



## Parenting Apart: Independent Review

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## Report to Relationships Scotland

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December 2016

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## 1 Introduction

Parenting Apart sessions provide information and support to parents who live apart from the other parent of their child/ren. They are targeted to parents who are in the process of separation or divorce and designed to make the experience of separation better for their child/ren and themselves. Most Parenting Apart sessions are delivered through a three hour workshop with a group of parents; some are delivered through one-to-one sessions. The Scottish Government has funded Relationships Scotland to provide Parenting Apart Sessions since April 2015.

It was beyond the scope of this review to undertake an evidence review. However, American research cited by Relationships Scotland has shown that ‘education’ interventions for divorcing parents improve communication and lesson children’s exposure to parental conflict<sup>1</sup>; parents have a better appreciation of their child’s relationship with the other parent; and that parents are less likely to send messages through their children, insult the other parent in front of the children or ask children to take sides<sup>2</sup>. It has also shown that parent education groups reduce re-litigation rates and improve court processes and outcomes, with a greater sensitivity to children’s needs<sup>3</sup>. Relationships Scotland’s hypothesis is that Parenting Apart will achieve these outcomes.

In June 2015 Relationships Scotland (RS) trained 52 staff from eleven of its member services to facilitate Parenting Apart (PA) sessions, see appendix A. These staff come from family mediation, counselling and family support worker backgrounds. Following the one day training course, RS has supported PA facilitators through three learning forums, designed to share experiences and family feedback.

RS has also developed resources for Parenting Apart facilitators to offer to parents. These include three pocket-sized booklets with information: Message for children, Messages for Young People, Messages for Parents. The booklets are also free to download from the [Parenting Apart webpage](#). The Messages for Parents booklets includes sections on ‘what do children need to hear’, ‘what helps’, ‘conflict and communication’ and ‘families come in all shapes and sizes’. RS has also produced a short film: Parenting Apart: Children’s Voices which presents the views of children about separation and divorce. This is shown to parents during Parenting Apart sessions to help them to focus on children’s needs.

The independent review of Parenting Apart has involved:

- Independent review of Relationships Scotland’s monitoring and self-evaluation of Parenting Apart (PA).
- Focused discussion session with PA facilitators and managers.
- A stakeholder survey.

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<sup>1</sup> Gillard & Seymour (2005): Children in the Middle: A Parent Education Programme for Separated Parents  
Arbuthnot & Gordon (1996): Does Mandatory Divorce Education Work? A six month outcome evaluation

<sup>2</sup> Brandon (2006): Can four hours make a difference? Evaluation of a parent education programme for divorcing parents

<sup>3</sup> Arbuthnot, Kramer & Gordon (1997): Patterns of Re-litigation following divorce education

## 2 Monitoring and self-evaluation

Relationships Scotland has developed the following monitoring and self-evaluation tools:

- A Before Parenting Apart session client questionnaire, see appendix B
- An After Parenting Apart session client questionnaire, see appendix B
- A Parenting Apart Follow-Up Review questionnaire, see appendix C. This is completed through telephone interviews with clients, approximately 3 months after the Parenting Apart session.

Data collated and analysed through these tools informed Relationships Scotland's Outcomes Report for Parenting Report October 2015 – September 2016.

Additionally, RS collates quarterly activities reports on Parenting Apart.

RS also asks facilitators to complete a 'debrief' form after each PA session. This is designed to record:

- Number of bookings
- Number of attendees
- What went well
- What was challenging
- Key learning points, and 'what would you differently'
- Identification of parents who might 'be worth approaching regarding participation in communications activity/publicity (case studies)'

Unfortunately data from these forms has not been collated, although they have been reviewed and used to inform ongoing development.

Finally, RS collates learning points identified through the PA facilitators and managers learning forums. This help to continuously develop and improve the service.

### 2.1 Comment on RS monitoring and self-evaluation of Parenting Apart

The Parenting Apart client questionnaires provide very useful data:

- On nature of Parenting Apart participants: participant age, number and age of children, parental relationship status, and the proportion of time that their children spend with them.
- On whether participants:
  - Are attending mediation to discussion arrangements for their child/ren
  - Are using solicitors to discuss arrangements for their child/ren
  - Are currently seeking a court order
  - Have an agreement about child maintenance in place
- On participant perspectives on
  - Discussing issues about their child/ren
    - It would be helpful to clarify what 'issues' this refers to – presumably family relationship issues.
  - Making arrangements for their child/ren

- It would be helpful to clarify what ‘arrangements’ this refers to – presumably arrangements about their child/ren’s relationships with each parent.
- Sorting out arguments or disputes
- How they are coping with their current family situation
- How their children are coping with their current family situation
- How satisfied they are with the current arrangements for their children
  - It would be helpful to clarify that ‘current arrangements’ refers to – presumably arrangements about their child/ren’s relationships with each parent.
- The impacts of the Parenting Apart session.

78% (330) of all individuals who completed before session questionnaires completed after session questionnaires, providing statistically strong confidence that findings regarding the immediate impacts of PA sessions are reliable. Sixty individuals participated in three-month follow up reviews: 14% of all those who completed before session questionnaires. This provides a confidence level of 60%: for this to provide statistical confidence, it needs to be at least 90%. Nevertheless, for a pilot project this is a good response.

In addition to working on increasing the response to the 3-month follow-up review, evaluation data could be developed by collating and analysing the following:

- Referral/signposting route. This would help
  - To develop understanding of how best to reach parents who could benefit from Parenting Apart sessions.
  - Target potential refers/signposters so as to better reach parents who could benefit
- Resource downloads. This would help to ascertain how much demand there is for the online resources developed through Parenting Apart.
- The PA facilitators’ session de-brief forms. This would help to continuously improve the service.

Finally, the questions asked in the before, after and 3 month review questionnaires could be developed in the light of this independent review.

### 3 Parents reached

This analysis of the reach of Parenting Apart is based on:

- Relationships Scotland's Outcomes Report for Parenting Report October 2015 – September 2016 and related spreadsheets.
- Additional data provided by RS on number of sessions and participants.

In total, between October 2015-September 2016 Parenting Apart has reached 424 parents, who had on average 1.7 children each – indicatively 731 children in total. More than two thirds (68%) of children were eight years old or younger.

