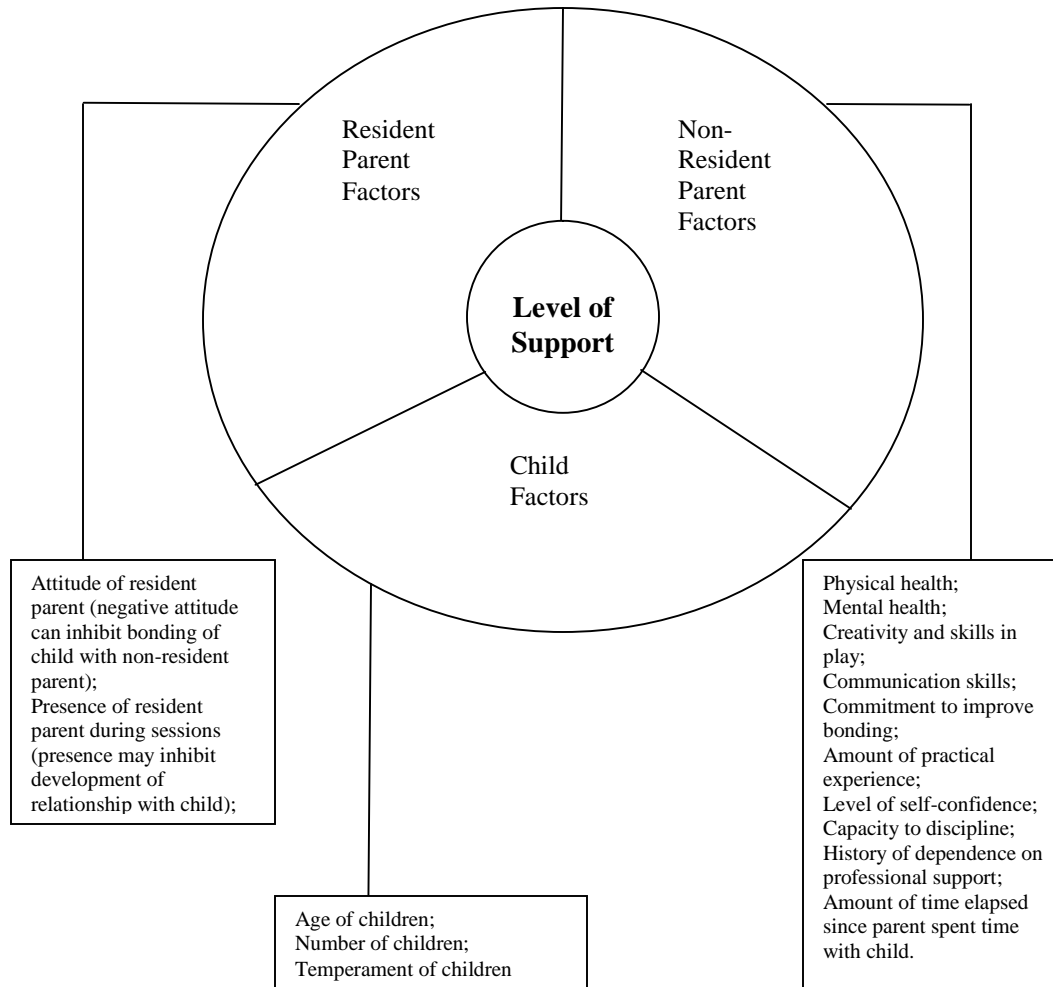
1. The development and adoption of an electronic database system incorporating details and visits by service users and children so as to provide a picture of current use while permitting further planning for the future. Additionally, such a move would lessen the loss of institutional memory which may occur when staff members leave their posts and new staff come on board. Finally, the collation of information – particularly at the outset – could lend itself to a more outcomes-focused approach to each non-resident parent and child using the service, acknowledging that this will not be possible for all;
2. Management and Staff should explore the potential for long-term service users to engage with other play/activity organisations in addition to Time4Us. Where transition from Time4Us is not an option for the service user engaging with other organisations such as youth clubs, sports clubs could offer the opportunity for further bonding between parent and child, supported by Time4Us staff. In addition, this may also serve to offer more age-appropriate activities to children who may outgrow Time4Us in terms of play activities;
3. As part of disseminating information about other services and activities management and staff should explore the potential for an information wall/notice board to be located in the centre. While service users did highlight the willingness of staff to provide any information requested a notice board could serve to pre-empt requests, provide a series of alternatives or suggestions to service users while also informing them wider statutory and voluntary services in the city and county;
4. Staff and management should work to formalise contact and relationships with key referrers, including the courts service, but not so formal to affect the flexibility of the service which has been responsible for much of its success so far. Such contact could serve to reduce the number of long-term users through the development of a plan for each parent, where appropriate. It could also serve to further embed Time4Us in the work processes of referral agencies such as the courts and social work departments;
5. If finances permit, staff and management should explore the possibility of purchasing a cooker and making necessary alterations to the kitchen to take account of this;
6. In the context of the future of the service, the feasibility of moving to another location so as to facilitate outdoor activities should be examined. However, this needs to be weighed against the overall high levels of satisfaction with the existing location, it's conducive atmosphere, the many positives that it already provides, and the significant investment which has already taken place;

