

The Parenting Apart Programme



Training Proposal

Draft Discussion Proposal
CONFIDENTIAL
Parenting Apart Ltd

The Issue

“ I have seen the Parenting Apart Programme transform families and parents in ways no other course, training, mediation or method can. ”

Kristina Brown,
Family Barrister, No 5 Chambers, Birmingham

Each year circa 100,000 children under 16 have parents who divorce. Figures are not available for parents who separate but are not married. Circa 11% of children living with both parents experience potentially damaging levels of parental conflict and circa 50% of children whose parents separate, don't have regular contact with the non-residential parent. There is extensive evidence of the impact of parental conflict on children:

Children's life chances are strongly influenced by their parents' relationship, whether they are together or separated. Exposure to parental conflict can have long-term negative impacts on children's early emotional, behavioural, cognitive and social development. New academic evidence shows that frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict causes stress and depression for the whole family, including children, undermining their education and employment prospects (Harold et al, 2016)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traditionally understood as a set of 10 traumatic events or circumstances occurring before the age of 18 that have been shown through research to increase the risk of adult mental health problems and debilitating diseases. Parental separation or divorce has been identified as one the 10 factors that contribute to toxic stress (EIF, 2020).

Persistent and unresolved parental conflict is likely to drain the emotional resources required to parent adequately, putting children at greater risk of emotional and social problems (Mooney et al, 2009).

Parental conflict destabilises relationships and damages children's upbringing, potentially harming their opportunities well into the future: 66% of children whose parents divorced said this affected their GCSEs, 12.5% turned to drugs or alcohol, 25% struggled with homework and 12% skipped lessons (Family Matters Evaluation Report, 2016)

Relationship distress is almost three times as prevalent in workless couple-parent families compared to when both parents are working (DWP, 2017; EIF, 2020).



The support currently available

There is limited support available for parents who are in conflict. Many of the families in Private Law proceedings do not meet the eligibility criteria for funded support. Cafcass data shows that one third of separating families are using the courts to resolve disputes rather than the one in ten. In a recent small-scale assessment of Cafcass case files in private law cases, it was estimated that around one quarter of cases contained no serious safeguarding concerns (Nuffield Foundation, 2019). Instead, the lack of early intervention creates a platform that warrants dispute resolution through the courts, especially when the early stages of our private law processes are the most resource intensive.

Studies report that conflict can range across a continuum of severity, from constructive to destructive conflict, to domestic violence and abuse in its most extreme form (EIF, 2019). Destructive conflict behaviours which put children's mental health and long-term life chances at risk include aggression, non-verbal conflict or 'the silent treatment'. By contrast, constructive conflict – where there continues to be respect and emotional control, and conflict is resolved or explained – is linked to lower risks of child distress. This suggests conflict resolution skills are an important focus for intervention to improve child outcomes.

The timescales to access available support can be lengthy, resulting in conflict increasing and becoming entrenched. Alongside this pressure and financial burden, families can fall into poverty, especially single parents. Many parents are reluctant to engage with services due to factors that include, for example, fear of being judged an unfit parent, and therefore do not voluntarily access services that might be able to support them in resolving conflict.

Research on intervention that support families in conflict indicate that out of 33 interventions offered, only 3 offered specialist support which involved individual and joint work within the family, such as Multi-systemic therapy or family therapy (EIF, 2020). All the other interventions were group or individual based programmes.

Anyone wanting to make a court application involving family proceedings, (with some exceptions), must attend a MIAM with a mediator prior to an application being made to the court.

- If ineligible for legal aid, then the service costs circa £120 which may be financially challenging for some
- These sessions last around 45 minutes which may not be enough time to make a full assessment of the type of support required for parents in conflict.
- Sessions can be offered online as well as face-to-face. Whilst this can be convenient for both the mediator and parent, it is more difficult to establish a trusted relationship to uncover conflict issues and causes in such a short time online.
- After the MIAM meeting mediation may be arranged or, if this is not a suitable option, the client is provided with a signed, certified form for court enabling them to issue proceedings

Parents who are in dispute over their children may be eligible for a funded Separated Parents Information Programme, typically accessed through a court referral