Of the 377 parents who provided their gender, 56% (212) parents were fathers and 43% (165) mothers. Most (77%) parents were between 30 and 49 years of age. More than half (52%) of the parents attending Parenting Apart sessions had been separated for less than 2 years; 35% had been separated for more than 2 years; and 5% were considering separation. Eight percent of all participants had never lived with the other parent of their child/ren.

The vast majority (86%: 364) participants attended one of the 119 group sessions; the remaining 61 participants received individual Parenting Apart sessions. AVENUE reached 25% of all participants; RS Shetland did not reach any parents. RS Borders delivered only individual sessions; South Lanarkshire delivered only group sessions. Participation was strongest in January – March 2016, with 129 parents attending Parenting Apart sessions. In July – September 2016 participation dropped to 96: just one more individual than in the first quarter of delivery (October – December 2015).

On average, three individuals have participated in each group Parenting Apart session delivered; with each trained facilitator reaching, on average, 8.2 parents.

#### 3.1 Summary

Parenting Apart is reaching parents – in particular fathers – who are relatively recently separated. However, it is also reaching some (8%) parents who have never lived with their child/rens other parent. In total, between October 2015-September 2016 it reached 424 parents, who had on average 1.7 children each – indicatively 731 children in total.

Parenting Apart group sessions are delivered to very small groups (3 individuals on average): there would appear to be scope for reaching more parents, and delivering PA more efficiently by running sessions with more participants. The highest average number of participants' group sessions in any quarter was 6.8: if all sessions achieved this participation rate indicatively 50% more parents would be reached i.e. 848 parents with approximately 1459 children. In order to increase participation rates per session it would be necessary for agencies to more effectively promote the service to key referral/signposting agencies and individuals, for example family lawyers.

It could be helpful to articulate the rationale for providing individual rather than group sessions: this may be due to remote/rural or cultural issues.

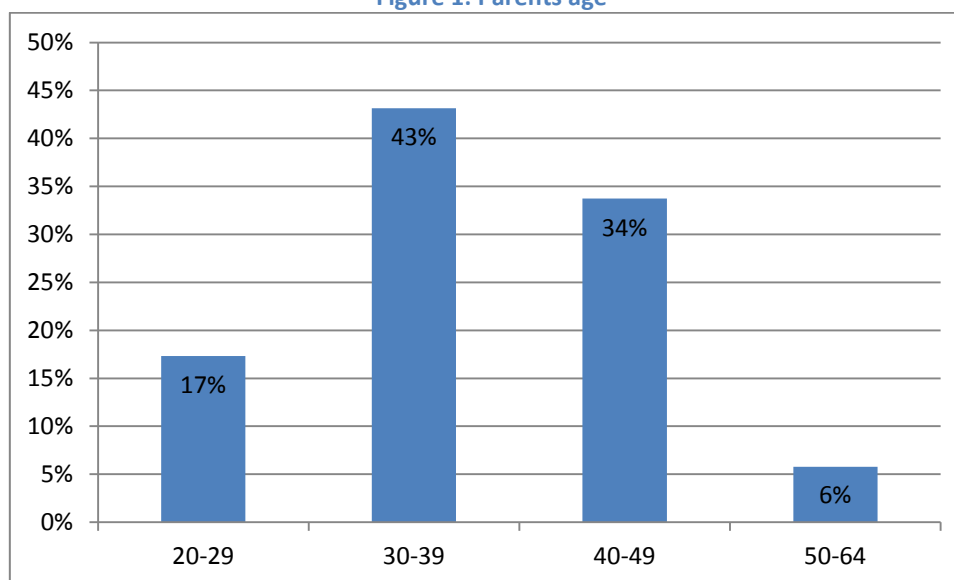
## 3.2 Tables and charts

**Table 1: Individuals reached October 2015 – September 2016**

	# Individuals	% Individuals
AVENUE	108	25%
Borders	29	7%
Central	29	7%
Dumfries & Galloway	20	5%
Highland	33	8%
Lothian	38	9%
Orkney	20	5%
Shetland	0	0%
South Lanarkshire	58	14%
Tayside and Fife	22	5%
West of Scotland	67	16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: data provided by Relationships Scotland

**Figure 1: Parents age**



Source: Relationships Scotland's Outcomes Report for Parenting Report October 2015 – September 2016, and related spreadsheets N=329

**Table 2: Age and number of children under 16**

Age of children	%	Total children <sup>4</sup>
0 to 4 years	33.7%	192
5 to 8 years	34.3%	195
9 to 12 years	22.5%	128
13 to 16 years	9.5%	54
<b>TOTAL CHILDREN</b>		<b>569</b>

Source: Relationships Scotland's Outcomes Report for Parenting Report October 2015 – September 2016, and related spreadsheets N=379

<sup>4</sup> There may be a degree of double counting of children: if both parents attended Parenting Apart sessions their children will be included twice



**Table 3: Participants parental relationship status**

Parents relationship status	%	#
Considering separation	5%	16
Separated less than 2 years	52%	159
Separated more than 2 years	35%	105
Never lived together	8%	23
TOTAL		303

Source: Relationships Scotland's Outcomes Report for Parenting Report October 2015 – September 2016, and related spreadsheets

**Table 4: Average participation per group session**

Service	Oct to Dec 2015	Jan to Mar 2016	Apr to June 2016	July to Sept 2016	TOTAL
AVENUE	6.8	3.8	3.8	5.6	4.8
Central	2.0	3.0	3.0	1.0	2.5
Dumfries & Galloway	0.0	1.0	3.5	2.5	2.1
Highland	2.5	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.1
Lothian	2.5	3.3	2.6	4.0	2.8
Orkney	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.8
South Lanarkshire	2.5	3.6	3.7	3.0	3.2
Tayside & Fife	1.0	2.3	2.0	0.5	1.1
West of Scotland	5.0	5.7	4.0	3.6	4.4
TOTAL	2.8	3.2	3.3	2.8	3.1