7. As part of a regular feedback process, management and staff should work to formally incorporate the views of all stakeholders into the planning and review processes for the service at regular intervals;
8. Future evaluations might consider the use of baseline and follow-up measures to assess the success or otherwise of the service in achieving positive outcomes for children and their parents. Such measures could be either standardised or service-based. The use of comparison groups in future evaluations might also be considered.



## The Criteria Used by Time4Us in Determining the Level of Support

The staff at Time4Us use a number of criteria in determining the level of support to be provided to each family attending the centre. These criteria are set out below:



## The Model of Support Provided at Time4Us

The model of support provided by Time4Us staff can be split into a number of stages. What follows is a graphical and descriptive account of this model of support. The next page features a full model of support followed by individual stages described. A map of the centre is also provided.

**Neutral Service**

FOCUS	Who is it for?	Who is it for?	What Does it Do?	How does it Work?	Where will it get you?
STAGE	<b>REFERRAL/ INQUIRY</b>	<b>FAMILIARISATION VISIT</b>	<b>FIRST ACCESS VISIT</b>	<b>SUBSEQUENT ACCESS VISITS</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>(i) MOVING ON</b></p> <p>NR Parent and Child move on from Time4Us. Occasional support provided by staff by way of Phone call, drop in to centre. Open Door Policy of Centre is maintained.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(ii) MAINTAINING SERVICE USE</b></p> <p>NR Parent and Child continue to use Time4Us. Staff support continues – positive reinforcement, advice. Support refined and maintained. Referral to other services if appropriate</p>
PROCESS	Staff phonecall or meeting with referrer/inquirer; Background history: • Last contact date; • Parenting skills; • Capturing extent of bond	Resident parent and child visit centre: • Child likes/dislikes; • Temperament; • Age N/R Parent visit (with referrer if applicable); Family Fit with other service users	No other families present in centre; N/R parent arrives early for visit; Resident parent and child arrive Handover protocol invoked (reception area); Continuity of staff contact with parents.	Refinement/ readjustment of support to NR parent and Child. Continued positive reinforcement.	
ROLE OF STAFF	Emphasise neutrality of service; Inform both parents of service principles and operation. Begin to identify support level required	Re-emphasise neutrality of service; Further identify support levels through criteria discussion. Case discussed during meetings	Observe, talk, play, advise (if required). Follow-up with NR parent (reflection, positive reinforcement); Feedback to resident parent, referrers.	Feedback and conversation with resident parent; Referrer feedback; Staff meeting decisions	
RESULT	Staff invite to centre separately: • Non-resident; • Resident and child.	Staff identify suitable time for first visit. Staff feedback to resident parent and referrer	Further access visit times identified. Trust between staff and all participants further built upon	Continued use at Time4Us, increased access in centre.	