- This is a 4-hour generic session delivered to a mixed group of parents
- Couples attend separately and therefore conflict issues cannot be resolved through this route

Parents may be eligible for funded in-court conciliation or Cafcass support

Parents may choose to self-fund and access relationship counselling and therapy

New parents may access funded and self-funded parent education programmes

How the Parenting Apart Programme addresses this gap

“ This programme has helped me to work out differences and compromises for the well-being of my son. It's also taught me how to engage with my ex and communicate in a good manner as a baby can pick up on behaviours... I would recommend it to anyone in the situation I have been in as I now to get to spend quality time with my son which is important for his upbringing. ”

Father

Our core programme

We support the Government's aim for every child to have the best possible start in life.

Our Managing Director, Claire Field is an expert social care consultant, whose previous roles include Managing Director of Contact Care UK Ltd. Claire has extensive experience of delivering the Separated Parents Information Programme. Claire recognised the programme's limitations, and from her extensive experience, identified how to address the gaps to significantly improve outcomes. The result is the Parenting Apart Programme, an early intervention that prevents long-term negative impacts for children's emotional health and wellbeing when their parents separate or divorce. The programme is unique in the UK.

We improve the mental health, emotional and physical wellbeing of children whose parents are divorcing or separating. We do this by supporting parents going through divorce, separation and conflict to prioritise the mental health, emotional and physical wellbeing of their children. The voice of the child is at the heart of everything we do.

We achieve this through a core structured 4 week programme which enables parents to explore their family challenges, initially individually, (1 session each), and subsequently jointly, (3 sessions), learning how to communicate as parents, to form a respectful parent working relationship, that results in a Parent Working Agreement which both parents agree to abide by. This can be filed alongside any court order if relevant. The Agreement details how the parents will work together to support the child's wishes, emotional and physical wellbeing covering practical issues including covering practical issues including childcare arrangements, transitions of care between homes, holidays and schooling. Parents retain joint responsibility for decision making related to their children's futures, as opposed to court directed, third party decision making.

Families can access the programme immediately at an accessible cost. This saves family time and the cost of a lengthy court process and facilitates children maintaining relationships with non-resident parent. We overcome practical barriers to accessing and completing the programme through, for example, accessible cost and sessions available outside working hours, including at weekends, to facilitate childcare and avoid loss of working hours.

The programme can be accessed before, during and after court proceedings. Parents who complete the programme can self-certify to courts that they have completed Alternative Dispute Resolution. Our accredited practitioners can provide reports requested by the Court, for example, parent attendance and work undertaken.

Where parents qualify for referral to the Separated Parents Information Programme, the Parenting Apart Programme can be used as an alternative resource, or if appropriate, offered after SPIP attendance where resolution has not been achieved. The Parenting Apart Programme is predominantly designed to save families time and cost within the court proceeding.



Parenting Apart Programme Evidenced Impact

Like many social enterprises we evidenced the outcomes from our programme for 5 years in the private sector, (parents pay to attend, either self-referring or being referred by their solicitor), before setting up a CIC in 2018.

A professionally prepared Social Return on Investment report that analysed the results of the Parenting Apart Programme from 2017-19, evidences that we have delivered over £10.2m of social value. In the year in which the parents attend the programme the social value delivered is over £4.65 million. This works out at £31,649 of social value per couple that separates or divorces. For every £1 spent delivering the programme a SROI of £46.52 was generated. These benefits arise from the voice of the child being heard throughout, as parents place them at the heart of all decisions and take greater responsibility for making these decisions together.

This leads to evidenced benefits:



Improved communication skills for parents



Reduced stress and anxiety; relief from anxiety and depression; improved mental health and emotional wellbeing; and reduced isolation for both parents and children



Financial and time savings to parents of avoiding full court process, with associated stress-reduction



Reduced length of time that a non-resident parent has no relationship with their child, which in a Court process is typically up to 18 months



Savings for the public purse through court cost savings; mental health services cost savings for children and parents; education sector savings through improved child behaviour; criminal justice savings from reduced involvement in crime and offending; and Social Services savings from not entering the Care System

During this time period, 294 parents accessed the programme, 85% completed it. Of those who completed, 100% reported reduced stress and anxiety; 100% improved communication; and 45% improved mental wellbeing.

