



The National Magazine of Families Need Fathers

“It is time society decided that children need two parents, irrespective of whether the natural parents are married, separated, or divorced.”

Keith Parkin, The Guardian, Father’s Day 1974.

1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985
1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997
2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009

35 years later...

Families still need Fathers

INSIDE OUR 35th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE:

- Father’s Day Thames Boat Trip - Family Law 2044
- Diary of a Helpline Volunteer - In Memory of Trevor Berry
- Is it time to reconsider Payne v. Payne? - FNF at Westminster



FAMILIES NEED FATHERS

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I was doing a podcast this morning for a site called Divorce Manual (<http://divorcemanual.blogspot.com/>). One of the questions was 'how has FNF changed over the last 35 years?' In this McKenzie, older and wiser heads try and answer that question but I had to think on my feet for this journalist. Obviously we've changed a lot in the last five years but every so often I get an inkling of how much. Yesterday was a classic example. I met two national charities. Both shall remain nameless to protect the guilty parties. The first wants to do joint research with us on getting more men working in nurseries and schools. They told me that in the past they would have never even thought about talking to us. The second organisation had in the past been branded as an 'angry men's' group. They too wanted to work with us and, very flatteringly, told me how they had copied FNF's strategy of working in the mainstream and now had much more influence.

When I got into the office I then found that we had received an email containing the contact details of the three thousand Sure Start and Children's Centres. At last we can offer our services, publicity and guidance

directly to the people who are often key to supporting separated and separating families.

So much more is happening as well: the biggest ever volunteer conference on September 25th to 27th; the appointment of Emlyn Jones as our northern organiser, Tony Upton for the midlands, and two year's funding to start a Liverpool Centre. Then there is the upcoming publication of a new edition of Sue Secker's classic 'For the Sake of the Children', the new LIP support pack 'Give 'Em Some LIP' (see page 12) and two new websites. The first - www.separatedfamiliesmatter.org.uk - is a long overdue site for people working with divorcing and separating families and www.meandmydad.org.uk is a chance to celebrate the great things about being a father and to which I hope you can all contribute. My kids' reaction when they saw themselves up there was 'did you actually take pictures of us?' Oh yes I did.

So 35 years down - a way to go but with such a great team of volunteers and staff we must be winning!



Nick Barnard, Editor

Hello and welcome to McKenzie 84, celebrating FNF's 35th anniversary! It's been a while since our last issue (partly because of your Editor being off on his hols - see below for me reading my favourite mag on top of Mount Kilimanjaro) but I hope this month's extra-large full-colour delights make up for it.

The answer to last month's trivia question (What's the connection between FNF and the editor of McKenzie?) is, of course, that both have their origins (one founded, one born) on Father's Day,

June 16th 1974 and 1985. I think that this year's Father's Day is the perfect time to reflect on everything that FNF has achieved in three and a half decades, but also to look to the future. One of the most satisfying things about putting this issue together was how much we could look forward to what we've got planned for the next year, in order to continue the work of the last thirty-five. As always, comments, articles, letters and riddles to mckenzie@fnf.org.uk or via snail-mail to the address on page 32.



Charles Kenyon, Chair

Father's Day will mark 35 years for our Charity. 1st May was the day of the funeral of founder member, Chair and Life President Trevor Berry. There was no one more influential in our first 20 years. This issue of McKenzie would not be being written without him. For those coming for help to FNF now; for those who give that help and especially those who earn by it, take time to give a thought to the people who stood for change a generation ago. This was no easy time, as now, when FNF is invited to meetings in Whitehall regularly; FNF was looked on as a group of social pariahs, pedalling child-hurtful policies by daring to question the gender orthodoxy of the time. Without Trevor and his ilk who stood up to this, 100,000 children and parents a year would not now be getting help from the website, or making 12,000 helpline calls. 35 branches and groups would not be providing their outstanding help and support: emotional, practical and with increasing good effect, legal.

Shared Parenting in primary legislation has been our aim for all these years and remains to be achieved. We still have no real champions in Parliament, people who will carry debate, but we do have an increasing influence in the detail of legislation. Evidence is seen as the key to change and FNF still lacks the

resources of most other organisations, particularly those people whose agenda assumes Shared Parenting is counter to their aims. So let us not forget the power of emotion and let us continue to use it in our arguments. In my 1990 copy of Access Magazine (precursor to McKenzie) there is a poem by member Donna Pursall that reminds us all why we did and do this work. It is called *When I was Five*:

*When I was so little
And not very tall
I lost my poor Daddy
That much I recall.
We walked from my old house
And on down the lane
And never went back there
We just caught the train.*

*Oh, how much I miss him
It's not very fair
My only hope now is
He knows that I care.*

*It was many years later
A knock at the door
A tall man stood out there,
Mom gave me a call
He called himself Daddy
How was he to know
That day was my happiest
I'll never let him go*



Over 100 years of FNF experience: (L - R)

Reg George, Charles Kenyon, James de la Mare, John Baker, Steve Stephenson attending the funeral of Trevor Berry, FNF's Life President, remembered on page 13.

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Transparent as mud

Plans to open Family Courts fall short as Jack Straw promises more changes

The much-touted revisions to the rules surrounding reporting on Family Court proceedings have turned out to be less permissive than had been hoped for.

The original proposals for a new dawn of transparency, touted in December and reported in McKenzies 82 and 83, promised much. Addressing the House of Commons, Justice Secretary Jack Straw said 'many argue that the current provisions to safeguard privacy and confidentiality go too far - leaving family courts unfairly open to accusations of bias or even injustice.' and promised a series of measures which would remedy the situation. In January the report 'Family Justice in View' stated that, from spring 2009, 'accredited' journalists would be permitted to attend Family Court hearings and pilot schemes providing extra material from judges for families and the public would be run in Cardiff, Leeds and Wolverhampton.

Precisely how the new regulations would play out was not known until

mid-April when President of the Family Division Sir Mark Potter, apparently concerned about the lack of guidance from the Ministry of Justice, published his own guidance for judges. From Monday 27th April, holders of a Press Card (a press accreditation scheme overseen by the Metropolitan Police – McKenzie awaits the result of its application) would be allowed to attend Family Court proceedings which do not involve adoption. However, they would not be allowed to examine any court documents or, as previously, report any details without the permission of the Judge and none that would identify the parties concerned. Judges retained wide-ranging powers to exclude journalists from the courtroom for a variety of reasons. Journalists present should have the opportunity to argue their case to remain, the guidance said, but do not have a formal right to appeal against exclusion. So far no details have been made available regarding the regional pilot schemes, nor has there been any concrete indication regarding the status of Clayton v Clayton (a significant precedent on the reporting of cases concerning children), which it had been suggested in December may be overturned.

However, many were unsatisfied. Writing in the Guardian, Marcel Berlins said that they 'clearly fail to meet the media's hopes and expectations. Indeed, on one view, very little of significance will change. Some openness is there, at least cosmetically, but the end result looks a lot like the status quo.'

Justice McFarlane, chair of Resolution, said that 'the current changes will do little, I fear, to address the very real difficulty that journalists face when confronted, after the end of the court case, with a parent who's complaining about a miscarriage of justice.'

Bob Satchwell, executive director of the Society of Editors wrote to Mr Straw to warn that the limitations of

the new rules would 'nullify the entire purpose of the past several years' discussions and the government's stated aim of openness and accountability.'

Sir Mark Potter also criticised the way the change had been implemented and predicted future difficulties, saying "The government has been unable to find parliamentary time for the general statutory overhaul required. Instead, it will fall to the judges to decide to what extent they should exercise their discretion to relax disclosure or reporting restrictions if sought by the media or one of the parties.... [This] will do little to alleviate the opportunities for further confusion."

"The current changes will do little, I fear, to address the very real difficulty that journalists face when confronted, after the end of the court case, with a parent who's complaining about a miscarriage of justice."
Justice McFarlane

The Justice Secretary defended the process in a response to an article on 'thelawyer.com', claiming that it had always been the case that restrictions would remain and he had "always been clear that the measures would have to be introduced in stages, not least because some of the changes need primary legislation." He said that legislation to ensure a 'clear and comprehensive' scheme of reporting rules "will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time is available, but I hope it will be sooner rather than later." Mr Straw added "I was very clear when I made my statement that there will continue to be some restrictions on what can be reported, now and when we have introduced new legislation... this package of measures will deliver a fundamental shift in the openness of family courts, and is far from the "damp squib" suggested."

McKenzie says...

As the reporting above suggests, the new regulations are both cursed and blessed. Despite Mr Straw's protestation to the contrary, we feel there is a distinct contrast between the 'brave new world' of wide-open and accountable family courts touted earlier in the year and the halfway house which arrived with a stutter and the promise of more to come.

So far media reaction has been positive and responsible, with some of the biggest newspapers and television stations working with us to observe cases. However, successful stories rely on details and we will have to wait and see how long media interest can be sustained with a relatively sanitised end product on offer.

The ultimate problem is that, by and large, Family Courts are cut off from the rest of the world. Those approaching know nothing of the world they are about to enter, and those within it have no one outside to turn to. Part of the media's role in society is to be the 'eyes and ears' and to observe and report those things in which there is a public interest. We need to give them the privileges required, balanced with very clear responsibilities, to carry out this role. The old system presented a brick wall in this regard and we are extremely concerned that, although their initial enthusiasm is encouraging, the new set-up will not make their task any more surmountable.

However, we must acknowledge that some progress is better than none and that it is a job worth doing properly. We are, at the centre, an organisation that works for the welfare of children. If given a choice between baby-steps towards a system that safely serves all involved and a manic dash into a free-for-all, then we will vote for the former every time. But this should not be used as an excuse to hold up progress. The Ministry of Justice promises that more changes, together with the information pilot projects, are on their way. These need to be soon and they need to cast significant light on proceedings.

The ball is in your courts, Mr Straw.

Cafcass accept 'two homes'

A new publication from Cafcass has made it clear that a child can have 'two homes' after their parents separate. The publication, 'Handbook on the parenting course for parents who are separated', is a booklet provided to parents who are attending court-ordered 'contact activity' under the provisions of the Children & Adoption Act 2006, which came into effect last December (see McKenzie 82 for more). In it Cafcass provide a series of 'Tips For Contact', with the first of these being:

"Children should feel that they have a home with both parents, regardless of the amount of time they spend with them."

The guidance also suggests that parents should not use children as go-betweens or compare or criticise the other home, and to expect resistance to the change as the children adjust.

Many of our members have encountered professionals, including Cafcass Officers, who do not think it appropriate for children to regard themselves as having a home with each parent; rather in order to be 'settled' they should have only one

home with one parent. Therefore this new publication, although low-key, represents an important progression in the way Cafcass looks at post-separation parenting. The Handbook may also be a useful resource for parents who encounter resistance whilst working towards a two-homes arrangement.

The 'Tips For Contact' can be found on page 27 of the Cafcass publication '**Handbook on the parenting course for parents who are separated**', available online at http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/publications/leaflets_for_adults.aspx. The publication is not available in print form, however members without internet access requiring a copy can contact the FNF London office (0207 6135060 / address on page 31).



New male DV victim network launched

A new network of refuges and services for male victims of domestic violence has been launched in Northamptonshire. The Next Steps Housing Association was founded by mother and daughter Dawn Hardie and Rachel Allen, property developers who realised the almost total lack of support provided to men being abused by their partners. The Association, which began work in February, has 100 places in 35 houses across the county and is the second such in the UK. It also offers places to female victims of domestic violence with older male children who need to be re-homed.

Speaking to the Daily Mail, Miss Hardie said "There is still a very strong stigma attached to men who say they have been the victims of domestic violence. Most of our referrals will only have decided to come forward after being taken to hospital. Statistically, men are more likely to be killed in domestic violence cases than women, and yet we found there was absolutely nowhere for these men to go to escape. They seem to be forgotten. We have already filled four units, and are getting referrals all the time from Women's Aid and the Sunflower Centre. We are offering full support to the victims, whether it be job advice or housing advice, or psychological support."



TRAIN BUDDIES

"I'm sure I'm not the only single father who wastes hours on trains trying to visit his children. I live and work in London, while my 10 year old daughter lives in Norwich. To fetch and return her on a weekend takes up a minimum of eight hours (when the trains are on time!). Why not then introduce the kind of 'buddy' or 'auntie' system that operates so effectively in other European countries? There, specified charities operating out of the major train stations generate income by transporting kids from A and B. The 'buddy', with skills in child minding, can take more than one child at a time (aged between 4 and 14 in France, and 5 and 15 in Germany).