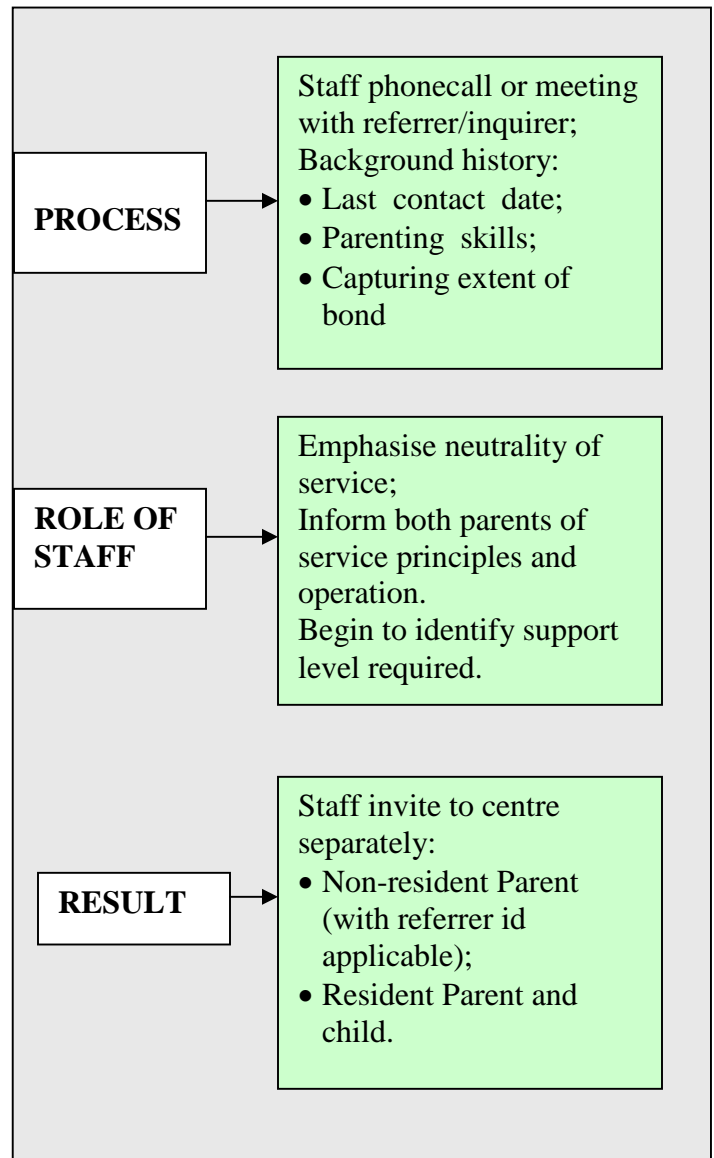
**Child-Centred Service**

### ***Stage 1A: Inquiry or Referral***

The initial referral or inquiry is usually dealt with by staff over the phone. This stage involves staff informing inquirers about the principles of the service – most notably its neutrality and child-centred approach - and the particulars of its operation (for example the handover policy in the reception area – see stage 1B on the next page), times of operation, facilities available and so on.

Much of the contact between potential service users and staff is concerned with informing parents - resident and non-resident – about how the service operates. In particular, the importance of the **handover policy** in reducing potential conflict or confrontation, and thus reducing the stress experienced by parents and the potential for children to witness such confrontation, is crucial (see stage 2 for a description of the handover policy).

