

Parenting Apart

Parenting Apart – parent education / information sessions

*Improving outcomes for children and families
experiencing separation and divorce and parenting when living apart*

Brief intervention – 3 to 4 hours

Aims:

- To educate / inform
- To affect thinking and behaviour
- To develop skills



Parenting Apart

Theoretical basis – attends to a number of the risk factors associated with impact on outcomes:

- Conflict
- Capacity to parent effectively
- Communication
- Contact

(Kelly (2012), cited in Salem et al. 2013)

The content is based on underlying theories such as:

- Social Learning
- Attachment
- Grief and Loss
- Conflict
- Attribution
- Mentalization / Reflective functioning



Parenting Apart

International evidence supports the effectiveness of brief intervention programs in:

- Reducing children's exposure to interparental conflict
- Reducing triangulation of children, such as placement in loyalty conflicts
- Improving quality of parent-child relationships, and improving co-parenting skills such as communication and problem-solving skills
- Increasing the encouragement of children's relationship and contact with the non-residential parent
- Improving parental understanding of children's responses to separation and divorce
- Increasing willingness to participate in other services for divorcing families

(Burke, S et al. 2009)

Parenting Apart

Parent education programmes for separating / divorcing parents are an established intervention in 46/50 US states*, in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England and Wales

(*Sigal et al. 2011)

2015 to 2019 Funding awarded by the Scottish Government for Scotland wide service delivery and development of provision

2020/21 Development of online delivery of sessions



Parenting Apart

Overview of the sessions

Parenting Apart sessions help parents to understand about

- the process of separation and divorce
- what their children need from them when they are living apart
- how to work together and put their children's needs first



Parenting Apart

A one off session of 3 hours for parents – generally groups of mums and dads, can be 1 to 1 over a couple of sessions

Parents attend a different session from their child's other parent

Parents can attend at any stage – before, during or a long time after separation. They may have never lived together

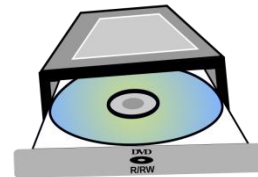
Grandparents, stepparents and other carers can participate

Parenting Apart

- information
- discussion
- short film
- resources
- refreshments

Parenting Apart

Children's Voices



Parenting Apart

Listening To Your Children's Views

Parents can often find it difficult to talk with their children about separation or to listen to their children's views about the changes that are happening. When children and young people don't know what is happening they can sometimes think that the separation or family change is their fault, or they might worry that the separation will change how their parent feels about them.

During and after separation it is important to understand what your children are thinking or feeling about any changes in their family. This can help you think about the arrangements for your children and make decisions that consider their needs and views.

Parents have a responsibility to give their children the opportunity to share their views if they want to. It is important for children to know that although you want to take their views into account, it is your responsibility as their parents to make the decisions – not theirs!

Children's views and needs are likely to change over time. It is helpful to encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings about arrangements regularly.

Children and young people can find it helpful to talk to other family members or friends or other trusted adults such as a teacher. Sometimes they may benefit from additional support from other professionals such as a counsellor.

In order to understand what your children are thinking or feeling it can be helpful to listen carefully. This might seem simple but it can actually be one of the hardest things to do, particularly when life is busy or you are struggling with your own emotions.

Some ideas are:

- Set aside time to listen to your children. If you have more than one child try to make time to listen to them separately – they may have very different views.
- Try to give your children your full attention when you are listening. It's easy to get distracted!
- Try to listen to your children without interrupting, give them time to speak.
- Ask questions to make sure you understand what your children have said.
- Support your children's feelings by repeating back what you heard your children say, even if you don't agree with them.
- Your children's feelings about the separation may be different from your own, try not to let your own feelings influence them.

Children's Views and the Law
The law in Scotland supports children and young people's rights to express their views, feelings and wishes, and to have their views considered and taken seriously in all matters affecting them. This includes their day-to-day home life. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) say that children should be given an opportunity to express their views on any decisions that affect them including those within the court process, depending on their age and maturity. Children also have the right not to express a view.