Parents pay the charity a fee plus the child's train fare, which in Britain could be kept low by the buddy's use of a Family Railcard. If it is the case that some single fathers are not seeing their children at all because of the distance and expense involved in doing so, this is an ideal way around the problem. If establishing such a system could help you, please get in touch with me via the FNF Office - 0207 6135060 or mckenzie@fnf.org.uk.

Roger Cooter

Love2Read

A good Father's Day Present: Make your own reading book for your child. www.love2read.co.uk lets you upload your own photos and text and then prints and binds them professionally in an eight leaf durable and colourful handy booklet, despatched within 10 days of order. There are demos on the website and it is easy to follow. Cost is £14.99 plus £2 p&p with a donation of £2 to be made by love2read to FNF for each book sold.

Love2read has set up a code **FNF2009** which members need to insert in the coupon code box on the checkout page for the donation to be activated.

notice board

Thank You To...

All the branch officers who linked up with their local media for **International Parental Alienation Awareness Day**. You generated some great coverage (www.fnf.org.uk/news-and-events/public-relations-diary) and the relationships you've developed will hopefully bear fruit for us in the future as well.

Everyone who participated in our **Parentline Plus focus groups** in February. PP+ were extremely pleased with the insights they gained, and are keen to utilise FNF members' knowledge and experience again to develop their services further.

Skydive!

The Stannah Think Again fund is offering 50 sons and dads the chance to jump out of a plane this Father's Day weekend... Parachutes provided, naturally.

The only conditions are that dad must be over 50 and both of you must be able to get to the airfield near Bicester, Oxfordshire on June 20th.

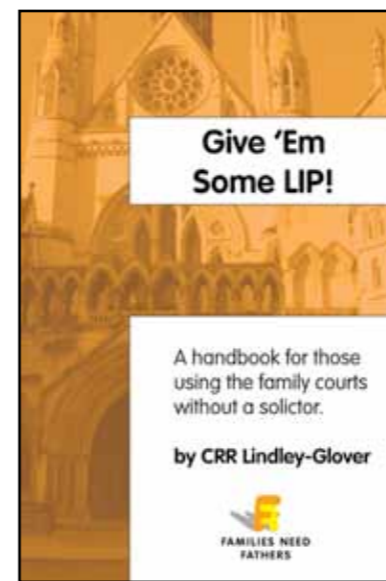
To find out more and enter the competition please visit www.thinkagainfund.co.uk or call 020 7861 2525.

From The Office

Give 'Em Some LIP

Are you using the Family Courts without a solicitor (acting as a Litigant-in-Person or 'representing yourself') or are you assisting someone who is? If so, then FNF is pleased to offer an ideal publication to help you along the way.

'Give Em Some LIP' was developed as part of our training workshops (see Letters page for a view from one attendee) for people assisting those acting as Litigant-in-Person and was produced by our own Ruth Glover, with assistance from several other FNF experts.



It's available exclusively to FNF members, priced £40, from www.fnf.org.uk/shop or by calling 0207 613 5060.

New Liverpool Office

We were delighted and not a little amazed that our bid to set up a Liverpool office, providing support to both branches and parents in the area, was successful through a bid to a government offshoot called the Parenting Fund. Thanks to hard work by Emlyn Jones and Marj Stirzaker in Liverpool and Nadja Singh from the office we have the funding for two staff delivering our services. This is largely recognition of the huge amount of work our Wirral branch have done over the years and the links they have made with other agencies in the Merseyside area.

In Liverpool we will be operating as a main service provider with proper funding, which represents another stage in FNF's evolution.

Recruitment for the two staff, finding an office and setting up a management group is underway as we go to press. Anyone interested in the jobs contact Alex Borchardt, alex.borchardt@fnf.org.uk or 0207 6135060.

Jon Davies

PS. We also had a bid in for a Nottingham office that did not work out, but it can only be a matter of time!

The Family Law Atlas

In a change from our usual schedule, **Jon Davies**, fresh from a Mumbai soiree, tells us what's going on in India.

When the British left India in 1946 we left them cricket and our family court system.

The cricket has been a source of joy ever since, the family courts not so. In fact from talking to Kamal and Pradeep, FNF supporters in Mumbai, there seems to have been little progress since we ran down the Union Jack.

The real level of family break-up is hard to assess. The official divorce rate is 1.1% but one social scientist I met felt that two fifths of families in Mumbai were close to divorce.

India is changing fast but the family courts seem to be stuck in the 'fifties. Court secrecy is much the same as

ours on paper but in a peculiarly Indian twist litigants often use newspapers to publicly debate the court judgements, seemingly with impunity. In a land where the father is the primary signatory on a birth certificate and the traditional eating order goes father, son, mother, daughter, it is perhaps surprising that shared parenting had made such little progress. The standard offer for many fathers after separation is to see their children for an hour once a fortnight in an austere contact centre attached to a courtroom.

There seem to be very few signs of progress. Court orders are routinely ignored, enforcement is almost unheard of and judges willing to make their judgments stick are rare. Long



delays are the rule, parental alienation common and children used as bargaining chips in a society lacking in many of the financial safeguards we enjoy in Europe.

There is hope: Kamal and Pradeep are part of an energetic and highly organised group called Children in the Centre who are campaigning for reform and we look forward to working alongside them in the future.

You can e-mail them on pradeep@grandmother.in

Say hello to...

FNF is keen to expand the services and support it offers to parents across the UK. Earlier this year we advertised for two new staff members - Regional Coordinators for the North and for the Midlands. We're very pleased to say that two FNF members were chosen as most able for the task, so say hello to **Emlyn Jones** and **Tony Upton**

Emlyn



By now it should be common knowledge that FNF has appointed myself to the position of, well, 'Up-North Person'. On the 16th of April, two other candidates and I were interviewed by a panel of FNF notaries. We whiled away the hours talking about our vision for FNF and what we would 'bring to the table' (that's management speak for what we want to happen).

Jon (Davies) and Alex (Borchardt) were particularly fascinated by the fact that many parts of the north were virtually civilised and have hot water. What came as a great shock was that for most of the year the roads here were indeed passable. So, given that I am going to have to do a fair bit of travelling, the actual expenses budget may have to be re-assessed to take account that I will not be dependant on a fast horse. So, what will my priorities be?

FNF is the leading organisation dealing with the fallout from what has become a national way of life - family separation. Every day in the UK parents relationships with their children are put under the spotlight as politicians and the media attempt to deal with problems associated with relationship breakdown. Our organisation is moving (and has to move) from its past structure of dedicated volunteers to a fully integrated and resourced support service for parents.

In the Northern Region, it will be my aim to visit branches and find out what they need in order to evolve. We are currently in the process of setting up a resource centre in Liverpool so that local branches will have a 'mothership' offering support in a number of ways. Hopefully this will be the first of a network of such centres linking FNF branches and groups.

I would also like to set up a Regional Committee, fully integrated with the charity nationally, that pass resolutions for our AGM (the last weekend in September in Coventry: be there or be square). Communication networks are a key element, and I would hope to put in place effective mailshots, press releases and forums serving principally the Northern Region.

FNF should be involved with every FJC in the country and I will set realistic targets for increasing our role in this important area. Each branch should be able to access reliable legal assistance and advice. I will work with officials to bring this about.

Finally and most importantly, we as an organisation have a history of individual and collective dissent. We argue with the lawyers. We argue with the politicians. We argue with the Judges. We sometimes argue with each other. All healthy debate, and at times necessary. However, the time has come for FNF, if it is to have a serious impact on the social fabric of this country, to present a common face to the outside world.

Dissent for dissent's sake is detrimental. There will be proper forums and procedures for individual or branch grievances within the Northern Area, But every first time user has the right to expect a mature (semi- professional) and effective service from the charity. I will measure my success on the sense of camaraderie and common purpose displayed by the new, and hopefully united Northern Region. You can contact Emlyn Jones, FNF Northern Regional Coordinator on emlyn.jones@fnf.org.uk

Tony



Like many in FNF I am a father, LIP, and previously main carer of our son. So, when upon separation I discovered that I was viewed as insignificant I realised that things needing changing. After all, our son certainly doesn't see me as insignificant.

Developing branches and acquiring the resources to grow initially are my priorities. Capacity building an effective branch structure within the region will be a challenge and one I feel we can all rise to. Coming from a background of co-operation and consensus I see these as fundamental to achieving FNF aims both nationally and locally.

Speaking to as many members as possible through attending meetings and running workshops, encouraging communication and openness is something I hope to achieve but should we not meet straightaway then I'm available via email and phone. I'm aiming to identify examples of best practice within branches and also the things we could do better. Utilising technology we can share the best and eliminate the worst. Helping new groups and branches to adopt a model branch structure will mean contributing much sooner and more effectively.

Funding is always going to be an issue. In Northampton we've just converted from a group to a branch in order to apply for £5k of Grass Roots Funding. Where possible all branches should be replicating applications to draw in as much resource as possible. Maybe members can ask their employers whether there is a 'good cause' scheme that we can apply for. There's always someone who wants to become our friend...

Divide and conquer – the workload that is! By having clearly differentiated roles within branches that allow everyone who wants to take an active role helps to build experience, confidence, and knowledge. Shadowing each other and swapping roles develops a sense of shared community. FNF has suffered from disparate agendas around the country. These new posts give FNF an opportunity to become more cohesive. We don't want to lose the local issues and individuality but we do need to lose that which works against our common aims.

Engaging organisations such as CAF/CASS is crucial to changing the paradigm that plagues our children. The door is open to us; by collectively putting our shoulders to it we can enter into a new environment of 50:50 care from mum and dad as an option.

I look forward to engaging and collaborating with everyone who wants to see an end to the current bias, please let me know if you think you can help in whatever way you can. FNF is the members and that's its strength. You can contact Tony Upton, FNF Midlands Regional Coordinator on tony.upton@fnf.org.uk

How much progress?

John Baker on nineteen years with Families Need Fathers

Some, surely.

Both personal and political. First, the personal.

Most of us will have a date burned into our memory. For me, it was 11 May 1990, at about 0815 in the morning. The phone rang deliberately, I assume, spot on. The children and their mother were due back then on the North Sea Ferry from their holiday. It would be them saying come and collect them from the port. It was indeed their mother. It was not a holiday that they had been on. She had another life organised in France. They would never be coming back. If I did not do as she said, I would never see them again. I had been unable to move from the phone when it rang again. A friend had gone past the mother's house and seen a 'For Sale' sign up. Had anything happened? She was round so quickly she could scarcely have had time to put on her shoes, and others rallied round immediately in a way that is still moving.

I had a meeting with Relate a few days later. We had called on them to negotiate a shared parenting agreement. It was all ready now - it only needed signing. Well, the positive progress we seemed to have been making was just a distraction while the ex got things organised. The Counsellor was brilliant - she switched immediately to her 'bereavement' techniques, but I had lots of support. 'What a cow' I said of the ex. 'Remember you loved her once' was the reply. I looked at

the counsellor 'My God, you are well trained' I said, and we both laughed.

I thought our - mine and the children's - case was unique. All cases are, but only in the detail. I had been the principal carer, for some of the time the exclusive one. The mother had had problems and at the time of the abduction had never had sole care of the children for 24 hours without help on call. We had slowly moved from nearly all care being from me to a paper agreement of equal shares, but she had not been able to deliver her side. There was so much hostility that I had started legal proceedings. "You are just her babysitter, except that you don't have the same rights, and it's your job to pay her" were the words of her solicitor, the only local member of what was then called the Solicitors' Family Law Association. A charming way of putting it, but accurate. My own counsel said that the law was that for a father to get 'custody' there had to be clear cut evidence of maternal neglect or abuse broadly equivalent to that required for a child to be taken into care. Only my care had prevented that, I protested. You still don't have the evidence, was the reply. But there was also a comment that had the genders been reversed, her case would have been regarded as wasting the court's time.

In brief, she won, but I was awarded what I was told was exceptional 'access rights'. A trip to La Rochelle every three weeks, and all school holidays save a summer fortnight with their mother.

A tiny consolation was that the lawyer who fought so aggressively, and in one respect clearly unethically, for her client, must have been a party to inflating the costs. But as she hadn't secured a charge on the mother's house to recover the legal aid contribution, she lost her money.