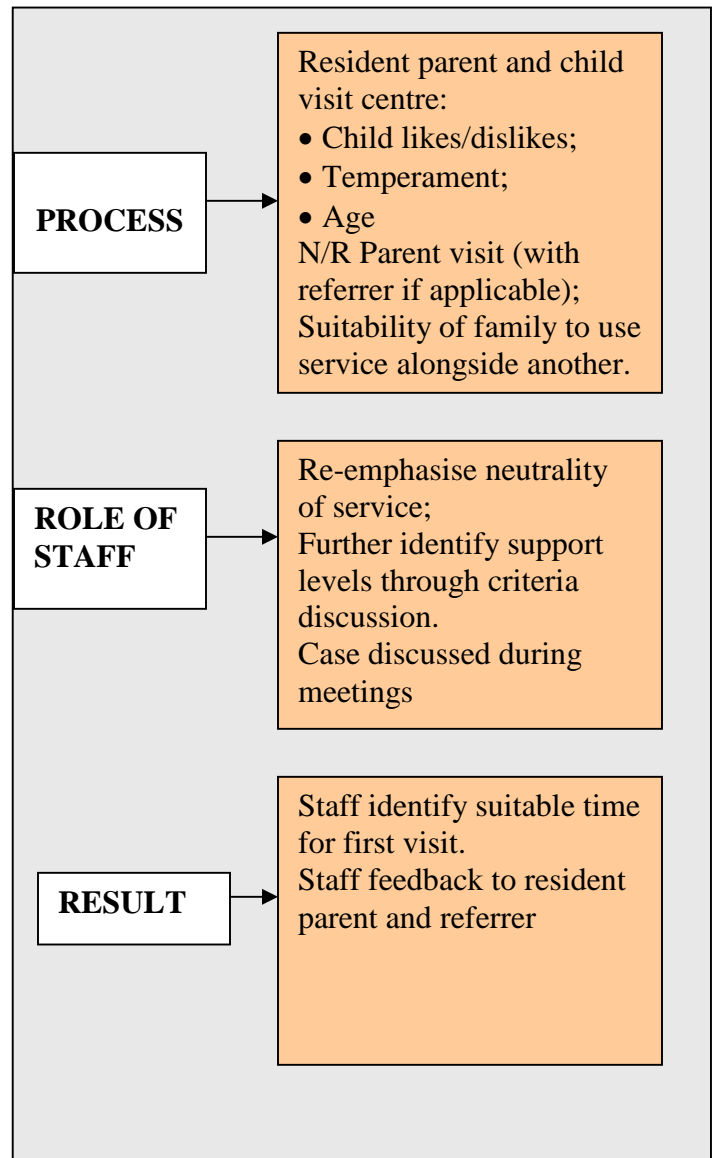
The focus of this stage is also to capture the extent of the bond between the potential service users, i.e. the non-resident parent and children. Therefore, staff begin to inquire about the various criteria detailed in the first graph above. Subsequent to this, staff invite the resident parent and child to visit the centre, as well as the non-resident parent on their own of with a referrer if applicable.



### *Stage 1B: Familiarisation Visit*

Upon the identification of a suitable time, the non-resident parent and, where applicable, the referrer visit the centre to familiarise themselves with it. Staff further discuss with the non-resident parent particulars of the determining criteria for the extent of support to be offered. At a separate time the resident parent and child, children also visit the centre. Staff liaise with both parent and children so as to further build trust between themselves and the resident parent and children. This also serves to permit staff to gauge the suitability or otherwise of the family to use the centre alongside other families.

If both parties are satisfied with the centre and its operation a suitable time is identified for the first access visit to occur. Staff prepare for the family's first visit through incorporating family needs into their weekly review meetings.