Source: data provided by Relationships Scotland

**Table 5: Average individuals reached by facilitator**

Service	Number of facilitators	Individuals reached	Average per facilitator	Total group sessions	Total individual sessions	TOTAL SESSIONS	Average sessions per facilitator
AVENUE	5	108	21.6	21	7	28	5.6
Borders	4	29	7.3	0	29	29	7.3
Central	5	29	5.8	11	2	13	2.6
D&G	4	20	5.0	7	5	12	3.0
Highland	3	33	11.0	10	2	12	4.0
Lothian	8	38	4.8	13	1	14	1.8
Orkney	5	20	4.0	8	6	14	2.8
Shetland	3	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
SLanark	5	58	11.6	18	0	18	3.6
Tay & Fife	5	22	4.4	17	3	20	4.0
West	5	67	13.4	14	6	20	4.0
TOTAL	52	424	8.2	119	61	180	3.5

Source: data provided by Relationships Scotland

**Table 6: Parenting Apart participants by group and individual session**

Sessions	Oct to Dec 2015			Jan to Mar 2016			Apr to June 2016			July to Sept 2016			TOTALS					
	Group	Participants	Individual	Group	Participants	Individual	Group	Participants	Individual	Group	Participants	Individual	Group sessions		Participants		Individual sessions	
AVENUE	4	27	4	6	23	0	6	23	1	5	28	2	21	18%	101	28%	7	11%
Borders	0	0	6	0	0	8	0	0	9	0	0	6	0	0%	0	0%	29	48%
Central	2	4	0	5	15	0	2	6	1	2	2	1	11	9%	27	7%	2	3%
D&G	0	0	1	3	3	0	2	7	1	2	5	3	7	6%	15	4%	5	8%
Highland	2	5	0	4	12	1	2	8	0	2	6	1	10	8%	31	9%	2	3%
Lothian	4	10	0	3	10	1	5	13	0	1	4	0	13	11%	37	10%	1	2%
Orkney	4	8	2	2	4	3	1	1	0	1	1	1	8	7%	14	4%	6	10%
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
SLanark	4	10	0	7	25	0	3	11	0	4	12	0	18	15%	58	16%	0	0%
Tay&Fife	7	7	1	3	7	0	1	2	1	6	3	1	17	14%	19	5%	3	5%
West	2	10	0	3	17	0	4	16	4	5	18	2	14	12%	61	17%	6	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: data provided by Relationships Scotland

## 4 Parents perspectives

This section is adapted from Relationships Scotland's Outcomes Report for Parenting Apart October 2015 – September 2016 which is informed by RS's analysis of participant questionnaires.

### 4.1 Coping with Separation

Before attending a Parenting Apart session only 32% of parents felt that their children were coping with their family situation, and fewer (30%) felt that they themselves were coping.

After the session

- 71% of parents said their understanding of how to cope better with their family situation had increased a lot or quite a lot.
- 82% said their understanding of how to help their children to cope better had increased a lot or quite a lot.
- 81% said their understanding of what their children may be experiencing had increased a lot or quite a lot.

Of the 60 parents who responded 3 months after the Parenting Apart, 54% said that they were coping better with their family situation and 57% thought that their children were coping better.

#### 4.1.1 Considering the needs of their children

Parents' comments in the after-training questionnaire indicate that they felt better able to consider the needs of their children:

- "Very informative and helps to focus on the important person in the relationship breakdown – my son."
- "The session was very helpful for me, especially the DVD. I have never come across a divorce in my family so it was actually very interesting to see the kids' reaction and what they expect from parents after divorce."
- "I found the session very helpful. I especially found it helpful to understand how our break up could possibly affect our daughter even though she is only 18 months. I liked the one to one support."
- "Very useful, made me more aware of situations which can affect the child. Helped with how to deal with behaviour which the child may be displaying (reassurance)."
- "The session has really made me think more about what my children are feeling and going through."
- "Very good. Made me more aware of how my daughter may be feeling."

## 4.2 Communication, Conflict and Planning

Before the Parenting Apart session 58% participants were struggling to discuss issues about their children with the other parent. After the session, 73% said their understanding about this had increased a lot / quite a lot.

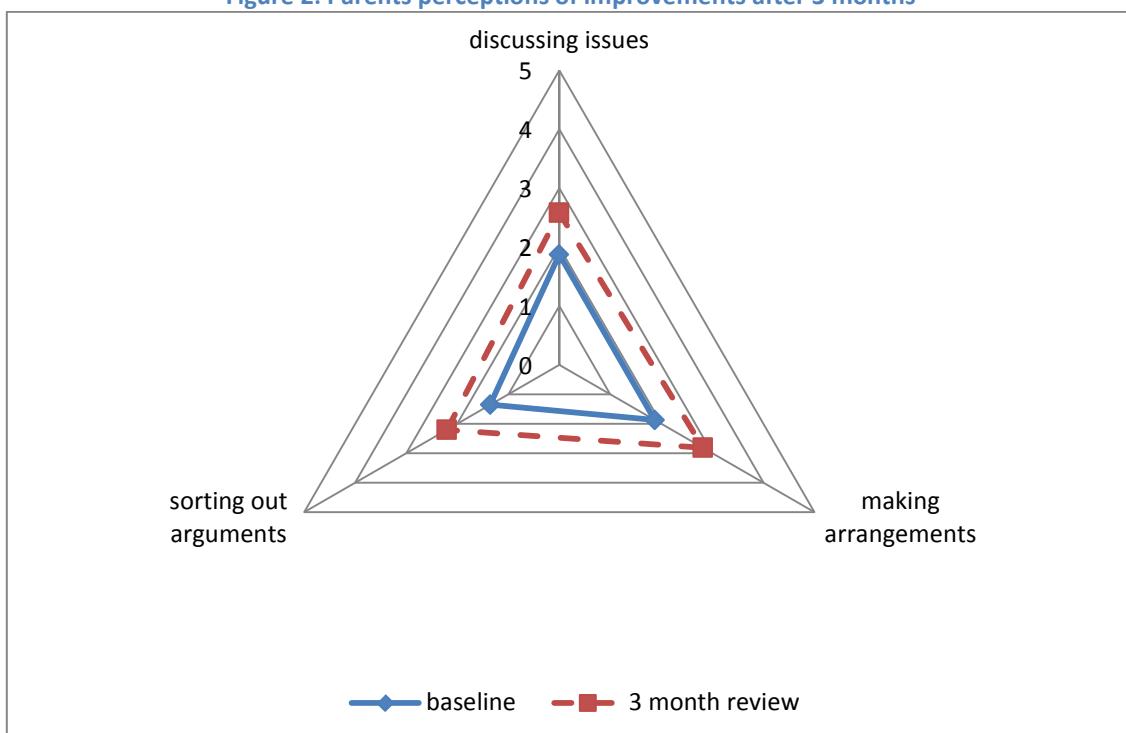
Before the Parenting Apart session 58% participants were struggling to make arrangements for their children. After the session, 65% said their understanding about this had increased a lot / quite a lot.