Fast forward several years, and the mother had softened to the extent that she would move out of her house for me to stay there with the children. What more could one ask than that? A turning point, however, might have been the more robust French law. After having been turned away from one 'access visit', I went to see a French lawyer. Don't come to me, he said, go to the police. They will ensure the children come to you. A mention of this to the ex, and there were no more difficulties.

Fast forward more years. The children came to me. One now lives the other side of London having just graduated from London University. The other is here, living with me.

So there has been progress, yes. Finally, things could not be better, except I would like the children to have a better relationship with their mother. The advice: Hang in there.

And political progress? The Children Act codified the law, but the impact on attitudes was slow, though it continues to evolve. I believe - although it's not certain - that I would have won the case now.

continued overleaf



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But I also believe I would not have needed to. For all her inability to care for them, the mother loved the children to bits. Any doubt about not winning, and she'd not have done the flit. The children would have had two involved parents most of the time.

Attitudes at that time are worth the odd anecdote. I had once taken the older child to a slide in the park, where she went round time and time again as toddlers do, while I watched her from the bottom. 'How did you get out on your own?' called a lady to the toddler as she came steaming across to 'rescue' her. "Where is your mother?" "Can you show me where you live?" She said as she was about to take her by the hand before I asked what she was doing with my daughter. As a male, I had been completely invisible. In Boots, buying some baby milk, I eventually insisted it was my turn to be served. 'I was beginning to wonder who you were with' replied the assistant. Some women, presumably thinking they were 'liberal' used to come up to me and say how good it was to see a male in charge of children. After one or two of these comments a response was thought of: 'That is a very

matronising attitude'. There were some memorable looks!

I used to have to go into Ladies' toilets, as that is where all the baby change facilities were. They are mostly either unisex or in both now (one exception, still, is Windsor castle).

And on the FNF front, there was the father who worked on the oil rigs, ten days on, ten days off. The judge in his case gave him access every second Saturday, and when he protested, told him to shut up. There was the letter from a solicitor to a father who said that the mother had no objection to 'access' and would allow it if the child said he wanted it. He was eight months old. There was the father who, with a mate, took their children on a day trip to France. They were stopped by Customs with the remark "Where are the women?". There was the Family Court Welfare Officer (now called Cafcass reporter) who told me that there was only ever one reason why fathers took mothers to court - attempted revenge.

The first time I spoke at a national 'family policy' meeting - invariably, then, only in question time from the floor - I mentioned the difficulties fathers could have seeing their

children. There was an immediate interruption from a woman behind me - she proved to be a senior university lecturer in Social Work Training. "Will the Chair please point out to this gentlemen that the days are gone when a man could beat his wife with a stick, so long as it was no thicker than a thumb?".

What tickled me most was being asked whether I realised there was someone with the same name as me who had written a chapter in a book promoting gender equality called 'Women and Social Policy'?

And at the national level, the Law was dominated by the judgements of Lord Justice Ormrod. One of his regular remarks to fathers who wanted to see their children was that they now had to recognise that they were divorced. He used to claim that he was well known for the importance he gave to 'access' but it had to be organised so as 'not to interfere with the child's normal life'.

In those days, FNF was a lone voice, misunderstood, often vilified.

There is still a long, long way to go, but surely we have made some progress.

Shared Parenting Shared Benefits

You may recall that, thanks to Nadja Singh's efforts, FNF received funding from the Equality and Human Rights Commission for a project on shared parenting. We are planning to launch it on Friday 19 June, just before Father's Day, as part of FNF's 35th anniversary celebrations.

The project was to draft four pieces of guidance to encourage shared parenting:

- 1) for Cafcass officers;
- 2) for schools and teachers;
- 3) for staff in SureStart Centres
- 4) and for the Court Service to disseminate to people representing themselves (Litigants in Person - LIPs) in the family courts.

These drafts are not lobbying documents. In each case the main objective was to make constructive suggestions that would bring about real change at working level.

The Cafcass strand has gone extremely well. We have agreed guidance with Cafcass, which they plan to disseminate to their staff. They have also agreed to issue a supportive statement on launch day.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have been pretty cautious about the schools and Sure Start drafts, but we are persevering. The DCSF has promised a supportive statement from a Minister on launch day. Jon Davies has also written to the major teaching unions seeking discussions with them about the schools draft.

The LIP draft draws heavily on the excellent book published by FNF and available to members at a very reasonable price (visit www.fnf.org.uk/shop or call 0207 6135060 to order). The draft for the Court Service is much shorter and less detailed. It aims to educate a new LIP about what the family courts are like, their procedures and how to behave in court and best prepare your case. We have had helpful comments from the national and Merseyside Family Justice Councils: thanks to Emlyn Jones, chair of the Wirral branch for arranging the latter.

"the main objective was to make constructive suggestions that would bring about real change at working level"



Often thanked, seldom seen: Craig and Nadja

Jon has sent the latest version to Jack Straw, the Lord Chancellor, and to Sir Mark Potter, President of the Family Court. He has asked both for their support on launch day and Jack Straw to get his officials to start work on a final version to be put out by the Court Service as soon as possible. This is an urgent task. Charles Kenyon organised a meeting he and I had with Judge Marilyn Mornington at the outset of the project. She was extremely positive about the idea of guidance for LIPs, not least because the numbers in Barnsley, where she sits as a judge, were growing. Given that the recession seems to bite ever more deeply, I fear a lot more people will be in that position now, in Barnsley and throughout the land. And the numbers will continue to grow for some time to come, since sadly recessions promote family breakdown and fewer people can afford to be represented by a lawyer.

Members have been great during this project. You have agreed to be interviewed. You have volunteered to be media case studies on launch day (and it may still not be too late to volunteer: please e-mail me at Craig.Pickering@fnf.org.uk if you're interested); you have commented on the drafts. There has been an excellent response to an opinion poll for members organised by Becky Sibert and our PR advisers for the project, Amazon PR.

We will be publishing the guidance on launch day. We hope that they will help members in their own cases and in their exchanges with schools, teachers and Sure Start Centres.

We are keen to get publicity for the launch at local, regional and national levels, in as many media as we can manage. If any members and branches would like to take part, please contact me.

Craig Pickering

What FNF means to me...

It was a lifesaver when my mother found an advert for Families Need Fathers in the Thompson Local back in early summer 1996.



I managed to get to my first meeting in London in July 1996, where I met Ian Mackay and never looked back. If it was not for the charity I do not believe I would have the wonderful relationship I have with my son now.

I have used my experience now to help other members through the Stevenage group. My confidence has been boosted recently by a member I went to court with, who has virtually gained all that he wanted with regards seeing his daughter. He said he could not have done it without me.

It is now a pleasure to see how far the charity has moved forward since I first became a member.

Stuart Young

I have been involved with FNF since my divorce in 1996. I joined the charity and attended the Central London Group for support, help and advice. It was, and still is, a lifeline to me and many others. After a while, I reached a reasonable agreement with my ex-wife on seeing our son. I could not have achieved this without FNF. Later, I became a volunteer in the National Office, and then Administrator. I try to help callers who feel that there is nowhere to turn. Those who have been plunged into the maelstrom of family breakdown usually find that the many parts of 'the establishment' do not operate as they hoped. In 1990, after 27 years in prison, Nelson Mandela was released. On 10 May 1994, he became President of South Africa. When he said "the struggle is my life", he meant it. He kept his faith and hope, despite times of doubt and near-despair. The struggle for children's rights, equal parenting and fairness in family law must go on. I look forward to the day when we can retire from the fray. Until then, we must hold onto the dream and keep on hoping.

Andrew Casey

Branch News & Boat Trip

Don't forget! Sunday June 21st is Father's Day and many FNF branches will be running special events for parents and children (often free or at very low cost). Contact your local branch committee to find out if anything is going on in your area, or join us on the **London Branch Thames Boat Trip** (pictured below). We'll be setting sail from Lambeth Pier (SE1 9SG) at 1pm and tickets are just £6 adults / £3 for children. Find out more at www.fnf.org.uk/news-and-events/events or call 0207 613 5060

Father's Day Events

Following last year's successful take-up, the Charity is once again able to offer funding towards branches holding Father's Day events. Ideally, funding will be 'matched' on a 50/50 basis, with the branch contributing half the cost of any event. Application forms can be found in the 'Branch Area' of the website – contact the office if you have forgotten how to log in to the Branch Area. Before funding is released branches and groups must file their 2008/9 accounts.

Central London Branch

Arising directly from the Branch's involvement in the London Family Justice Council, FNF has been invited by the Chair of the Greater London Magistrates Panel to contribute towards a family proceedings courts 'open day' at four venues around London in October.

Northampton and Manchester:

Both these FNF 'groups' have recently taken the plunge, held AGMs and formed management committees as they have developed into fully fledged FNF 'branches'. Both branches are in the process of seeking funding to develop their work.

Rugby

Use the Google map on the FNF website to keep a look out for further details of these meetings which we anticipate will start on Wednesday 17th June. It is difficult starting new meetings, difficult to 'get off the ground' and develop the critical mass that ensures survival, as Northampton (now thriving – see above) found. So, please, if you live anywhere near Rugby, as a contribution towards FNF, even though you have no actual need, try to get along for the initial meeting.



Dartford

Meetings start on Wednesday 20 May. Situated on the M25, Dartford was identified as a town where meetings could serve south Essex as well as south-east London and north-west Kent. It is within easy reach of central London by rail so that the charity can parachute in a host each month until a local member comes forward to take over the reins (trains, parachutes, reins – mixed metaphors, but a clear invitation we hope).

Swindon

Just like the Dartford meeting, Swindon was a town targeted by FNF being at the centre of the Bermuda Triangle formed by the Bristol, Oxford and Reading branches. It is slowly becoming established, being directly responsible for securing three additional member attendees since meetings began a couple of months ago.

Bath

Use it or lose it. You may not have noticed but these are the first FNF meetings to be held on solicitors'

premises – though many FNF meetings benefit from regular pro bono contributions from solicitors. Besides a couple of solicitors, totally committed to FNF's cause (and not 'touting for business'), April's meeting had two branch officers with over 40 years 'service' between them - but only one member seeking help. Anyone who can travel, even a long distance, would derive great value from attending these meetings.

Leeds

Following May's AGM the Leeds Branch will be exploring the possibility of establishing meetings in Bradford and York. Contact Don 07981 710179 if you can help.

Burton-on-Trent

Well done to Colin Brealey, who has taken over from Fraser Chatburn (who himself deserves a big pat on the back) as Chair of the Burton-on-Trent branch. The group also has a new venue and now meets at The Coopers Tavern, 43 Cross Street,

Central London Branch

Steve Stephenson shares his memories of the trails blazed by FNF London

Meetings of the Central London Branch (CLB) began in August 1989 – yes, the Branch is approaching its twentieth birthday. For the 15 years before the opening of the London Branch (no 'C' necessary back then since it was the only London Branch), FNF had been holding twice-monthly meetings in Holborn's Conway Hall, tucked away in a garret at the back of the building. Although a number of FNF cognoscenti (including the late Trevor Berry (founder member), playwright and actor Terence Frisby and psychiatrist Robin Benians) would host twice-monthly meetings which had been running then for fifteen years, they were poorly attended and pretty depressing.

Right from its foundation the CLB met every week – mainly because it was easier to keep track of a meeting that took place every Thursday. This was pre-Internet time and subscribing to Family Law allowed our visitors access to one of the only sources of information about the world they had been forced to inhabit. Within a month, Bruce Lidington, later to become FNF national Chairman, had walked through the door; the inaugural committee meeting took place at what is now the Hilton London Metropole Hotel; and our branch newsletter was born, given the name 'McKenzie' by Bruce, the editor... the parent of the magazine you are now reading.

The London Branch newsletter, McKenzie, funded entirely by attendees' donations, was soon being posted to nearly two thousand recipients, covering the 'Home Counties' and beyond. All of this was, of course, done by unpaid staff – writing copy, collecting from printers, enveloping (with our children's help) and posting – gummed stamps and envelopes are now a thing of the past. There was, and always will be, criticism by branches of the national organisation – generally that it lacks bite and ambition. It was no different with the CLB, twenty years ago or even now. It's one of the functions of the grass roots. We viewed the trustees as being set in their ways, unprepared to take on the establishment. Bruce

wanted the CLB to provide the impetus, determined that it would be 'the tail that wagged the dog'.