The Parenting Part Apart Training

The Parenting Apart Programme pedagogy and practitioner training has been developed with a people, programme and process core, interwoven with an ethically principled and compassionate design. The design is both programme and process based with a clear focus on relationships and systemic family support through positive change.

It recognises that change can occur through the formation of a trusted and healthy working relationship with a highly skilled, empathetic and child-focused/trauma informed Parenting Apart Practitioner. The evidence base behind the programme includes Influences by neuroscience and evidence-informed principles of child development.

The Parenting Apart Programme has been designed with a relational and attachment sensitive approach to parental engagement, centered on the development, formulation, agreement and implementation of a Parent Working Agreement.

The unique structure of the programme has been created to centrally focus the minds of parents on the psychological needs of their children. It achieves this through a strengths-based, attachment-focused commitment to the prioritisation of the mental health and emotional well-being of children impacted by parental separation and divorce.



Components/elements of Training Programme has been developed and include:

1. Reflect safeguarding principles and standards.
2. Emotional health and mental health of the child alongside psychological elements.
3. The impact to child of the lack of/no relationship with one parent
4. Improving communication/reducing conflict
5. To help parents to develop and secure the best outcomes for their children
6. To help parents to develop a co-parenting relationship to meet the everyday needs for their children

The Parenting Apart Training Programme has successfully been awarded The One Awards accreditation from NOCN in recognition of our high quality programme content, integrity and efficacy.

External recognition, through a national awarding body provides Parenting Apart Trainee Practitioners with formal and external recognition of their competency-based achievement, through formally recognised approval through One Awards, part of the NOCN Group.

The One Awards accreditation from NOCN offers specifically designed and robust recognition of our training which has been designed to meet the needs of a wide range of professionals, employers and training organisations, who are increasingly demanding high quality, nationally recognised and competency-based training for their staff members. The Parenting Apart Training Programme, delivered through the One Awards accreditation from NOCN provides confidence and security to trainees, whilst offering assurances that the content of the programme has met the highest standards of external rigour and scrutiny.

We are delighted to have been awarded the CANparent Quality Mark for the Parenting Apart Programme. The CANparent Quality Mark set out what organisations needed to have in place in order to prove that they are delivering quality approved classes based on sound evidence, with strong governance practices, financial and risk management procedures. Coupled with robust systems for training, supervision and measuring and evaluating outcomes. We had to demonstrate how our work made a positive difference, having an evidence based approach to delivery, effective governance and engagement with parents.



The CANparent Quality Mark is awarded to organisations running universal parenting programmes. Choosing a parenting programme with the CANparent Quality Mark is assurance that the class:

- Is relied on by parents to make a positive difference, it is evidence informed, monitored and evaluated to improve parent / child relationships;
- Is recommended by other parents;
- Is responsive, warm and relational, engaging with parents and builds on these effective relationships to meet their needs;
- And that you can rely on the integrity of the class provider, its professional conduct, competence, financial and governance systems, and data protection/confidentiality, to ensure suitability to deliver a class.



The Parenting Apart Training Programme has been developed in response to the high number of requests that we continuously receive for practitioner training. The training content has been carefully and meticulously designed to be accessed by practising mediators, professionals involved with any form of mediation or dispute resolution, Children's Health, Social Care, Education, Family Courts, Training Providers, Family Mediation Services, Providers of Alternative Dispute Resolution, Colleges, Universities, Safeguarding and Child Protection Practitioners.

Training will be delivered through a mixed-method approach, which assesses the competency, understanding and knowledge of the participants, whilst providing robust evidence for competency-based recognition and endorsement of the Parenting Apart Training Programme.

All training modules have been carefully designed and externally endorsed to deliver the theoretical principles of the programme, whilst imparting the competency and knowledge-based requirement for verification and final practitioner licensing and endorsement.

A robust competency matrix, tracks, measures and assesses Trainee Practitioners through measuring their interpersonal skill and ability to translate theory to practice, through our carefully developed and standardised programme approach. Assessment and evidence for successful training completion will include a variety of activities designed to engage, challenge, enthuse and motivate trainees. Evidence of learning will be captured using case studies, practical demonstration, reflective logs or journals, report compilation, role play and simulation, written methods of evidence gathering, oral questions and answers and distance learning methods where required.