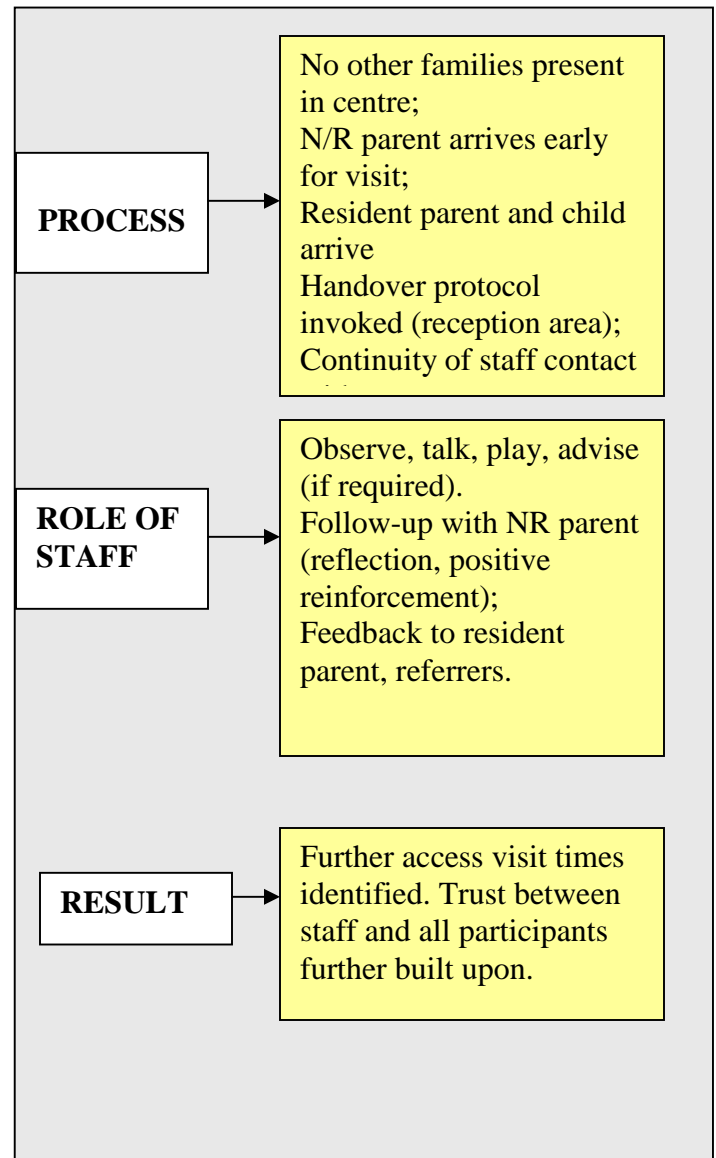


## Stage 2: First Access Visit

The first access visit usually takes place when no other families are using the centre. The non-resident parent is asked to arrive 15 minutes early. Once the resident parent and child arrive staff put the **handover policy** into action, where the child is collected in the reception area and brought into the main play room to the non-resident parent. One staff member usually remains with the resident parent for a few moments to generally chat or answer any questions.

Depending on the support criteria staff may play with the non-resident parent and child (ren) or may simply casually observe the visit.

Once ended, staff put the **handover policy** into action again, with the non-resident parent remaining in the play room until the resident parent and child have left the centre. Staff may discuss the visit with the non-resident parent if desired by the latter. Staff will also contact the resident parent to see how the visit went for the child and parent.

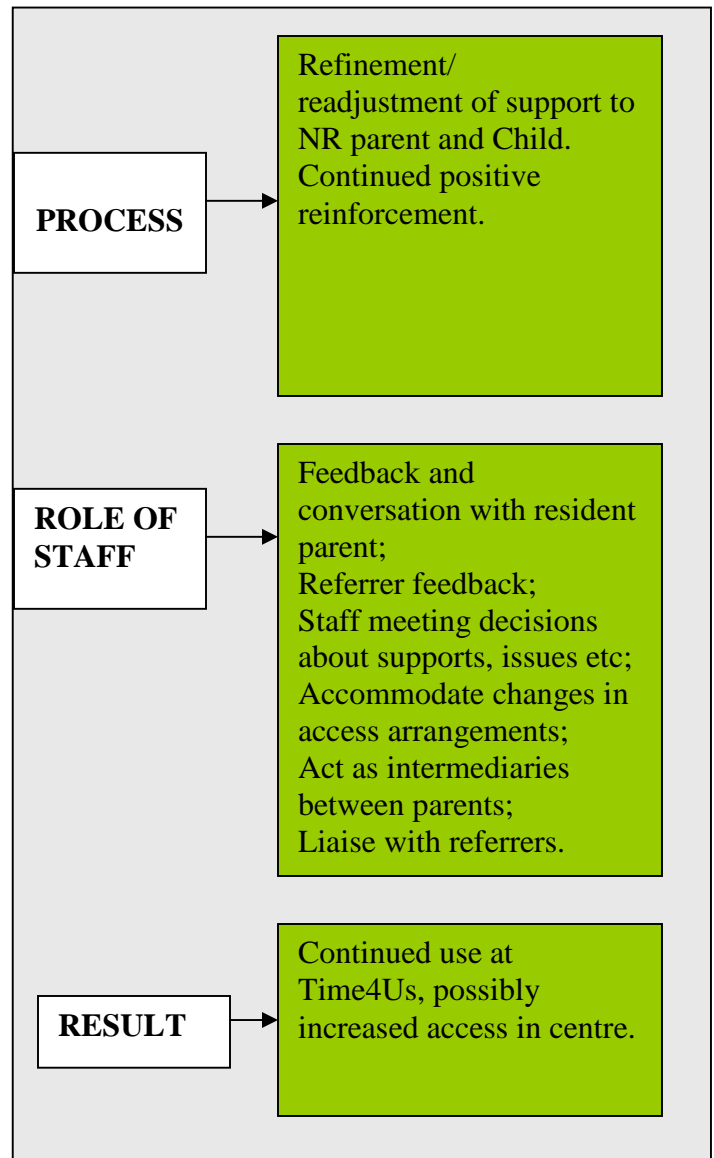


### *Stage 3: Subsequent Access Visits*

Subsequent access visits are arranged in conjunction with resident parents. For the most part, however, access times become fixed, although staff are accommodating of rearranging visits for parents and children.