Besides helping individual parents, the CLB has acted as a nursery for FNF talent. Without the Branch many key contributors would not have become involved - from current trustees John Baker and Neil Grice to 'historical figures' such as the late Ian Mackay, who blazed the McKenzie Friend trail, having been taught his trade in the London Branch. We dried Ian's tears, patched him up and he repaid FNF by years of generous service. Bruce Lidington, John Baker, and Jim Parton all served their time with the CLB before becoming national Chairman. Bruce began his 'career' in FNF as the first McKenzie editor, but the CLB have provided many successors: Jim Parton, Fairless Masterman, John Baker, Stephen Soghoian and the 'wicked' Richard Gregory, whose spoof Samizdad papers provoked outrage and hilarity in equal measure amongst the legal establishment.

The CLB can also claim credit for moving FNF out of a bedroom in Norwich into its first office, the building it continues to occupy. The offer of a 'free' office in Curtain Road came from a member because of the work of the CLB, and it was the CLB Secretary who took on sole responsibility for the office in its early stages. And, of course, few will remember that back in the last century the CLB was the first branch to set up an office – totally funded (rent, phone, fax and copier) by attendees' subscriptions.

Like the McKenzie newsletter, the FNF factsheets were born in the CLB. With no Internet, no means for fathers to access basic information, we grew tired of repeatedly explaining 'parental responsibility' – and perhaps not doing it particularly well or leaving something out in one explanation. So the Branch produced the first factsheet. Soon the range extended to double figures and then



they were adopted nationally by the Charity. John Foley and Francis Fuchs from the CLB developed FNF's Internet presence at a time when all the pages had to be written line by line in code. FNF was one of the few charities to have an Internet presence. It's all so easy now.

Having information so easily accessible on the Internet has almost certainly cut attendance. Over many years we'd routinely have thirty or so at weekly meetings, standing room only, rooms bursting at the seams with some attendance well into the forties. Meetings tended to be more 'high energy' and lively. Nowadays, attendance is smaller, meetings are calmer, though we still average over 22 a meeting, with an annual attendance in excess of a thousand in recent years.

National Council may still regard the Branch with some reservation since we continue to be outspoken in questioning its actions and strategies when we think it necessary – and that's not a bad thing. But, compared to years gone by we are really a bunch of poodles – very conciliatory. The CLB was on the streets demonstrating, carrying banners along Oxford Street and Park Lane, fly-posting, heckling the President of the Family Division as he opened the Inner London FPC, long before the founder of F4J had the gleam of fatherhood in his eye.

Having passed over the newsletter, factsheets and the website to 'national', the CLB has now handed over the organisation of the 15th Fathers Day Thames Boat Trip. We trust it is in safe hands.

Trevor Berry, Life President

Without Trevor Berry, FNF would not exist. He was the foundation stone of the charity and thousands of children and thousands of parents know each other because of him and what he started at a time when no one would put their hands up to say that families needed fathers. Although less well known to the current membership, he epitomised Families Need Fathers in the first twenty years.

Trevor was born in London in 1925, the eldest of three brothers. After grammar school, he attended Woolwich Polytechnic and trained at Woolwich Arsenal, qualifying as an engineer in the Ministry of Defence. His subsequent career, working on nuclear programmes in particular, would take him around the world.

Trevor responded to an article by Keith Parkin in The Guardian on Father's Day 1974 (see page 12 for more) and so began a commitment to Families Need Fathers which would last for decades to come. He became involved in FNF's

support work, hosting the first 'Walk-in, Talk-in' meetings in London, and the campaign for change.

In 1980, shortly after FNF became a registered charity, Trevor was elected Chairman and would hold this position until he was made President (later Life President) in 1994. He was the longest-standing Chairman in the history of Families Need Fathers and as President would act as a sympathetic mentor to the Chairman of the day. His continued commitment to our cause, across the years and through turbulence of all kinds was described by Richard Gregory in his 25th anniversary history of FNF:

"While others have moved on or given up - for whatever reason - Trevor had been constant, never departing from the founding principles and steadfastly picking up the pieces when things looked like going 'pear-shaped'."

Former FNF Chair and McKenzie editor Jim Parton:

now allows. During that hearing, one opposing barrister criticised Mr McKay for not attending. Ian gallantly waved to their Lordships from the visitors gallery and being recognised, caused much amusement and embarrassment to the barrister. Needless to say this case [1995] was won and has led to the President of the Family Court Division, finally producing guidance on the access of McKenzie Friends, albeit three and a half years later. Sadly, Ian passed away just over two years ago; he had given his strength and health to others, at the expense of neglecting his own needs." by Ian Julian

Bruce Lidington 1950 -1996

Bruce Lidington joined Families Need Fathers in 1988, quickly becoming a driving force within with the London Branch meetings and eventually being persuaded to become the Charity's Chairman in 1994.



"An outsider once commented to me that one of FNF's greatest achievements was to survive for so many years at all. It could have gone under many times. That it didn't is largely Trevor's achievement. Now the argument has been largely won, Families Do Need Fathers, it's no longer a debate. That itch has started to receive treatment, though there's still some way to go."

Trevor's is a huge achievement, and I'm only sorry he was never honoured publicly for it [Trevor was nominated for awards at various times by FNF but sadly never received one]. He stuck with an unfashionable cause for more years than any one else, and he was effectively never thanked for it. He's a hero, the quiet sort who no one knows about."

Trevor passed away on 17th April 2009 aged 84. Our thoughts are with his family and especially Mary.

Perhaps the best tribute is that given by Trevor Berry, following Bruce's death in August 1996, aged just 46:

"Many members will never have known Bruce personally. For those who worked with him at FNF national level or in the London Branch, there will be an abiding memory of him as one of the members to whom a lasting debt is owed. He gave his time and effort generously to FNF. Probably more than any other individual FNF member, he brought the Society to the attention of a wider public and highlighted the gross injustices. He was one of the outstanding members of FNF in its twenty two years of existence. Earlier in the year he was so happy to tell me that both parents would be celebrating their daughter's 13th birthday as a threesome. We must remember him and our deepest sympathy goes to his daughter Claire, his wife Sheila and his very close friends. They have lost a father, husband and friend whose sense of fairness, justice and honesty was second to none."

The impact made by Bruce in such a short tenure as Chairman speaks volumes and leaves us to wonder what he would have achieved had he not left us before his time.

Ian McKay 1944 - 2006

"Ian was a professional man who tirelessly helped both mothers and fathers to fight in the courts for contact with their children. As a charitable man he would often travel across the country at his own expense and pay for lengthy telephone calls himself. Many of these people were destitute, robbed by an unjust family system of their children's love and relationship and then robbed again by expensive and protracted proceedings until they could no longer afford or trust their legal representation. He won many cases, which changed the law and the attitudes of the Judiciary. My greatest honour was when he referred to me as his protege and invited me to assist his litigant who had been badly treated by Social Services. At the ensuing Court of Appeal hearing, we won the right for litigants to disclose court papers to their McKenzie Friends and other helping agencies, to a greater extent even than the new law



Family Law 2044

Becky Sibert hops in her time machine and looks forward 35 years to report what she hopes to see.

Britain has got its problems. As we face 2045 most of our coast is under water, we have only the tunes of Abba as we have run out of original music and there is only one After Eight mint left. However, there is one element of our lives which has improved and that's how we look after separated families. After the panic of the C20, when divorce and separation rates were at their highest and children were routinely stuck in the middle between warring parents, things are better.

There once was a time (not that long ago) when children sometimes had to grow up without the love and guidance of both parents. Now, this rarely happens. Parents, separated or not, work together for what is in the best interest of their child or children.

On the eve of the last family court closing down and the last family judge hanging up their wig, we ask 'what's changed'?

1. Culture: high profile campaigns headed by celebrities, extensive media coverage and soap and movie plot lines have all done their bit in making it socially unacceptable to deny a child a relationship with either parent. Arguments about the children just don't happen.
2. Change in Family Law; More than 20 years have passed since the Government of the day, led by Prime Minister Brooklyn Beckham, introduced a presumption of shared parenting. Shared Residence is and has been the starting point when parents separate for some time - with great success. Parental Alienation is recognised and addressed quickly. Mediation and collaborative law is compulsory. No one needs to go to court to settle parenting time (we used to call that 'contact') disputes. With parents agreeing on separation, broken 'contact' orders are a thing of the past. Open courts (no, not like 2009) have proven that courts are not the best place to work out parenting time arrangements.
3. For some time there has been fair financing of public policy on shared parenting, so there is a fair division of child benefit, tax credits and the child maintenance system.
4. The wider family are included and supported through government policy and the law reflects this.
5. Schools, doctors, children's centres (and anything to do with the family) engage and include fathers and mothers.
6. Education in schools reflects the importance of both parents.
7. There are also support stops in every town across the country to help with anything to do with the family, with a particular focus on those who are struggling with their relationships and those who have separated.

So, are we better off? The simple answer is yes! Children are more happy, more satisfied, less distressed, they have a better sense of identity, feel more special, go on to develop more meaningful relationships and stand a smaller chance of negative outcomes as they have a substantial relationship with both their parents.

Society as a whole is also better. Unemployment is down, crime is down, people abuse substances less, children are performing better at school and teenage pregnancy is down - to name a few!

The last word on the Family Courts has to go to Rocco Ritchie, who was the last Chair of the now-defunct national charity Families Need Fathers:

"Over the last 40 years we have seen a transformation of how we help separated families and the fact that both parents matter is ingrained in our culture and minds. No, we don't need family courts to solve problems after separation and yes - children and family's lives are better off."

35 years on...

FAMILIES STILL NEED FATHERS

Happy birthday Families Need Fathers! Thirty-five years is a long time – two generations of children have come and gone since our founding and we considered it an impossible exercise to try and recount all the important people and events which have shaped the course of our history. (see box opposite for more) Therefore, in this issue of McKenzie we've kept the history brief, and instead focussed on FNF's present work and our hopes for the future.

The Beginning

The founding of Families Need Fathers is generally pinned down to Father's Day 1974. Keith Parkin, a financial consultant and art collector, penned an article for the Guardian which declared:

"It is time society decided that children need two parents, irrespective of whether the natural parents are married, separated, or divorced..."

[in the belief that] attitudes concerning custody, care and control are riddled with ignorance and prejudice, a society called Families Need Fathers has been formed. It will campaign for equal parental rights... will prick the social conscience and will ensure that sense prevails over nonsense and that custom accords with truth."

Together with Alick Elithorn, a child psychiatrist who had been advised that to apply for custody of his children was a hopeless exercise and had subsequently lost all contact, Keith Parkin founded Families Need Fathers. In the same year Trevor Berry (who sadly passed away in April - see page 14) joined the cause, to remain an integral part of FNF for decades

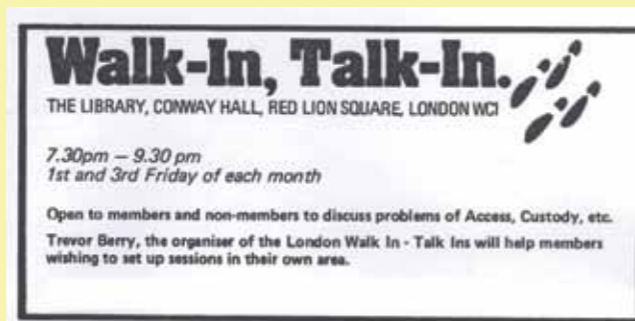
to come. The 'double-F' logo that we still use today was created and FNF's mission to ensure that children were not denied a full relationship with a loving parent began.

In 1975, the first 'Walk-In, Talk-In' meetings were held at Conway Hall in London, where they would run for the next 16 years and establish the format for FNF's keystone service – the Local Branch Meetings we know today. Also first held in 1975 was the Father's Day Boat Trip – another FNF tradition which survives to the present day.

Families Need Fathers: A Registered Charity

In one sense, this year is actually Families Need Fathers's 30th birthday, as it was 1979 when the society became a registered charity. In its newfound guise, FNF expanded across the country and in 1985 the FNF Newsletter, which had run for the previous 11 years, became our journal Access. FNF also gained its first external funding in 1985, with a grant of £860 from the Greater London Council, having subsisted until then on donations and subscriptions. As the Berlin Wall fell, McKenzie was founded as the FNF London newsletter (happy 20th, McKenzie!) and Families Need Fathers marked its 20th anniversary.

The 1990s brought more change and development for FNF. As its



Advert for London meeting, 1978

FNF History

Anyone wishing to read more on the history of FNF is recommended to read the article featured in McKenzie 41 (25th anniversary issue) available online at www.fnf.org.uk/about-us/history.