Before the Parenting Apart session 73% participants were struggling to sort out arguments as parents. After the session, 61% said their understanding about this had increased a lot / quite a lot.

Of the 60 parents who responded to the 3 month follow-up review, there was an improvement in the ability to discuss issues (43%), to make arrangements for the children (56%) and to sort out arguments as parents (48%).

Three months after the Parenting Apart session the percentage of parents satisfied with the current arrangements for their children had risen from 18% to 42%.

Figure 2: Parents perceptions of improvements after 3 months



Source: Relationships Scotland's Outcomes Report for Parenting Apart October 2015 – September 2016

Comments made during follow-up review interviews included:

- “It taught me how to deal with situations with my ex-partner better.”
- “Following the session I felt that I understood my situation much better and all the things we were doing to make things worse. From when I attended the group I have gone from not seeing the kids at all to now living back in our family home. I can't tell you how much better things are. We're not together as a couple but we are together as parents.”
- “Since attending Parenting Apart my partner and I have attended mediation. We have told our daughters we are separating. Due to information we received about Parenting Apart I feel we had the knowledge and skills to discuss our separation with them.”
- “The impact of the session was in that I tried to change my interactions with my ex-partner and also tried to see things from his perspective.”
- “It stopped the escalation from minor disagreement to monumental screaming at one another, and this is still the case now 6 months later. It was very helpful deconstructing the emotional glue that one gets embroiled in and gave me the ability to look at things from all our perspectives in a clearer way.”

### 4.3 Use of statutory or other support services

More than one third (37%) of Parenting Apart participants were attending mediation before the session. Immediately after the session 65% parents said that they were more likely to use mediation. Of those not in mediation before the Parenting Apart session, 29% were in mediation 3 months later.

More than one quarter (28%) of Parenting Apart participations were seeking a court order before the session. Immediately after the session, 35% said that they were less likely to seek a court order. Half (50%: 7 out of 13) of those seeking a court order before they attended the Parenting Apart session, who also completed a follow up review, were no longer seeking a court order 3 months later.

More than half (57%) of Parenting Apart participants had a child maintenance agreement in place before the session. Immediately after the session 24% parents said that they were more likely to agree a child maintenance arrangement. Of those who did not have a child maintenance agreement in place before the session, 41% had one in place 3 months later.

More than two thirds (66%) of Parenting Apart participants were using a solicitor before the session. After the session 58% expected that the situation would not change.

### 4.4 Improved family situation

After the Parenting Apart session 87% participants felt that what they had learned at Parenting Apart would improve their family situation; and three months later 75% still felt that the session had helped to improve their family situation.

## 4.5 Recommending Parenting Apart to others

Immediately after the Parenting Apart session, 99% participants said that they would recommend Parenting Apart to others; and three months later 76% of respondents had recommended Parenting Apart to others.

Comments made during follow-up review interviews included:

- “I told some girls in the court waiting room that they should go along to the group. It was good to understand more about mediation before I started it. I found the group really helpful and wouldn't change any of it.”
- “I would absolutely recommend it to other parents.”

Other comments made during the review interview showed that participants valued the opportunity to share experiences with other parents:

- “Found it very beneficial. Helped me on a personal level. Felt everyone took something from it. Only negative thing was it was only one session. Very good to hear others having the same issues and difficulties, and to hear the dad's side and then the mother's side.”
- “Good to know that you're not on your own and that other people are in the same situation. I realised through the group how far I'd moved on from the beginning, letting go of the anger and needing to win. It's not about winning, it's about moving on and really it's all about your kids.”
- “It was brilliant to hear from other parents. I always thought it was just hard for dads but this showed me it's difficult for everyone, it really changed my view. Going to Parenting Apart provided me with a base for working with my daughter's mum ...and I can see how far we've come in 5 months.”

## 4.6 Summary

It is clear that the parents who participate in Parenting Apart sessions value the sessions, and consider that the session has:

- Helped them to:
  - Better understand what their children may be experiencing, and address their needs.
  - Better (understand how to) cope with their family situation.
  - Better (understand how to) help their children to cope with their family situation.
  - Better (understand how to) discuss issues (presumably family relationships issues) about their child/ren with the other parent.
  - Better (understand how to) make arrangements (presumably arrangements about their child/ren's relationships with each parent) for their children.
- Made them more likely to use family mediation services.
- Made them less likely to seek a court order.
- More likely to agree a child maintenance arrangement.

## 5 Focus session with facilitators and managers

A focused discussion session with Parenting Apart facilitators and managers was held as part of the fourth learning forum on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016. This two hour session involved focused groupwork plus a plenary session, see appendix E for groupwork guidance. It informed the development of the stakeholder survey questionnaire.

See table 7 for outcomes of the discussion session. Participants considered that Parenting Apart

- Gives parents opportunities to learn from other parents
- Helps parents to cope better with separation
- Helps parents to see the situation from the child's point of view
- Helps parents to communicate effectively with the other parent about their child/ren
- Helps parents to make decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren
- Helps parents manage conflict more effectively
- Helps parents to consider alternatives to the court

Participants provided some anecdotal evidence of the impacts of PA on improving outcomes for children, and suggested possible indicators of impact; but stressed the need for ongoing effective and light touch monitoring and evaluation.