Staff continue to support both the non-resident parent and children who use the service, although at this stage the level of support required by the family has been well established. However, advice and information are provided when requested, and more generally maintaining trust between staff and families is a continuing focus of the relationship between staff and all family members.

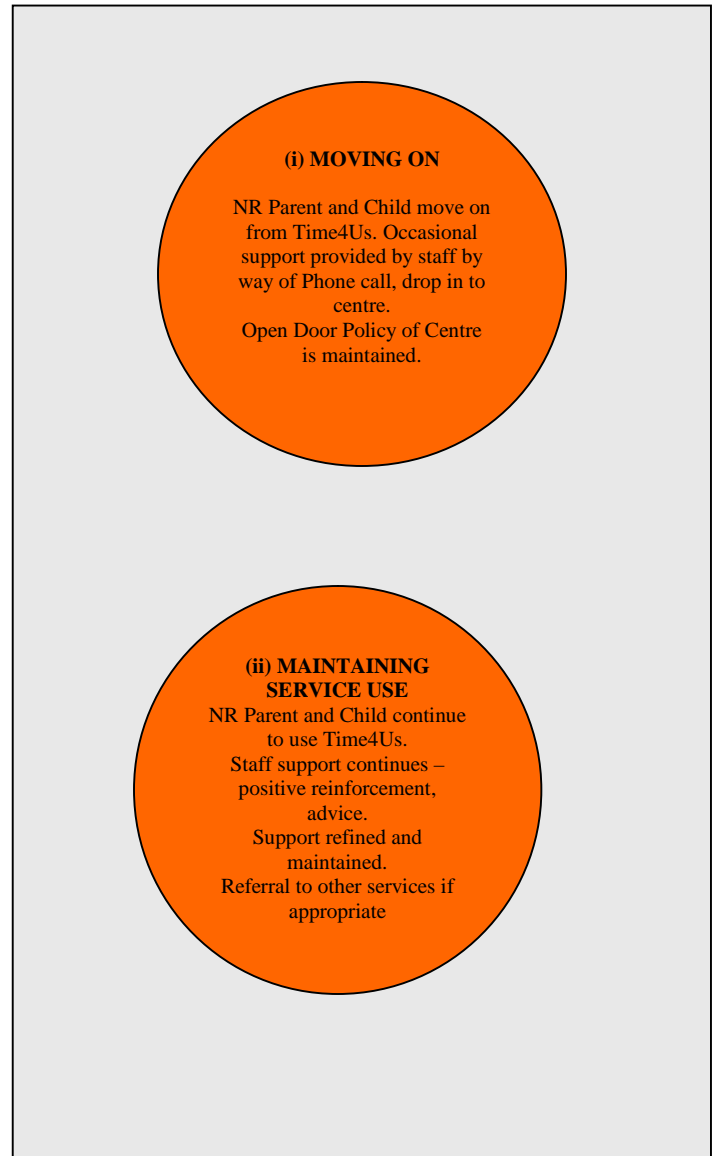
If so desired by family members, or warranted through referrer input (e.g. court decision) staff facilitate changes in access arrangements as far as is practicable and with consideration to other service users.



**Stage 4: Exiting Time4Us or maintaining service use**

Depending on a number of factors, non-resident parents and children may either continue to use the centre for access arrangements or exit the centre. Regarding the former, staff continue to provide required support to the non-resident parent and their children whilst they use the centre, and in a wider context through the maintenance of contact, either through parents dropping into the centre or staff contacting parents over the phone. Should it be required, staff also refer non-resident parents to other services if appropriate. Contact and trust is maintained with the resident parents also.

In the case of the non-resident parents and children exiting the service or moving on, staff still maintain contact through occasional phone calls or when parents and children drop into the centre. The centre operates an open door policy to such families, so while they may not require the centre for access visits parents and children are always welcome to use the centre on a sporadic basis if they so wish and the centre is available.



# TIME4US LAYOUT

Not to scale