The first Guardian article ('Families need their fathers') is also available online at www.fnf.org.uk/about-us/the-first-article.

Alternatively, write to the London office and we will be happy to send you a copy of both.

nationwide work grew, its base moved from 'a bedroom in Norwich' to an office on Curtain Road (where the London staff still live, albeit with slightly more room to swing cats these days) in 1992. Two years later, FNF's first website was launched. Trouble struck at various points during the decade but, as ever, a cast of committed and determined believers weathered the storm and steadied the ship ready for the 21st century

A New Millenium

And what of the last ten years? Arguably FNF has accelerated faster than ever before, hand in hand with recognition of the importance of both parents and the UK's consistent failure to keep children and separated parents in contact. Although some of this can doubtlessly be attributed to the activities of a certain direct action group of snappy dressers, the Families Need Fathers hand in the process should never be underestimated. In addition to making leaps and bounds with our support services, the last few years have been



Branch meetings list, 1992

spent establishing FNF as the credible, reasoned voice for non-resident parents and their children. FNF volunteers, trustees and staff put in the hard yards, replying to consultations and making submissions to government, meeting with politi-



Trevor Berry, remembered on page 14, on the FNF Boat Trip, 1995

cians and practitioners alike and being there at every opportunity, no matter how small or distant, to share our core beliefs and make it clear that the status quo could no longer be tolerated.

One major recognition of this came in 2001 with the publication of Sue Secker's 'For The Sake Of The

Children', looking at the problems facing separating families and how best to deal with a difficult and conflicted situation. The book, part-funded by the Government, represented a major step forward for Families Need Fathers in terms of mainstream recognition of our work and principles. We are delighted that the Department for Children, Schools and Families has commissioned a new version, to be published imminently.

In 2006, Families Need Fathers took another stride forward with the award of a significant grant from the DCSF. This allowed us to appoint a Chief Executive Officer, expand our staff to include policy and research work and, most importantly, look to the future and make long-term strategic plans like never before. The renewal of this grant in December 2008 will allow this work to continue, whilst the recent Parenting Fund award (see page 7) and the appointment of Midlands and Northern Regional Coordinators (page 8) means that we can take our support and campaigning work further and reach more people than ever before.



Steve Stephenson and Trevor Berry, 1995

Celebration?

In putting together the 35th anniversary edition, we weren't sure if we should be using the word 'celebration'. On the one hand, for Families Need Fathers to have kept going providing services and pushing for changes since 1974 is a great achievement. For many people, Families Need Fathers has helped them rebuild a relationship with their children – and that is worth celebrating.

On the other, it's not happy times for everyone – including us. Because of the problems that we're all familiar with, some children and parents are forever apart. Every year, thousands more encounter difficulties. We've come a long way since 1974, but not far enough yet.

We've tried to reflect that in this issue but also acknowledge the achievements, changes and, most importantly, all the people across the years who've given their time, energy, blood, sweat and tears to help others and their children, whilst also looking to the challenge ahead.

We're glad to be here, but we're even more looking forward to the day when we don't need to be.

So, what have we done?

We're sometimes asked, with varying degrees of cynicism, 'what has FNF achieved in 35 years?'. Well, aside from building up the most comprehensive network of non-resident parent support services in the world (see opposite), here are just a couple of FNF's Greatest Hits...

McKenzie friends

For many years, Families Need Fathers has championed the role of McKenzie friends providing assistance to Litigants-in-Person who cannot afford, or do not wish to employ, the services of solicitors. FNF members have been involved in some of the cases which established the precedent for a person acting for themselves in a Family Court to have the right to a McKenzie friend. This culminated in the 2008 Practice Direction from the President of the Family Division, which made it explicit that the assistance of a McKenzie friend should only be refused in exceptional circumstances. Although not a central service of FNF, many of our members provide assistance to Litigants-in-Person and many more have found invaluable help from a McKenzie through the FNF support network.

Birth Registration & Parental Responsibility

FNF's contribution to the debate on the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (which amended the Children Act 1989) means that, since December 2003, an unmarried father who is named on his child's birth certificate automatically has Parental Responsibility. Should the Welfare Reform Bill go through in its current form later this year, then there will be a greater emphasis on Registrars to ensure that a father's name is always registered and fathers will also have increased opportunity to have themselves named.

Benefits & Maintenance

Although not directly related to contact, financial issues have a massive impact on many parents' ability - or inability - to spend time with their children. FNF is a 'key stakeholder' with the Department of Work and Pensions and CSA/CMEC, constantly advocating a better deal for non-resident parents and their children. FNFers were involved in the key 'Hockenjos' judgment, which better enables NRPs to claim benefits and entitlement, and we also campaign for flexible working.

A less adversarial court process

One of the first messages FNF tries to convey to new members is that, if you can, you should keep yourself out of court. The increase in profile and resources for mediation, and other forms of dispute resolution such as Collaborative Law, make us think that others may be taking this message on board too.

Opened Family Courts

As we've reported on page four, the latest development in Family Court reporting procedures hasn't gone as far as we'd hoped. But, as a result of our work, and the journalists and media outlets we collaborate with, we're undoubtedly on the right track.

Made friends & influenced people

In the last three years, FNF has held meetings at Westminster with the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, with another scheduled for the Welsh Assembly later this year. We regularly meet with officials from Cafcass, CSA/CMEC, the Ministry of Justice and Family Justice Councils, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Children Schools and Families. We work closely with leading charities, and family and children's groups from all over the world. We are regularly contacted by academics and researchers, as well as the BBC, ITN and national newspapers. Families Need Fathers has become the leading voice in the campaign for shared parenting.

The Present

Today, Families Needs Fathers is the leading organisation providing support for and campaigning on behalf of separated parents and their children across the United Kingdom. We employ 14 staff members, with further appointments anticipated this year, as well as the opening of our Liverpool office. Our website receives around 15,000 visits each month and our online forum has over 600 members. Our helpline is ably run by a team of over 30 volunteers and answers 12,000 calls each year. We are regularly contacted by the most prominent media outlets and The Sun's Dear Deidre advice regularly suggests contacting FNF. We are consulted as a matter of course by the Government and have close ties with all the major political parties. We have almost 3000 members and help many thousands more at our 37 branch meetings across Britain. This is only made possible by the hundreds of volunteers who give and have given their time, energy, knowledge and skills day-in and day-out for the last 35 years.

Incoming

As well as speaking out on International Parental Alienation Awareness Day (April 25th), having our say on the disappointing new Family Court reporting rules (see page 5) and the fun we had with Me & My Dad during National Family Week (see page 23), FNF has got a host of projects planned for the rest of the year. Here's the top line...

Grandparents

On May 18th, Families Need Fathers joined forces with the Grandparents' Association, the Family Matters Institute and Finerday, to launch our report 'Beyond the Nuclear – Including the Wider Family', calling for greater consideration of the wider family after separation. See page 21 for the report.

Shared Parenting – Shared Benefits

On Father's Day FNF will be launching our groundbreaking 'Shared Parenting – Shared Benefits' campaign. Over a year in the making and funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the project has produced the first ever set of guidelines setting out the benefits of Shared Parenting and suggesting best practices for schools, Sure Start centres, Cafcass and Litigants-in-Person. See page 11 for more on this.

Welsh Assembly

In the last three years FNF has held forums with the Labour (2007), Conservative (2008) and Liberal Democrat (2009) parties, where MPs have met with FNF trustees and members to hear their stories, discuss the problems at hand and look to the future. In June we will be repeating this exercise with members of the Welsh Assembly – watch this space for more on this.

Parental Responsibility

Finally, we are planning a big campaign for the end of 2009 to educate families and communities about one of the most important issues we work with, but is sadly often overlooked – Parental Responsibility.

The Future

The combined efforts of everyone who has contributed to Families Need Fathers over the last thirty five years have resulted in some colossal achievements –but there's still a long way to go. See page 15 for a (slightly irreverent) look at where we might hope to be in 2044 but, remaining in the here and now, last year FNF published a new set of policy aims. These are the main issues we want to deal with and our priorities for doing so. Here's a quick run down:

1. A presumption of Shared Parenting – not just in the decisions judges make, but within all the organisations and institutions which work with separated families.
2. Recognition of the real costs of Shared Parenting, so that there is a fair division of Child Benefit, Tax Credits and Child Maintenance.
3. Significant reform of the Family Law system to include compulsory mediation, after-court care for families and enforcement of contact once ordered.
4. More support services, information and education available to parents before and after separation, particularly on the benefits of Shared Parenting
5. A more sensitive treatment of Domestic Violence.
6. More support for the wider family after separation and divorce.
7. Increased and better quality resources for the Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass).



McKenzie 33 - the first to go nationwide. See back page for more FNF publications through the ages.



Sue Secker promotes Both Parents Matter in Reading, 2008



Behind the closed doors...

Since Family Courts were opened to journalists on April 27th (see page 5 for more), several cases have been reported at varying lengths. Here are two of the most notable.

In early May, a judge prohibited a mother from contacting her children for **three years** after ruling that the children faced “an intolerable situation of conflict of loyalties resulting in them suffering serious emotional harm”.

The court heard the children made serious allegations against their resident father during supervised contact visits which upon investigation were found to be false. It was not clear whether she had encouraged the children to make the allegations, or the children had done so under their own volition. A psychiatrist assessing the case reported that she “loved her children” but had harmed their development by trying to be always “available” to them and in response the judge expressed “serious concern about [the mother] infantilising the children”.

In response, Cafcass CEO Anthony Douglas said “In a small minority of cases, continuing contact with a parent who is determined to continue a relationship battle after separating can cause their child immense long-term emotional harm. Ending contact with a parent can help children grow up and move on from events to which they were often only miserable witnesses.”

The woman had previously been jailed for one month after texting her ex-husband and approaching her son in the street, in breach of an injunction to the contrary. She is also facing trial for Contempt of Court in relation to a video about her case posted on YouTube.

McKenzie says...

This has been a cause for much discussion and a source of much contention. The facts reported are, in themselves, difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, there are indications of Parental Alienation and a deliberate Contempt and breach of a court order. On the other hand, children should have contact with both parents, with very few exceptions. Three years is an extremely long time for a relationship to be disrupted. Furthermore, McKenzie understands there to be other elements affecting this case which have not been reported.

It may be that the final judgment made, in light of a sorry state of affairs, is in the best interests of the children. There is also a strong suggestion that these children have been enormously let down, to the point that their welfare may be at serious risk. But cases like this come as no surprise to us.

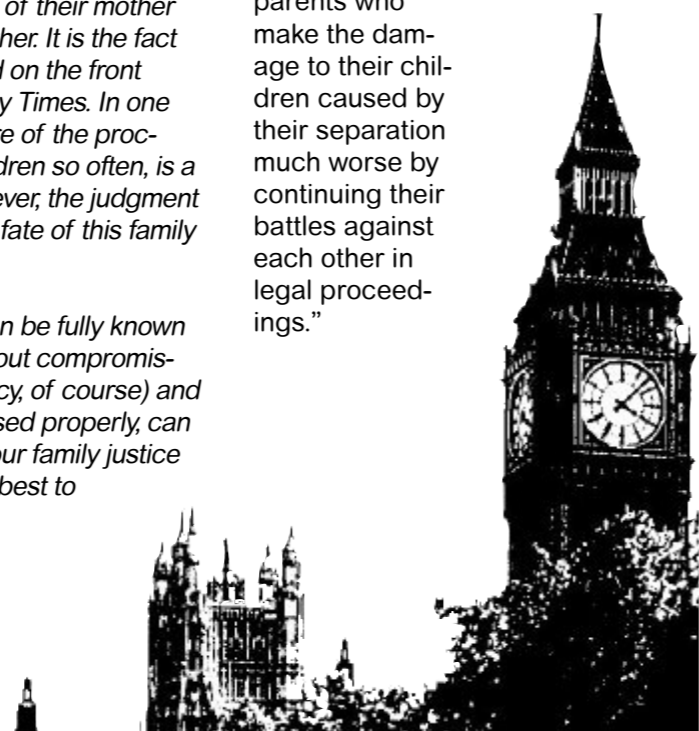
What makes this case exceptional is not the extremes of the events or the judgment, nor that is it that children are being deprived of their mother rather than their father. It is the fact that it was reported on the front cover of the Sunday Times. In one sense, this exposure of the process which fails children so often, is a step forward. However, the judgment still stands and the fate of this family remains the same.

Only when facts can be fully known and reported (without compromising children's privacy, of course) and judgments scrutinised properly, can we have faith that our family justice system is doing its best to protect children.