**Table 7: Focused discussion session with Parenting Apart facilitators and managers**

	<b>What is it that Parenting Apart is doing?</b>	<b>How does this activity improve outcomes for children {and families?}</b>	<b>How do you know whether Parenting Apart has improved outcomes for children?</b>
<b>Give parents opportunities to learn from other parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing different perspectives</li> <li>• Hearing the other side of the story</li> <li>• Providing space and opportunities for discussion</li> <li>• Best mix is resident and non-resident parents                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Also how other parents cope at different ages and stages</li> <li>○ Able to neutralise their thoughts hearing other perspectives – not their own ex-partner</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining insights, raising empathy</li> <li>• Hearing what other parents experience</li> <li>• Addresses the boundary between the subjective and the objective – facts, info, other people’s experiences, so it normalises the situation and so                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Builds hope</li> <li>○ Provides a space to reflect and look at the situation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Normalises so breaks down barriers</li> <li>• Information reduces isolation</li> </ul>	
<b>Help parents to cope better with separation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing</li> <li>• Mutual support</li> <li>• Normalises their situation, even if only one parent engages</li> <li>• Signposts e.g. to debt advice, counselling, family support workers</li> <li>• Only 3 hours, but can link to other areas of the service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research shows causality: better coping parent = better coping child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anecdotal evidence:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parents moving into mediation</li> <li>○ Parents moving from using contact centres                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parents taking responsibility for parenting</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Parents coming into the service as a starting point</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Does PA make a difference as                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A stand-alone service: limited</li> <li>○ As an integral part of a combination of different services:                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Motivation to attend</li> <li>▪ Impacts on mediation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continued funding is depended on effective monitoring and evaluation, but this is difficult, onerous and costly to achieve: light touch preferable</li> <li>• Lack of longitudinal studies</li> <li>• Easier to gauge if parents engage with other services alongside PA (Child Contact Centres/mediation)</li> <li>• Parents say that this is the first time they have thought about the situation from their child/rens point of view</li> <li>• Our assumptions link in with research findings and feedback from parents:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Communication</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Child focus</li> </ul>
<b>Help parents to see the situation from the child’s point of view</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing</li> <li>• Objective, facts conveyed, take a step back</li> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlights emotional impact on children – can give case examples</li> <li>• This is the focus of PA</li> <li>• Shift from combative focus to child centred focus</li> <li>• Development of awareness of responsibilities</li> <li>• More emotionally available parents to their children: help children have effective relationships with both parents</li> </ul>	
<b>Help parents to communicate effectively with the other parent about their child/ren</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of PA session – communication exercise: groupwork in the session</li> <li>• Practical exercises: tips and hints, reframing, using humour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All info focusing on children from the adult relationships which enhances children’s coping, reduces conflict etc</li> <li>• More successful arrangements made: financial, contact</li> </ul>	
<b>Help parents to make decisions and plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical information</li> </ul>		



<b>about arrangements for their child/ren</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about what's not helpful</li> <li>Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stability, consistency, understanding</li> <li>This is the focus of PA</li> </ul>	
<b>Help parents manage conflict more effectively</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeing the situation from other perspectives</li> <li>Capacity building in parents – giving them tools to use</li> </ul>	
<b>Help parents to consider alternatives to the court</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing experience</li> <li>Alternatives also to Parenting Plans<sup>5</sup>/Mediation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents taking control of decision making</li> <li>See other people's experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PA cases transferring into mediation</li> <li>Fewer divorces</li> <li>Less conflict</li> <li>More stability in children's' lives</li> <li>More engagement in support services</li> </ul>
<b>Any other activities that Parenting Apart is/should be doing to improve outcomes for children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhances reflection</li> <li>Educative role: for sheriffs, government, parents</li> <li>Raising awareness: with statutory and voluntary agencies</li> <li>Breaking cycles of behaviour</li> <li>Easing the mediation process</li> <li>Easing Contact Centres work</li> <li>Educating/ giving skills re conflict resolution</li> <li>Solution focused approach</li> <li>Follow-up? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1:1 coaching meetings</li> <li>Continued support</li> </ul> </li> <li>Self-help group</li> <li>Follow-up non-engagement of other parent</li> <li>Embed in client journey rather than stand alone</li> <li>Need to engage sheriffs before sending parents to PA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Context is crucial, incl other services: internal; (child contact centres &amp; mediation) + external (family law)</li> <li>System set up to deal with separated parents and not considering parents who have never lived together; so <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PA needs to introduce/establish a parental relationship</li> <li>Many parents have never been together so should PA focus on managing conflict and/or co-parenting issues??</li> </ul> </li> <li>How does PA fit into internal and external services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PA facilitators are not mediators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's the one place that parents can be challenged</li> <li>It 'unlocks' parent so that they can understand their responsibility for their children</li> </ul> </li> <li>It's the only place that you can do that work with the parent – rather than mediation</li> <li>Mediated through the parents experience</li> <li>Less need for court?</li> <li>Follow-up could be crucial e.g. try out skills and come back?</li> <li>? Parents (vetted and trained) to give back/facilitate</li> <li>Longer to evaluate?</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/112200/0027302.pdf>

## 6 The stakeholder survey

The survey questionnaire was sent out through the Family Law Association<sup>6</sup>, the Judiciary of Scotland and the eleven Relationships Scotland member agencies which provide Parenting Apart sessions. It was circulated from 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016, and closed on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2016. See appendix D for survey questionnaire.

### 6.1 Response

80 responses were received, the majority from Aberdeen City/Aberdeenshire (36%), with 14% from Orkney, one of the smallest local authority areas. See table 8. The majority (53%: 23) of respondents were family lawyers/solicitors; with 35% (15) respondents being family mediators, see table 9.