Practitioners trained to facilitate The Parenting Apart Programme will be assessed and supported to achieve Parenting Apart Licensed Practitioner Status through this competency-assessed training programme. *This is a mandatory requirement of the training.

The Parenting Apart Programme can be offered as an Alternative Form of Dispute Resolution to parents going through conflict, divorce or separation prior to or alongside Mediation. It is important that parents are given the options and choices that are most suitable to them.

The C100 can be self-certified by parents providing they have participated in an Alternative Form of Dispute Resolution. The Parenting Apart Programme is a highly recognised and reputable programme offering an evidence informed alternative to Mediation.

As a learning organisation, we care passionately about support for families and children going through the pain of conflict, divorce or separation, and we are now delighted to be able to offer a comprehensive and endorsed training programme, based-upon our evidence-based modules of delivery.

This formal recognition has been achieved through a collaborative and partnership approach with; Shropshire Academy and Learning Trust, a highly specialised provider of education, health and social care training programmes.

Additional programme options

Overcoming common challenges after an agreement has been made

In addition to the core programme, our Parenting Apart Programme Practitioners are trained to support parents to practically overcome common challenges that arise after an agreement has been made. For example, they can attend and support the initial transitions of care with both parents, role-modelling appropriate behaviour and language, involving children whenever appropriate.

Domestic abuse

Where it is identified that one parent has made an allegation of domestic abuse against the other, supported by clear evidence, for example either a police investigation took place or an injunction was issued, then we can deliver the Parenting Apart Programme provided both perpetrator and victim have engaged in a Domestic Violence services and provide evidence that it is safe for both parties to work together.

Where this safety evidence cannot be provided then the practitioner is able to

Work with parents individually to agree a safe arrangement for their children

Where agreement cannot be reached, both parents' proposals can be provided to the court with the rationale behind these

Where one parent fails to engage, we can work with the willing parent to propose a way forward for the court to consider

Include other family members in the sessions who have been identified as protective carers



Group working

Our evidenced experience is that our programme is most effective when working with one couple. However, we recognise that it may be appropriate to provide a cost-effective small group alternative, especially for parents who are entrenched in conflict and struggle to prioritise the needs of their children.

Court reports

The Parent Working Agreement developed can be filed with the with the Court if required.

Our accredited practitioners can provide reports requested by the Court, for example, parent attendance and work undertaken. If they are required to act as an Expert Witness then whilst we can accommodate this in the future, additional training will be needed.

Module Title	Parenting Apart Practitioner Training Programme ©
Organisation Reference	Company Number: 08586917 One Awards/Programme and Centre Number: NO61141
Level Benchmark Equivalence	Level 3 – Parenting Apart Practitioner Training©
Total Qualification Hours	80 hours @ 8 hours per day (10 days)
Total Guided Learning Hours Maximum Group Size	40 hours (3/5 days classroom-based) 14 (2 x trainers)
Awarding Body Endorsed Quality Mark	One Awards, part of the NOCN Group
Review Date	To be confirmed
Sector Subject Areas	Children’s Health, Social Care, Education, Family Courts, Training Providers, Family Mediation Services, Providers of Alternative Dispute Resolution, Colleges, Universities, Safeguarding and Child Protection
Quality Assurance and One Awards Approved Assessment Framework	Formative Assessment (prior knowledge, practice and understanding), Portfolio of Evidence, Reflective Log, Supervision Log and Summative Assignment
Pre Requisite Course Requirements	Safeguarding and Child Protection Level 2 (Minimum) 2 Years Practice-Based Fieldwork and Experience Enhanced DBS (Update Service or Evidenced) 2 Professional References Practitioner Disclaimer
Total Cost : On Application Inclusive of:	TBC 10 Days Practitioner Training Formative Assessment Competency-Based Assessment Awarding Body Registration and Certification Practitioner Licensing (Legally Binding) Programme Handbook and Associated Training Materials

The Parenting Apart Programme

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