We hope that this happens soon.

On April 28th, Lord Justice Ward employed Philip Larkin's poem 'This Be The Verse', which infamously begins with the lines “They fuck you up, your mum and dad. / They may not mean to but they do.”, to warn two parents about the impact of their ongoing conflict on their nine year old son. Overturning a previous County Court ruling that the boy should stay with his paternal grandparents rather than his mother or father, LJ Wall said that “I hope this case has given the mother a fright. I hope it has also given the father a fright.” and if they did not begin to cooperate amicably “they may well lose the care of their child.”

He ruled that the child should be resident with his mother and have contact with his father, adding that “Separated parents, in my experience, frequently fail to understand that their children love both of them, and have loyalty to both... This mother and father are no different from many separated parents who make the damage to their children caused by their separation much worse by continuing their battles against each other in legal proceedings.”



Including The Wider Family

On 18th May 2009 Families Need Fathers, The Grandparents' Association and The Family Matters Institute held a successful forum in Portcullis House in Westminster. Hosted by Stewart Jackson MP and attended by 100 MPs, parliamentarians, civil servants, journalists and third sector representatives, the forum initiated debate on including the wider family after separation and divorce.

With divorce and separation rates rising, how we protect children after their parents separate matters more than ever. The relationship that children and grandparents share is particularly important during and after that time, however, current systems and practice do not adequately protect children's relationship with their grandparents and this has to change.

The forum was based on Families Need Fathers (FNF) and The Grandparents' Association (The GA) research report 'Beyond the Nuclear-Including the wider family'. When a family breaks down, a child's relationship with their grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and other extended family members often suffers. Research carried out for this project showed that in 42% of cases where parents separated, one set of grandparents lost all face-to-face contact with their grandchildren.

Institutions, law and policy fail to recognise a grandparent's special



role in children's lives. For example, Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) officers, who prepare reports for judges presiding over family court cases, are not routinely expected to consider the contribution of the wider family to a child's life. Furthermore, if a grandparent, aunt, uncle or other extended family member wished to apply to a court for contact with a child, they would first have to apply to the court for permission for their contact application to even be heard.

The report outlines the problems facing the wider families of separating parents, consolidates existing research and makes a series of achievable proposals which would improve and protect the right of a child to keep in touch with his or her wider family after their parents separate. It is hoped that 'Beyond the Nuclear - Including the Wider Family' will initiate changes both in Parliament and in courtrooms.

Families Need Fathers, The Grandparents' Association and Family Matters Institute are calling upon the Government to:

- Think 'Wider Family': ensuring that in any policy guidelines, grandparents and the wider family are explicitly considered and named.
- Develop a sociological understanding of Grandparenting: funding research, and projects that seek to explore and communicate the role and importance of grandparents to children's upbringing and welfare; and supporting them in this role.
- Amend the Children Act 1989 to remove the obstacle that requires the agreement of the biological family to ask permission prior to making an application for contact and their case being heard.
- Ensure that both Cafcass and the Judiciary consider the important relationship between children and grandparents in the court process and when determining the future arrangements for the child.

To receive a copy of the 'Beyond the Nuclear- Including the Wider Family' or to join in the campaign contact becky.sibert@fnf.org.uk.



Charles Kenyon addresses the forum as the BBC roll cameras

Finerday



Our report and Westminster event were kindly sponsored by Finerday, a free online service designed to keep families in contact, particularly older and younger members. Some of our members have been trialling the service and you can find out more at www.finerday.com

The Fourth Local Family Justice Conference Kimberly Pender

On a very wet and blustery day in April Charles Kenyon and I attended the above Conference in Northamptonshire, in our capacities as Chair and Trustee of FNF. The National Family Justice Council (FJC) was established following public consultation in July 2004 and is an advisory non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry Of Justice (MOJ), although it is independent and operates at arm's length from Ministers. The Council's aim is to "promote an interdisciplinary approach to the needs of family justice, and through consultation and research, to monitor the effectiveness of the system and advise on reforms necessary for continuous improvement". It is supported in its work by 39 Local Family Justice Councils (LFJCs) across England and Wales.

FNF are lucky to have members on 22 of the LFJCs and my task as Trustee is to attempt to place FNF members on the remaining 17 by formally writing to their Chairs. I also undertake presentations to the LFJCs if requested to better inform them of our role in the family justice system and to introduce local members who can sit on their Councils. Becky Sibert, our Policy & Information Officer, does a sterling job in making contacts and supporting me in my task. The LFJCs usually comprise 20 people and meet three to four afternoons per year. As with the FJC, they comprise the local Family Court Judge (chair), lawyers, social workers, mediators, the police, Cafcass, local paediatricians or children's mental health experts and so on. I believe we are the only voluntary organisation to have leave to apply to join the LFJCs.

The 4th Local Family Justice Conference saw approximately 53 attendees, of which 22 were from the National FJC and the remaining from LFJCs or 'observers', as indeed I was described. The Conference began with an opening welcome from the President of the Family Division, Sir Mark Potter who later had to rush back to London to deal with the first day of media access to the family courts, addressed later by Charles Kenyon's presentation to the Conference. Following the welcome, the Conference continued with presentations and

panel question and answer discussions. The following presentations took place:

'Outcomes of applications to court for contact orders after parental separation or divorce' by Joan Hunt, Senior Research Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Family Law and Policy was based on research into an assertion by Earl Howe that courts frequently sanction Contact arrangements that amount to almost no contact at all. She ultimately concluded that his assertion was incorrect but did however make some comments about fathers not helping themselves by failing to attend Court Hearings or becoming angry and upset at Court. Our Chair pointed out quite rightly that fathers who were being denied Contact were justified in being angry and upset and were often frustrated that they were there in the first place.

Bridget Robb of the British Association of Social Workers and DCSF Social Work Task Force explained "The Education, Training and Professional Development of Social Workers" confirming that, following Baby P, measures were being brought in to review the quality of students and placements. She said they were likely to introduce a minimum requirement that applicants for social worker's positions would now have to have an Honours degree. She recognised that they had a lot of young able people but a deficit of support workers of a certain age due to difficulties historically in retaining staff. Consequently there was a significant amount of overseas recruitment of older staff.

District Judge Heyworth of Liverpool gave an impromptu talk about the way he conducts first directions appointments in family cases, which was enlightening to many. He felt a different approach often worked on the basis that many parents coming to Court wanted to talk to a Judge about their problems rather than just a Cafcass officer. So, he sat down informally with them and a member of Cafcass present, with lawyers at the back of the room, and asked the parents to tell him about their children, likes, dislikes etc. He asked, when

they were together, which parent did what with the children so the parents were in effect focusing on their children together. The District Judge then asked what the problems were and explained the courts were there to help. He felt that parents focusing on their children together gave them a better understanding and recognition that something was wrong and that the onus was on them to resolve matters for their children, just as they had when they were together, or face having a less palatable solution imposed on them by a Judge. DJ Heyworth believed his approach was successful and encouraged other Judges to consider it as an alternative. Various other presentations took place including a report from the LFJCs and 'A View From the Chair' by Her Honour Judge Black, newly appointed Chair of Hampshire LFJC. Beverley Sayers, Family Mediator of FJC presented a piece on setting up an Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee and Professor Nick Wilkeley explained CMEC.

Charles Kenyon, our Chair finished the presentations with 'Opening up the Family Courts', a topical talk on allowing the media access to Family Court Hearings. Some of his comments were met with a few raised eyebrows as it is clear many view media access with huge concern. In particular, Judge Mornington of Barnsley County Court felt many would be discouraged, even blackmailed, into not going to court if they felt their personal financial details would be made public knowledge, as Ancillary Relief cases would also be subject to media access. Charles did point out that many hoped by allowing media access they would be more educated in the workings of the Family Courts and in actual fact journalists would only ever be interested in human interest stories.

On the whole I felt the day provided a good opportunity to publicise FNF in Charles' presentation and to informally lobby attendees from LFJCs who do not yet have FNF members on their Councils.

Kimberley Pender
FNF Trustee

The Welfare Reform Bill Cometh

The Welfare Reform Bill is now in the House of Lords. It contains, as you may recall, highly contentious proposals to allow CMEC/CSA to take away driving licences and travel documents without having to bother with going to court. It also contains an excellent proposal to encourage many more unmarried fathers to register at their child's birth, by making it much easier for them to do so.

FNF was name checked several times, positively, by Ministers and MPs during the Bill's passage through the House of Commons. The only glitch was when a LibDem got us confused with F4J!

On the CMEC proposals, we elicited a promise from the Minister, Kitty Ussher, that junior officials would

not be making these decisions in CMEC. That's useful, but a long way short of what we really need. The fact is that CSA was always under-resourced. In these difficult times CMEC will be. So busy senior people will force what they see as simple decisions down their hierarchy, and injustices will result. It's a matter of preserving civil liberties, which so far the Government and CMEC have failed to understand.

It would be great if members and branches wrote soon to their MPs and any nearby Lords about the CMEC proposals. MPs pay a lot of attention to these letters, and it's still all to play for.

We have given the Government support in fending off attempts, in effect, to nullify the joint birth regis-

tration proposals because of supposed risks of increased child abuse and domestic violence. FNF takes these matters very seriously, but nobody has shown how the changed legal status of fathers can increase these risks in this context. And the changes that have been proposed could make it even more difficult for these fathers to register.

We're lobbying hard on all these issues as the Bill goes through the Lords. On CMEC we are once again supported by Resolution, JUMP and MATCH. We'll give you an update in the next issue.

Craig Pickering

**Your
Action
Needed!**

Me & My Dad www.meandmydad.org.uk

Families Need Fathers, as part of National Family Week, are pleased to introduce www.meandmydad.org.uk an online gallery celebrating the role fathers play in enriching their children's lives.

Dads! Do you have a favourite photo of building sandcastles on the beach with your child, or enjoying a special moment on holiday, or playing games in the park? Whatever your photo, please submit it and join in the celebration! All you have to do is submit a photo of you and your child and tell us what you are doing. We will then approve your photo and display it on this website.

If you can't submit a photo, you can always browse the photos on the website and have fun identifying FNF staff either as children or as young dads.

If you have any queries or questions about Me & My Dad please e-mail becky.sibert@fnf.org.uk.



Which FNF staff member is laughing it up here? Visit the site to find out...

Time to think again?

The argument for reconsidering Payne v Payne, Leave to Remove, and Internal Relocation Case Law

Do you remember 1970? The Beatles gave their last performance, Apollo 13 had to abort, there were protests about the Vietnam war in Washington. Adult television included the Black and White Minstrel Show, Till Death Us Do Part and the Benny Hill Show. We hadn't yet seen Bless This House, The Good Life or The Fall And Rise Of Reginald Perrin. Society has changed since Families Need Fathers came into being.

One area of family law which has not moved on from those early days concerns relocation cases. The principle that governs the court's decisions in cases where the primary carer seeks to move the children to the other end of the country or abroad remains entrenched in the guidance of Poel v Poel, a case heard 39 years ago. Consider the words of Lord Justice Thorpe in 2001, in the case Payne v Payne, which is the current, leading authority but remains largely based on the guidance found in Poel v Poel:

'The disintegration of a family unit is invariably emotionally and psychologically turbulent. The mother who emerges with the responsibility of making the home for the children may recover her sense of well-being simply by coping over a passage of time. But often the mother may be in need of external support, whether financial, emotional or social. Such support may be provided by a new partner who becomes stepfather to the child.' [Payne v Payne – para 31]

This led him to the conclusion:

'Thus in most relocation cases the most crucial assessment and finding for the judge is likely to be the effect of the refusal of the application on the mother's future psychological and emotional stability.' [Payne v Payne – para 32]

The first question to be raised is this: is the opinion of women as vulnerable creatures who need a man about the house still relevant in today's society, or reflective of 1970's opinion? I don't know any women who would be happy to still be stereotyped in this way.

The second question is: has the role and importance of fatherhood changed and become better understood, and does the court consider the role of the father as being important to child welfare? The answer, when you read the text of Payne v Payne, is 'no'. In fairness, much of the authoritative research on the importance of fathers in children's lives, which contradicts the rationale behind the current case law, was published after 2001:

• **In 2002**, the University of Oxford's Department of Social Policy and Social Work found that girls whose fathers are involved in their upbringing are less likely to have mental health problems in later life whilst good father relations can prevent boys from getting into trouble with the police. Dr Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan, co authors of the research also found that 'Good father-child relationships are associated with an absence of emotional and behavioural difficulties in adolescence and greater academic motivation too.' Their study is based on the experiences of 17,000 children, stretching back over 40 years.