**Table 8: Respondents by local authority area**

Local authority	#	%
Aberdeen City	8	18%
Aberdeenshire	8	18%
Angus	0	0%
Argyll & Bute	1	2%
Clackmannanshire	1	2%
Dumfries & Galloway	4	9%
Dundee City	1	2%
East Ayrshire	4	9%
East Dunbartonshire	1	2%
East Lothian	1	2%
East Renfrewshire	1	2%
Edinburgh, City of	5	11%
Eilean Siar	0	0%
Falkirk	3	7%
Fife	2	5%
Glasgow City	6	14%
Highland	3	7%
Inverclyde	0	0%
Midlothian	1	2%
Moray	0	0%
North Ayrshire	3	7%
North Lanarkshire	3	7%
Orkney Islands	6	14%
Perth & Kinross	1	2%
Renfrewshire	1	2%
Scottish Borders	1	2%
Shetland Islands	0	0%
South Ayrshire	2	5%
South Lanarkshire	5	11%
Stirling	2	5%
West Dunbartonshire	1	2%
West Lothian	2	5%
answered question	44	100%

Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.familylawassociation.org/>

**Table 9: Respondents by nature of job**

Nature of Job	#	%
Agency manager	2	5%
Counsellor	3	7%
Family Lawyer/solicitor	23	53%
Family Mediator	15	35%
Family Support Worker	1	2%
Sheriff/Judge	1	2%
Social Worker	0	0%
Other (please specify)	6	14%
answered question	43	100%

Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

Of the 21% (17) respondents who had not heard of Parenting Apart, 15 said that they would like to know more about it, and 11 provided their email addresses so that they could be provided with more information: three were sheriffs, and eight were family lawyers.

## 6.2 Referral, signposting and reasons

Forty four survey respondents (70% respondents who had heard of Parenting Apart) had referred or signposted people to Parenting Apart. Of those referrers/signposters who provided the nature of their job, 50% were family lawyers/solicitors and 44% were family mediators. See table 10. All family mediators who responded to the survey referred/signposted people to Parenting Apart. Survey responses were received from people who referred/signposted indicatively 350 people to Parenting Apart: 83% of Parenting Apart participants. **As such, the survey provides strongly representative views of the perspectives of referrers/signposters.**

Referrers considered that participation in a Parenting Apart session would be beneficial in relation to all measures:

- They would meet other parents who live apart from their child/rens other parent
- They would learn from hearing about the experiences of other parents who live apart from their child/rens other parent
- They would find out about ways of coping better with separation
- They would be better able to see the situation from their child/rens point of view
- They would find out about ways of better communicating with the other parent about their child/ren
- They would be better able to make decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/re
- They would be better able to manage conflict more effectively
- They would be better able to consider alternatives to court

In particular, however, PA sessions were seen as likely to be most beneficial in enabling parents to see the situation form their child/rens point of view and in finding out about ways of better communicating with the other parent about their child/ren.

Indicative comments included:

- Seeing the situation from their child/rens point of view

- “Looking at how children might be experiencing the separation can be useful.”
- “I think the session show the children's point of view and can sometimes be an eye opener for a parent who has got caught up in separation and what is fair to them rather than what is fair to the child.”
- “I think it helps parents see the child's point of view better thus make decisions based on what is most beneficial to the child and not themselves”.
- Finding out about ways of coping better with separation
  - “I think often it makes people realise how they are feeling is normal.”
  - “Understanding the effects of separation and how they can help themselves and their children can be invaluable.”
- Learning from hearing about the experiences of other parents who live apart from their child/rens other parent
  - “This sometimes can be one of the most beneficial aspects of the class especially when a non-resident parent hears from a resident parent or the other way around and they are able to empathise.”
  - “This is important to help normalise the situation for parents.”
  - “They may not learn but would certainly be able to reflect on their own experience and difficulties through the stories of other parents.”
  - “Sharing stories can be very powerful.”
- Meeting other parents who live apart from their child/rens other parent:
  - “Feedback from clients referred found this really beneficial.”
  - “Good to know that other people are going through the same thing.”
  - “This is probably the most beneficial aspect as people can feel isolated.”
  - “The group can be helpful for those who feel isolated.”

**Table 10: Nature of referrers**

	#	%
Agency manager	2	6%
Counsellor	1	3%
Family Lawyer/solicitor	16	50%
Family mediation/counselling agency manager	0	0%
Family Mediator	14	44%
Family Support Worker	1	3%
Sheriff/Judge	1	3%
Social Worker	0	0%
Other (please specify)	4	13%
answered question	32	100%

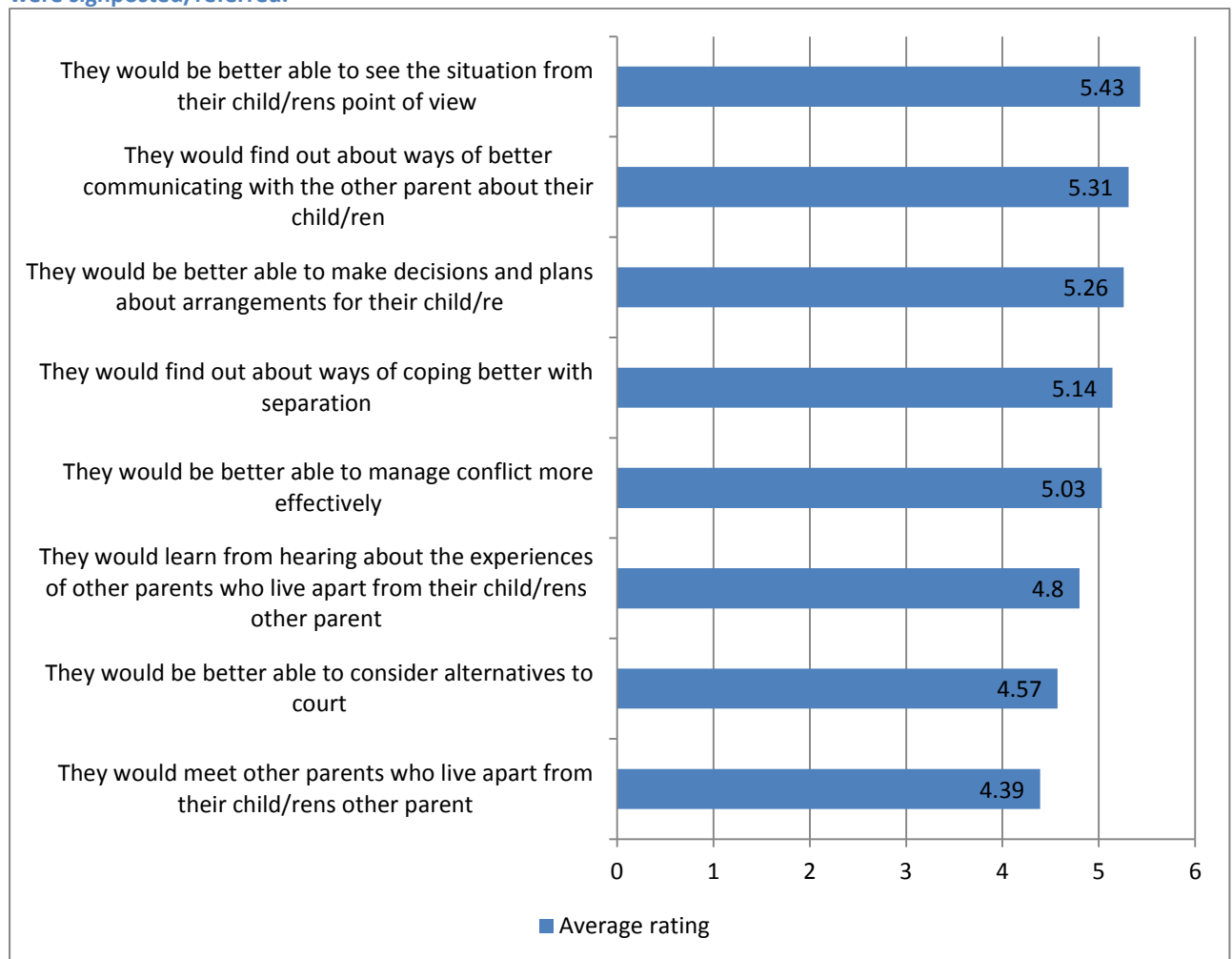
Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