Parenting Apart

- Facilitators are specifically trained for this work
- Facilitators are either experienced family mediators or have had other training and experience in working with separating families.
- Two facilitators in group sessions, generally at least one mediator
- Practitioner Learning Forums and feedback from parents have informed the development of the content, tools and resources
- Whilst there was dedicated funding from the Scottish Government the sessions were offered free of charge, some Member Services are now having to charge

Parenting Apart

The Impact in Scotland - Statistics

- Over 1800 participants since funding awarded in 2015
- Around 80% participate in groups, 20% in one to one sessions
- Offered by 11 Relationships Scotland Member Services
- Over 50 facilitators trained

(Relationships Scotland Parenting Apart Outcomes Analysis 2019)



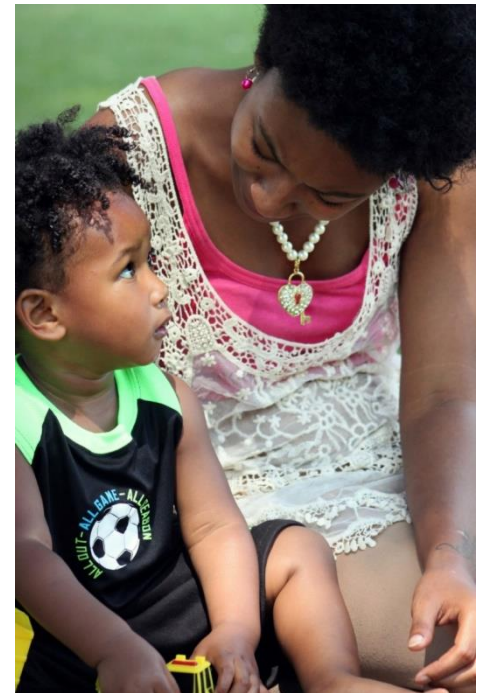
Parenting Apart

Evidence of impact in Scotland

- After attending Parenting Apart, 81% of parents said *their understanding of how to help their children to cope better had increased significantly*

81% of parents completed After Session forms and

- 99% of these parents would recommend Parenting Apart sessions to others



Parenting Apart

Impact on use of Services

At the Three Month Follow Up Review stage:

- Of those who did not have a *child maintenance agreement* in place before the session, 40% had one in place 3 months later
- Of those who were seeking a *court order* before the session, 49% were no longer seeking a court order 3 months later



Parenting Apart

Evidence of endorsement in Scotland:

- Independent Review conducted by SMCI Associates in 2016
- The Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) has included Parenting Apart in their Civil Legal Aid Handbook
- The judiciary have encouraged colleagues to refer parties to Parenting Apart
- Support from the Family Law Association and Lawyer Mediators (CALM Scotland)
- Cost Benefit Analysis in 2017 by Inspiring Scotland showed significant savings to the public purse of up to £7.11 for every £1 spent, depending on assumptions and complexity of cases.

Parenting Apart

Research and publications:

Clark, B (2020) A Study into Parenting Apart.

Key findings include:

- parents generally reported extremely positive experiences in Parenting Apart and there seems some evidence of positive follow-on impacts for consequent engagement in mediation.
- the survey research suggested some evidence of longer-term impacts in terms of improved parental attitudes and circumstances after 3-6 months.

Cubitt, R (2019) Finding the Right Support: One Size Doesn't Fit All.

Family Court Review Vol 57 No 3, July 2019, 327-331

Parenting Apart



What do parents say?

Listen to Carla, Mike and Stacy Jo talking about their experiences and hear some comments from other parents three months after participating

<https://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk/family-support/parenting-apart-groups/video-parenting-apart>



Read a case story here:

<https://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk/family-support/parenting-apart-groups>

Listen to a solicitor and a sheriff talking about Parenting Apart:

<https://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk/family-support/parenting-apart-groups/video-parenting-apart>

Parenting Apart

Information, films, FAQs and resources on the Relationships Scotland Website:

www.parentingapart.org.uk

<https://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk/family-support/parenting-apart-groups>



Book a place



Frequently Asked Questions



Watch a video



Free Resources

Parenting apart is easier when you have the know-how...

Parenting Apart

References:

- Burke, S et al. (2009). Parenting after Separation - A Literature Review prepared for The Australian Psychological Society. The Australian Psychological Society Ltd.
- Clark, B (2020) A Study into Parenting Apart. Available at SSRN:https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3515665
- Cubitt, R (2019) Finding the Right Support: One Size Doesn't Fit All. *Family Court Review* Vol 57 No 3, July 2019, 327-331.
- Relationships Scotland Parenting Apart Outcomes Analysis (2019). Available at <https://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk/about-us>
- Salem, P., Sandler, I., & Wolchik, S. (2013). Taking Stock of Parent Education in the Family Courts: Envisioning a Public Health Approach. *Family Court Review*, 51, 131-148.
- Sigal, A., Sandler, I., Wolchik, S., & Braver, S. (2011). Do parent education programs promote healthy postdivorce parenting? Critical distinctions and a review of the evidence. *Family Court Review*, 49, 120-139.

Parenting apart is easier when you have the know-how...