• **In 2003**, in their report entitled 'The Impact of Parental Involvement in Children's Education', the Department for Education and Skills concluded that 'Father's involvement in children's education at age 7 predicts higher educational attainment by age 20, in both boys and girls' and 'the involvement of fathers exerts an influence on children's positive attitudes to school'.
• **In December 2008**, in an article entitled 'Time with dad is time well spent' in the New Scientist found

that 'At age 11, children of highly involved fathers boasted markedly higher IQs than children with less present dads.' The article was based on a study covering the results of over 40 years of research on the experiences of 10,000 children in the UK.

• **In February 2009**, Richard Layard and Judith Dunn, the authors of 'A Good Childhood' prepared for the Children's Society found that 'On average, children are less likely to become depressed or aggressive the more they themselves see their separated father. Most children hate loss of contact with their father and often experience substantial distress, anger or self-doubt as a result. So it is a real worry that in Britain around 28% of all children whose parents have separated have no contact with their fathers three years after the separation.'

A further question exists as to why the court is not making reference to the above research when conducting the balancing exercise in relocation cases?

Payne v Payne primarily considers the relationship between father and child in terms of contact. Research is conclusive that for a positive child outcome, the father needs to fulfill a role which goes beyond seeing their children on holidays, alternate weekends, or simply having contact via webcam. Midweek care is essential. The welfare arguments are now strong for a presumption of shared residence, and a refusal of relocation applications.

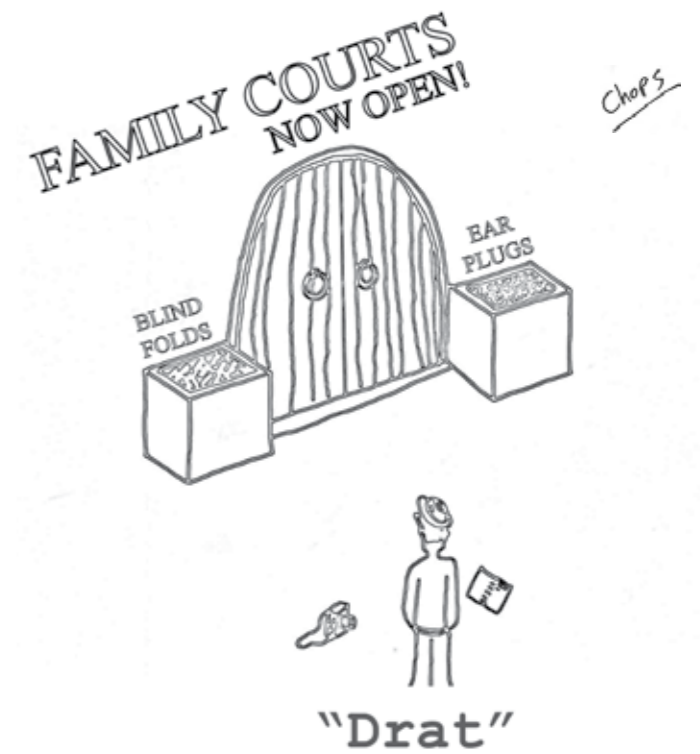
In 2005, the High Court in New Zealand dispensed with Payne v Payne as an authority on relocation cases. Their reasoning was that 'this case emphasised the weight of one factor above all others'. The New Zealand court held that Payne v Payne does involve a presumption in favour of relocation, and one based on the premise that the

impact on the mother of a refusal of her application outweighs any other factor. In practice and in its application, Payne v Payne does not uphold that child welfare must be the court's principle consideration.

The case for revisiting and overturning Payne v Payne as an authority in the UK courts was best expressed by Lord Justice Thorpe himself when he said 'Very few family law decisions that are 'principled' decisions have a shelf-life of more than one generation. Most principles in family law are actually founded upon social policies or social assumptions made by the judges. Those assumptions as to child development or child help have to be reviewed from time to time.' ['Advocacy in Family Proceedings, a Practical Guide' - Family Law, in March 2005].

We agree.

Charles Kenyon
On behalf of the Relocation Policy Advisory Group



Parenting After Parting

Nicola Gunn talks us through Resolution's new service

Each year around 240,000 children in the UK experience the divorce or separation of their parents. More than one in three children will see their parents separate before their sixteenth birthday. Most parents are ill equipped to support their children through the emotional aspects of separation or divorce. All too often, children become embroiled in parental conflict, causing them lasting emotional damage.

Resolution is a group of family lawyers committed to minimising conflict in family disputes and supportive of a constructive, child-centred approach to separation and divorce. As a member of Resolution, I firmly believe that court proceedings should be the option of last resort when dealing with family disputes, particularly those involving children. Court proceedings often encourage both parents to focus on the negative aspects of the other parent and their parenting abilities, rather than building upon the positives and nurturing the child's relationship with the other parent. Not only are such proceedings very costly, both in financial and emotional terms, but they often result in

neither parent being happy with the decision of the court imposed upon them. Furthermore, the character assassination that frequently takes place during court proceedings can breed resentment and bitterness for years to come, placing considerable strain upon the parents' ability to communicate with one another.

Research suggests that parents and children who have access to good information at an early stage are much better able to manage the changes that divorce or separation bring to a family. Parenting After Parting is a new initiative launched by Resolution, in collaboration with the renowned parenting expert, Christina McGhee. Parent information workshops are offered to separating parents by trained professionals. They involve 4-hour information sessions, delivered over one or two sessions, and provide an opportunity for parents to receive practical information on issues concerning separation. The standard fee is £80.

The topics covered in the information workshops include the emo-

tional aspects of separation or divorce for parents and children; how children may react to a divorce or separation at different ages; tips for talking to children about divorce or separation; ways to help children manage grief and loss constructively; and how to establish a parenting relationship with your former partner post separation.

Choices that parents make for their children in these difficult times will be crucial for their children's future development and how they are able to cope with the transition from being a family under one roof to being a family in two separate households. It is hoped that the workshops will assist parents in successfully managing the change so that their children can continue to thrive after the separation. To find out about workshops near you, visit www.resolution.org.uk/parentingafterparting.

Nicola Gunn
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Self-help

The messages reproduced below (which may have been edited for content and privacy) are from the FNF Online Forum, which generates several hundred messages per week. If you're an FNF member, you can get involved too - as well as self-help there's also a wide range of general chat and news discussion. Find out everything you need to know (including getting started FAQ) at:

www.fnf.org.uk/help-and-support/fnf-online-forum

The challenge of discipline

After a series of incidents I'm concerned about how my son is coping. He seems angry and anxious. He stayed overnight last night but didn't seem settled and said he wanted to go back to his mam's. I distracted him sufficiently to forget it but he's never said that before. I think he has begun to see me as a weak parent. After the split we had a year of wonderful times and now I feel I'm losing him and he's losing something of himself.

Ideally I would like someone to work with me and his mum so we can help him through this but she would need to be compelled or encouraged strongly. Is there a support system for parents in this situation? Will CAFCASS fulfil this role? Do mediators advise as well as mediate?

Duncan

In my experience, apart from sites like this, you're on your own. I just explained to my kids that, at daddy's house we have daddy's rules and at mummy's she has hers. I then set about making sure they had so much fun that they were too busy to think about the politics! Although that cannot continue, as you would only be a 'circus dad', it does work short term, to help re-establish bonds. Try not to agonise over 'what all this is doing to him'. Try to concentrate on what you can do.

Steve

Try surrounding your child with lots of extended family and friends of his own age and try to be the parent you'd be if you'd remained together as a family. Children will always play one parent off against the other, and one's ex isn't always to blame. I recently did some tutoring for a child in this situation. His

father's puppy-like attitude with his son meant the son was running rings around him. Dad was so keen to please that the son was losing respect, and told me so. Finally, I do believe in counselling when the child shows they are really not coping.

James

Children make the most of it when a parent shows a weak spot. Don't be anxious when your child makes hurtful comments. Try always to have the same rules and limits. That will give him security. Try to just enjoy your time with him, being the best parent you can. Don't let him see you're worried, but let him share his worries with you if he wants to.

Paula

Thanks again for the advice... it worked! The judge at the directional hearing told my ex that my son needed to have contact with his dad immediately and that this should be similar to how it was before. He said my son should not be burdened with the responsibility of picking which parent he stayed with. My ex's solicitor stated my son had been reluctant to stay with me and the judge said that given the choice he would probably also be reluctant to go to school but his mother surely still made him go.

Two days later I had an overnight stay and my son said he didn't want to stay the night. We played a game of football and he was being quite stropky but I decided to be firmer. It was like flicking a switch and he was back to himself. He's now asking to stay with me more. I think he was pushing the boundaries and discipline was what he wanted so he could feel secure again. Well done this forum!

Duncan



Leave to apply

My case has been ongoing for nine years. The present order was set three years ago for six years. I see my daughter three times a year, with letters every month. There's a 91/14 in place preventing further applications for the duration of the order. I'm not allowed direct contact with the mother, to go within three miles of my daughter's home, nor to contact any school she attends.

At the time the order was made, my mother, now 84, had an application to be made party to the case. The judge thought it unhelpful so she withdrew it. Now my mother only sees my daughter with me. My mother has now developed cancer. She says before her time comes she would like to contact my daughter's mother to ask for more information about her granddaughter. Most of all she would like to see her granddaughter in a school play or production. She wants me to accompany her. She feels that as my daughter only sees us together she would get upset if she went alone or with someone else. As my mother's request would require me to apply for leave to vary the order, what's my position?

Do I get someone to write to the mother? Or apply to the court for leave to send my mother's wishes to my daughter's mother - then if any offers are made apply again to vary the order so I can accompany my mother? Or write to the judge, who has reserved the case to himself, for guidance on best way forward?

Antonio

Mum's attitude is key to whether you or someone else writes, or if it is referred

to the courts. Writing directly to judges is frowned upon. If Mum has hate in her heart you may get nowhere. If there is some compassion then you need to tweak her conscience. The court may only make her dig her heels in. Is there someone on her side of the family you could write to and explain the situation? Perhaps a mutual friend could write to someone on her side?

Reggie

Emphasise that it's your daughter who will lose out if she misses seeing her grandmother, rather than the other way round.

Sean

Mediation

Two weeks ago my wife told me she no longer wants to be with me. We have two girls of six and eight, a house with 100k equity, and we both work. She has told me she cannot buy me out and won't sell. She wants to go to mediation. I know the kids should stay in the family home but I also need

somewhere permanent, where the kids will want to spend time with their dad.

I spoke to a solicitor and they told me to try and talk her round. If I have to start from scratch I probably won't be able to afford to live locally to my kids, which may affect contact. Can anyone tell me what to expect in mediation?

Alexander

A tough time! I got "what do you want to do, see your kids or divide your house?" I took the 'see the kids' route and started again. I used Youth Hostels for regular contact, as at the time my flat was too small.

Sanjay

You will not get "shafted" through mediation. If mediation fails then there's a strong chance it will eventually go to court, where your chances of getting "shafted" are significantly greater. So it's in your interest to succeed in mediation. It's definitely in the interests of your children to resolve this in a non-

adversarial way.
Nav

Decide which battles you want to fight and what you want, always based on what is best for your children (in your own judgement). I think you are unclear about this at present so take your time to consider things carefully. Oh - and don't move out.

Germaine

Keep a diary. All dates and events concerning the break-up - any threats, brash statements or actions should be logged. When your wife gets a solicitor she'll be advised what she can get. The idea is to provide a stable environment for the kids first. You get your share from what's left.

Ryan

CSA for two kids is 20% of net income per month - keep that in mind when you talk money. Don't move out and don't respond to any provocative behaviour. Get in touch with your local FNF branch - they will help.

Al

Diary of a Helpline Volunteer

The Helpline is a vibrant and continually changing entity. Having been a part of the team for six months now I can safely say that no two evenings are the same.

I mean, how many different ways can there be to make contact between a parent and child difficult? The callers ring with despair and a lack of hope and, for the main part, tend to end the call feeling a little less alone and often with a clear strategy on how to go ahead.

Some calls are more difficult than others - the situation more complex to grasp. I had one call recently which took up most of my evening and perhaps illustrates the best of FNF working together. A man called at 7.30pm. He was in some serious distress and despair, being at his wits end. Suicidal, perhaps?