**Table 11: Approximate number of referrals by respondents**

Approximate number of referrals to Parenting Apart in the last year	#	%
fewer than 5	10	28%
5 - 10	13	36%
11 - 15	6	17%
16 - 20	5	14%
21 - 25	0	0%
26 - 30	0	0%
more than 30	2	6%
answered question		36
		100%

Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

**Figure 3: Perceptions about how Parenting Apart sessions would benefit people at the point at which they were signposted/referred.**



Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

N=36

### 6.3 Parenting Apart delivery and resources

Of the 63 respondents who had heard of Parenting Apart, 13 (21% respondents who had heard of PA) were involved in the delivery of Parenting Apart sessions (25% trained PA facilitators), with most (58%) having delivered 5 – 10 sessions in the last year. With an average of 3.5 sessions in October 2015 – September 2016 delivered by each facilitator (see table 12), **this response provides a strong representation from those facilitators who are delivering the most sessions – and consequently reaching the most families.**

Twelve of these respondents were trained Parenting Apart facilitators, with one assisting the trained facilitator. One was also an agency manager. All facilitators who responded to the survey said that they had used their learning from the Parenting Apart facilitators **training** in their other work with families, in particular in their family mediation work (6 respondents), and in their work in contact centres (3 respondents). They also all said that they had made use Parenting Apart **resources** in other aspects of your work with families, with the following comments being indicative:

- “I am a mediator, and I give booklets to parents who come for an intake appointment, also when their ex partners do not want to proceed with mediation and don't come for an intake appointment, I contact those parents and offer them booklets so that they have the same information available to them. At the very least one can hope that the parents who don't want to engage in the mediation process, will read the booklets.”
- “Within family mediation, have given booklets to parents.”
- “At mediation I have used some of the interactive exercises to help parents.”
- “Offered to families at risk of breakdown and in conflict.”
- “If one party does not want to use our service then intake can often be the only opportunity a parent has to engage with our service and receive information. Therefore, I have given out booklets at intake including what children say.”
- “Individual support with parents.”
- “Have used with families in schools.”

Four Parenting Apart facilitators who responded to the survey had been involved in delivering sessions in venues outwith their agency. These included the following:

- For Heart to heart (a support organisation for families dealing with divorce).
- Children's Services attached to a Primary School
- HMP Dumfries
- Church
- Medical Centre
- We have delivered parenting apart to prisoners in prison. I have found this to be positive and beneficial to the parents in prison.
- Single parent group

**Table 12: Approximate number of Parenting Apart sessions delivered by respondents**

Approximate number of Parenting Apart sessions delivered	#	%
Fewer than 5	3	25%
5 - 10	7	58%
11 - 15	2	17%
16 - 20	0	0%
More than 20	0	0%

Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

**Table 13: PA facilitators use of PA resources**

Have you made use of any of the Parenting Apart resources? Please tick all that apply	#	%
Booklets	11	92%
DVD: Children's Voices	9	75%
Interactive exercises	5	42%
None of these resources	0	0%
Other (please specify)	1	8%
answered question	12	100%

Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

## 6.4 Perceived impacts of Parenting Apart sessions

Survey respondents considered that there would be positive impacts from participation in a Parenting Apart session in relation to all measures:

- Parents are less likely to go to court to sort out child contact and residency issues
- Parents cope better with separation
- Parents are better able to communicate with the other parent about their child/ren
- Parents are better able to make decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren
- Children experience less parental conflict
- Parents who live apart are better able to put their children's needs first
- Parents who live apart recognise the importance of their child's relationship with their other parent
- Parents who live apart develop effective co-parenting relationships

