



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Child Abduction Section

February 2011

Who we are



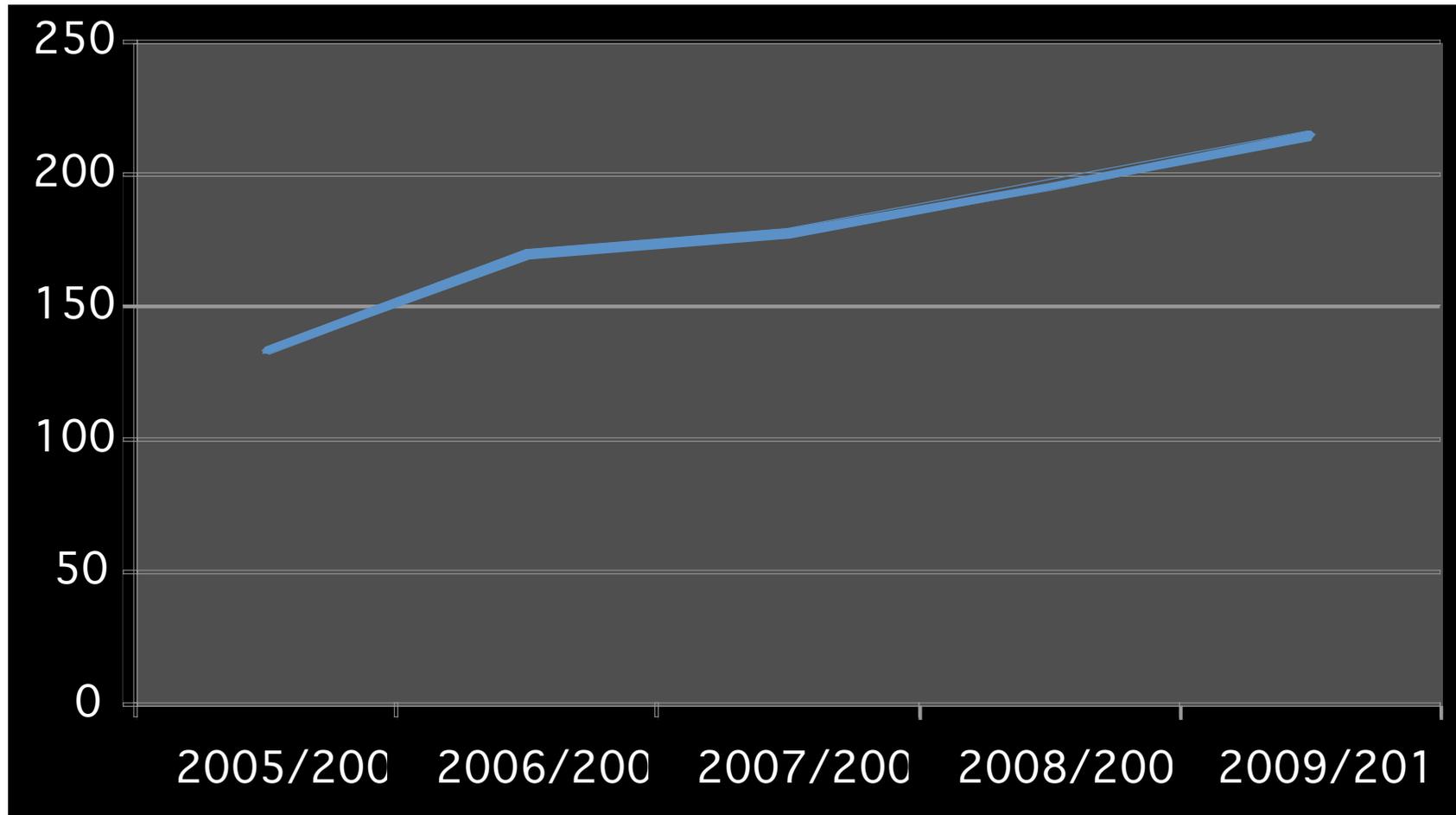
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- Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) leads on abductions to countries which have not signed the 1980 Hague Convention on Child Abduction
- We established a dedicated Child Abduction Section in 2003 to assist British Nationals affected by actual or potential international child abduction
- Head of Section, Office Manager and 3 Caseworkers
- Public advice line open during office hours – 0207 008 0878
- Global Response Centre open out of hours – 0207 008 1500
- Between 2009 -10 we dealt with 213 new child abduction cases
- 39% increase in the number of new cases to non-Hague countries last year, - Pakistan, India, Thailand and Nigeria increased the most

New child abduction cases dealt with by FCO



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What we do



As well as casework the FCO also:

- Lobbies foreign governments to sign the Hague Convention
- Decides whether to enter into treaty relations with countries that have signed the Convention
- Develops bilateral agreements, e.g. with Pakistan and Egypt, aimed at improving international procedures for the return of children
- Supports NGO-run projects on child abduction in the UK and abroad
- Works closely with Ministry of Justice and other government departments to agree UK policy on international child abduction
- Raises awareness of the problem of international child abduction

Abductions to non-Hague countries

- Prevention is better than cure. Cases of abduction to non-Hague countries are much harder to resolve and the chances of a parent securing the return of their child are often very limited.
- Parents must start legal proceedings in local courts overseas, which can drag on for years and prove very expensive.
- Parents normally have to meet their own legal costs.
- Location of a child can be more difficult than in the UK.
- Many cases will be in countries who apply Shari'a law in custody disputes and may give a non-Muslim mother fewer rights to custody or access.

FCO advice to parents



Criminal route:

- Can result in arrest of abducting parent only (i.e. not return of child)
- Parents should report abduction as a criminal offence to UK police
- Police can pursue criminal proceedings and location of the child via Interpol

Civil route:

- Serves to return child
- Parents should take legal advice
- Requires court orders such as wardship or return orders (in the UK) and custody orders and leave to remove (overseas)

Other routes:

- Mediation between parents - re-unite and CFAB (www.cfab.uk.net) may be able to offer mediation services

What the FCO can do (in the UK)



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- Give prevention advice to parents
- Record details of the case and share with FCO colleagues overseas
- Liaise with police, social services, lawyers and other government departments as appropriate
- Provide information on NGOs and other organisations that can help

What the FCO can do (overseas)

- Provide a list of local English-speaking lawyers and information about translation services
- Try to conduct a consular visit on the child if the other parent agrees
- Check with immigration authorities overseas to see if child entered or left country
- Contact local authorities to find out what progress has been made in trying to locate a child
- Contact courts overseas to ask about progress on a case
- Attend court hearings in exceptional circumstances
- Notify the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the relevant country of the case if the left-behind parent has a UK court order in their favour
- Make representations to foreign governments where local court orders are not being enforced
- Issue passports and emergency travel documents
- Offer travel information and help with finding accommodation locally

What the FCO can't do

- Rescue a child or get involved in any illegal attempts to bring the child back to the UK
- Give legal advice or interfere in the legal system of another country
- Provide financial assistance, e.g. for legal, translation or travel costs
- Locate a child if their whereabouts are unknown
- Translate documents
- Take legal responsibility for a child
- Offer FCO premises as a venue for the left-behind parent to meet the child
- Take sides between parents in a civil case



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Contact details

- Advice line: 0207 008 0878
- Global Response Centre (out of hours): 0207 008 1500
- E-mail: childabduction@fco.gov.uk



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Questions please!