He was sleeping rough in a lock-up shop, having been on the receiving end of an occupation order, and the

partner had filled his children's heads with the usual hatred and bile. He had no money, was unable to get legal aid and let slip that he had been staring at bottles of pills and alcohol for the last two hours.

I felt seriously concerned at the way the conversation was going. He had no hope left. Out of my depth, I began to pick my way through the details of his story, listening when necessary but trying to reinforce that he wasn't on his own. FNF could and would help.

At the end of the call (some two hours later) we'd agreed a very short-term target and the local branch called him shortly afterwards to ensure he was okay. They became deeply involved for a few days to help him over the 'hump' and he went to court at least believing that he could achieve a result for himself and his children; a good example of how all the elements of FNF combine to help people. I actually called the helpline myself at the end

of the call for support.

Calls come from far and wide. I had a couple of callers from the US with British partners and very small children. Both were hopping the Atlantic from New York to spend time with their children. In both cases, hostility was making contact difficult. When faced with the UK family law system, they couldn't believe what passed for best practice here. One described the system as a relic of the dark ages and utterly barbaric. Both came from a place where parents were seen as equal and a position of shared residence was the default.

The need for FNF is clear - we need to continue the fight for change but not forget about the impact we can make on the more personal level. As always, we need more volunteers to expand the service we can offer. Please consider offering one night on the helpline. Contact Alex Borchardt for more details
alex.borchardt@fnf.org.uk
0207 6135060

THANK YOU TO... Sir William Arbuthnot, who has stepped down as a helpline volunteer and forum moderator after many years service. His consistent wisdom and support will be missed throughout the charity.

Cafcass, the law and our families

Alan Critchley is just doing his job. He quoted the legislation that defines his job. It is law. I had also thought it law - and a very fair one at that - that we are all innocent until proven guilty. However, by investigating all "accusations", no matter how "implausible, improbable or unlikely", without proof, Cafcass are accepting the presumption of guilt and attempting to prove innocence (I sincerely hope). Founded or unfounded, I'm sure that many of us have experienced issues around the way that Cafcass have weighted the information in their reports. Perhaps Mr Critchley can clarify exactly where Cafcass legally ends and the courtroom legally begins?

I should also like to ask Alan Critchley whether the legislation, "given cause to suspect that the child is at risk of harm," refers to physical or emotional harm, or indeed both. Quite rightly, "our starting position is always that it's best for a child to have a good and loving relationship with both parents." Therefore it must follow that where physical harm is not an issue, whichever parent seeks to remove the child from the other is attempting to cause that child emotional harm and should therefore be safeguarded against.

Clearly we are talking about legislation, not logic and common sense. However, we all sympathise that Cafcass have an impossible job to do and we can only be hopeful and optimistic that the process causes the children the least amount of emotional harm possible.

So, Mr Critchley, please understand that despite all of our personal experiences, we all really do wish to work with you on this although it really does seem that no matter

what shiny legislation is brought in to help you and Cafcass as a whole, there are some things in life that you really can't polish.

Simon Ramet

Go - LIP workshops!

Can I just say that if anyone is thinking about attending one of the LIP workshops but isn't sure about whether to go or not... Go!

It's well worth it. I attended the one in Northampton last Saturday. I would recommend this to anyone. My only complaint is that at £10 for the day it is too cheap. It was worth ten times that.

Thank you to Ruth for running it and everyone else that has had a part in making it happen.

Jamie

New name, same staff

I refer to the McKenzie Christmas Issue 82 Magazine, (page 15), bottom right paragraph with the heading: "Why should parents who feel hard done by the CSA have more faith in CMEC?" and comments made thereafter, promising change by Janet Paraskeva.

I feel it is a great article with a few good hard hitting points, informative and somewhat encouraging in context, however I have my reservations for the following reasons and just wanted to voice my own personal opinion as a father hard done by the very same system.

How is the new system supposed to work properly when the staff responsible for past failures of the old system are kept on as the very same staff for the 'newest' system to continue in their failings?

Wouldn't it be better, more productive and reassuring for everyone by simply ridding the system of those whom have caused it to fail so terribly and recruit new members, fresh thinking, qualified and enthusiastic staff whom have the ability to make a real change for the better?

I would be most grateful if Janet Paraskeva could take a moment of her time to respond to my letter as I believe the new system can work, but only if given the opportunity for change to take place from the very start. **New System = New Staff.** In my opinion it's a simple as that.

Marcus Suitor

The kids are alright

The news is often gloomy and negative. According to many reports and studies, life for children is full of abuse, neglect and the foundations of lifelong victimhood. Children are blamed by unthinking adults for graffiti, vandalism and street crime. They are also victims of crime. he gloomy predictions say that children who have a bad start in life often end up in the kind of households portrayed in the TV series 'Shameless', living on welfare and/or crime, never working, forever dependent on handouts or drugs.

We need to recognise that there are good things about being a child. There are sunny days and at times when it snows we get a day off school, sledding in the park. We should accentuate the positive and keep our eyes on the prize. If our goal is a fair, free society where children feel safe and grow up to be balanced and healthy adults, we need to build gradually towards it.

Sam Wise

A Family's Heartbreak: a Parent's Introduction to Parental Alienation

Michael Jeffries with Dr Joel Davies
A Family's Heartbreak, LLC;
March 2009
ISBN 978-0-9796960-1-5
\$19.95 (approx £13.25)

Michael Jeffries, a journalist, tells his story of the breakdown of his marriage and how the younger of his sons was completely alienated against him by his ex-wife. His story is interspersed with conversations with his psychologist, thus giving some insight into the dynamics of the situation. Although written in an American context there is much common ground with the UK – court orders disregarded or not worth the paper on which they were written and the lack of recognition or response by courts to parental alienation (PA). The story is not pleasant and includes graphic accounts of how a previously well behaved 11 year old boy, who once had an excellent relationship with his father, began to inflict multiple verbal and physical assaults on that same devoted father. The account does not (yet) have a happy ending but it does open up the horrors of PA. Interestingly, it also shows how the older son managed, with great dignity, to maintain a relationship with both parents.

Many will recognise elements of PA in their own journey through a breakdown and will find some understanding and comfort in it. If, in addition, the book is widely read by those involved in PA cases – regarding medical, social and legal practitioners it may help to put an end to a practice which is as evil as that of a previous generation which used small boys to sweep chimneys.
Keith Fern

I Don't Want to Choose; How Middle School Kids can avoid choosing one parent over the other

Andre. K and Baker, A J L

Kindred Spirits; 2009
ISBN 978-0-578-00394-9
\$9.95 (approx £6.65)

This book meets a need; texts for children affected by 'parental alienation'. Middle school in America is roughly the younger end of secondary school here. It is for them to read and work out their own best response. It is a 56 page pamphlet, simply produced and probably easily revised. The test of course is whether it helps, and the experts on that will be the children. I hope that our people whose children might benefit will try it, and feed back to the authors. They are committed to helping and will surely take the comments into account.

It is well organised, centring on a list of situations that such children might find themselves in, and how they could respond. The seventeen situations are things like 'one parent looks sad, angry or hurt when you leave to be with the other parent' and cover many of the predicaments children find themselves in. The responses are well organised, well presented, revolving around these headings: 'think for yourself', 'consider your options', 'listen to your heart' and 'use your coping skills'.

While the authors are powerfully committed to telling the world about parental alienation there are tensions between that objective, and the delicate task of helping children manage conflict between their parents. The author's passion for the first objective has not, in my view, enabled them to be single minded enough about the second. One tiny illustrative detail; there is a page which says 'this book belongs to...' and while a child 'in the middle' should find this book useful, they are very likely to need to deny that they have consulted it.

I would love to be more enthusiastic but I suspect that a pamphlet that omits what adults should know and concentrates wholly on how children could cope would go down better. However, this is the first edition. Please, please the authors hurry out with a revision building on the very good aspects addressed so far.
John Baker

A Practical Guide to Family Proceedings (4th Edition)
Robert Blomfield and Helen Brooks
Family Law (Jordan Publishing);
March 2009
ISBN-13: 978-1846611292; £47.50

This book offers step-by-step guidance on the effective conduct of all the most common types of family law application – including contact enforcement procedure. And it does indeed deliver. Therefore it is a useful reference book held by FNF branches and groups – one to complement, certainly not supplant, the essential Jordan publication by HHJ Mitchell, Children Act Private Law Proceedings: A Handbook (though the latest edition was published before the new contact enforcement provisions came into force). Despite this volume stretching to 570 pages, due to such a wide area being covered, there is possibly not sufficient detail, particularly in the key areas that are central to our members' needs. Only around a quarter of the book could be properly described as relating to children (as against 'family') proceedings. In its limited two-page section on residence orders it manages to confuse 'joint residence' and 'shared residence', a distinction that was originally made in the Court of Appeal back in 2003 and most recently again by Wilson LJ in April last year.

Conversely, the range it covers provides its strength. Those of us involved in delivering help at meetings may gain little experience of helping with financial provisions for children under Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989, DNA tests, property issues between unmarried partners and other peripheral matters – or, in the Central London meeting at least, even familiarity with divorce procedure. Though in FNF we may focus almost exclusively on children matters the parents who come to us for help often have to deal with connected issues – such as allegations of domestic violence and the associated FLA1996 injunctions. Being able to dip into this book, with its references clearly annotated can be very helpful. It's a book for the experienced, dutiful helper, not really for the 'client'.
Steve Henson

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For professional support and expertise in Career Management contact Paul Weaser FCIPD 07762 629850 paulweaser@versheena.co.uk
(Paul, an FNF member, has 25 years HR experience in the private and public sectors and will donate some of his fees to FNF)

Victoria Chart Company



Are you a parent feeling like you need to bring stability, routine and positivity to family life? If so, then take a look at the **Encourage & Praise** range of reward charts. They provide a great focal point for parents and children to work from, they encourage togetherness and help maintain routine during busy lives. Using these charts also creates a positive mindset for children, knowing they have achieved their goal. Praising and recognising children's achievements is very motivating and usually results in the child being keen to repeat it and the parent feeling positive about their child's development.

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can tailor them to their child's individual needs allowing them to get the results they need. You may be particularly interested in the My Time chart created for children whose parents are going through the separation/divorce process.

To view the Encourage & Praise range of reward charts please visit www.EncourageAndPraise.com.

If you make a purchase please enter the initials 'FNF' in the message box upon leaving the checkout and a donation from each chart purchased will be given towards Families Need Fathers fundraising efforts.



Grandparents Action Group

working to maintain and protect relationships between grandparents and grandchildren.
Pam Wilson, Chair: 01952 582 621
GAGJASPER@aol.com

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McKenzie

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35th anniversary edition

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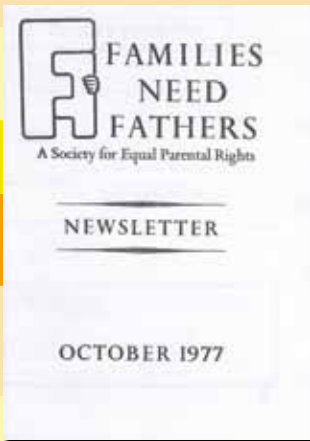
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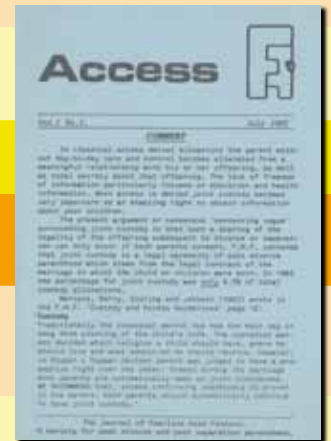
McKenzie through the ages



FNF Newsletter, 1977



FNF Newsletter, 1984



Access Issue 1, 1985



Access, 1990



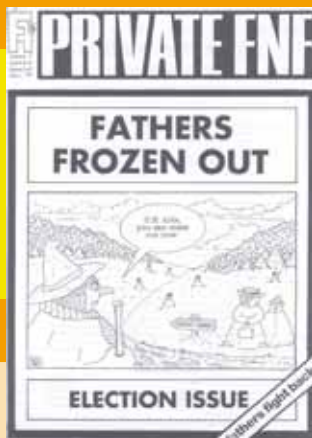
Access, 1991



McKenzie (then only distributed around London), 1992



Access, 1993



A series of unique spoof newsletters were published throughout 1997



First nationwide McKenzie, 1997



McKenzie, 1999



McKenzie, 2004



McKenzie, 2008