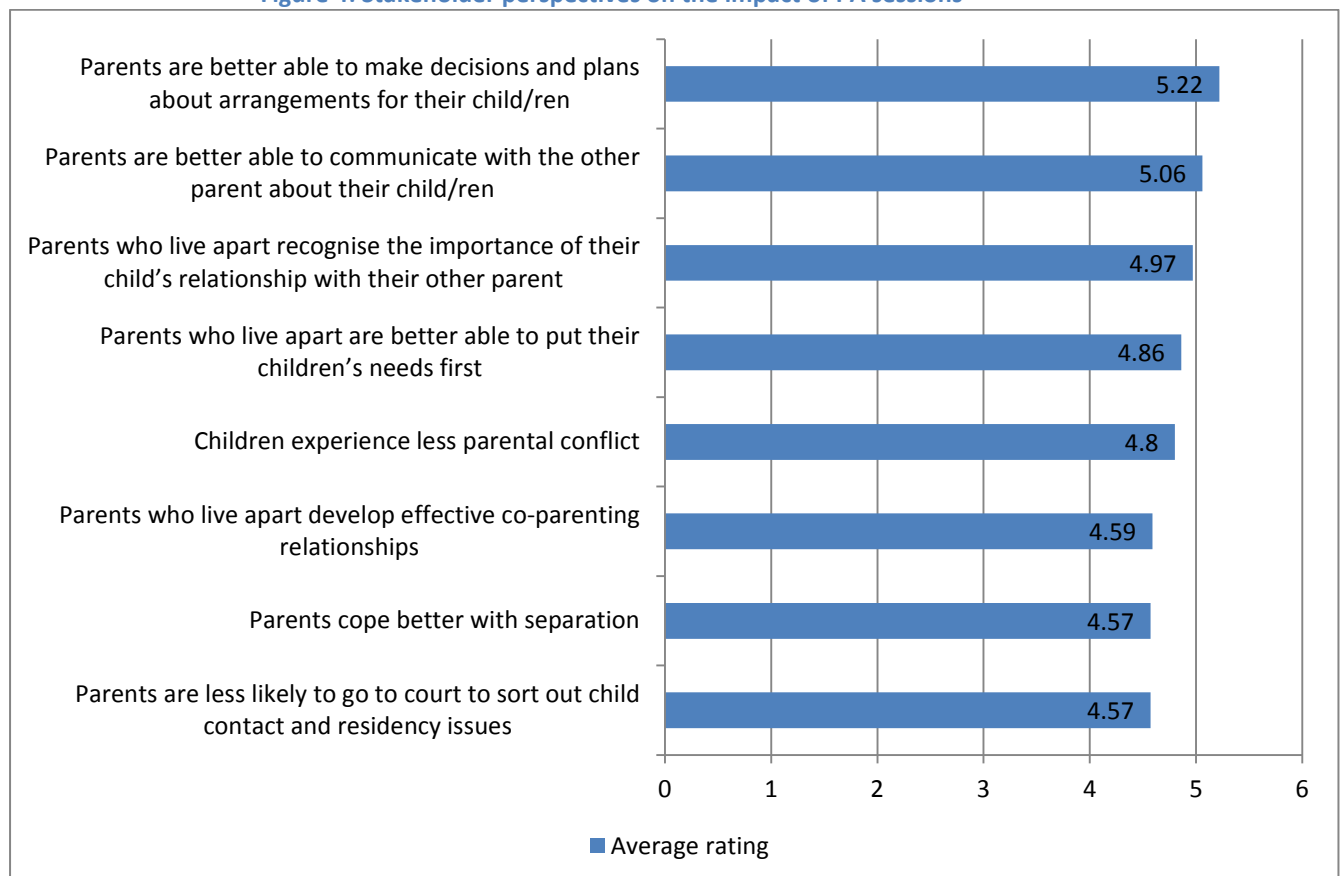
In particular, however, PA sessions were seen as enabling parents to make better decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren, and better able to communicate with the other parent about their child/ren.

Indicative comments included:

- Parents are better able to make decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren
  - "Hopefully but no follow up to measure that."
  - "Feedback from parents attending supports this."
- Parents are better able to communicate with the other parent about their child/ren
  - "This is difficult to change in one session."
- Parents who live apart recognise the importance of their child's relationship with their other parent
  - "Parenting Apart helps parents to recognise in a supportive way that children have a right to a relationship with both parents."
  - "Feedback suggests this is the case."

- Parents who live apart are better able to put their children’s needs first
  - “Parents recognise that they may have been putting their own needs first, and they move on from this.”
  - “No follow up to measure that.”
- Children experience less parental conflict
  - “Parents talk about not handling disagreements with their ex-partner very well, and learn how conflict can affect children.”
  - “Don't know as I don't speak to the children.”
- Parents who live apart develop effective co-parenting relationships
  - “No follow up to measure that but hope they learn to do so.”
- Parents cope better with separation
  - “I believe that PA can be very effective for parents where there has been no abusive or coercive behaviours. For victims of domestic abuse there needs to be better screening and awareness of the coercive control that ex-partners continue to exert through contact.”
  - “In some cases but difficult when patterns are well established.”
  - “Parents can be at very different stages of dealing with separation, especially those parents who didn't make the decision to separate. This statement is too complex to generalise.”

Figure 4: Stakeholder perspectives on the impact of PA sessions



Source: SMCIA survey of PA stakeholders

N=41



## 6.5 Areas for improvement

The survey asked stakeholders to identify any ways in which Parenting Apart could be better. The following areas were suggested:

- Better promotion: 11 respondents made suggestions about better promotion, including the following indicative comments:
  - “It could be publicised amongst Family Lawyers.”
  - “Wider publicity to make separated/separating parents more aware of the service at an early stage as often by the time they come to see a solicitor they are already entrenched in their position.”
  - “It's a great concept, but more information needs to be sent to solicitors for onwards transmission to clients, including the likely course content and an info book would be useful. We need dates and times.”
  - “Wider dissemination of information about the service and venues providing service would be beneficial. Does service provide information talks to, for example, courts, and local solicitor groups?”
  - “Be more widely known about. Have literature about the service available at courts.”
  - “I have tried to find out about sessions, but no-one responds, or I get a response saying that there are no further sessions scheduled and to call back later. I cannot find out how to refer people other than to the original number of sessions organised in Edinburgh.”
  - “I only heard about it from a client. So much better marketing required.”
  - “It would be good if we had more literature or leaflets to hand to separating couples.”
  - “It's a very poorly promoted facility in this area.”
  - “It sounds like a very good idea but not sure how much of an uptake there has been here due to lack of advertisement of the service - it should be pushed more!”
- Greater articulation with other services and agencies
  - “Be an entry point to wider support and lead to local support groups and closer ties to established support agencies. Would be good to have a more inclusive multi agency involvement in planning, delivery and evaluation.”
- Nature of delivery of PA sessions: 8 respondents made comments about the nature of session delivery, in particular relating to having more – and more accessible – sessions, and providing follow-up sessions.
  - “More sessions available.”
  - “More availability of sessions.”
  - “Possibly more sessions at varying times.”
  - “More flexible in delivery times/options (lots to take in in one session, but hard to get someone along for two...).”
  - “A follow up meeting but parents may not attend unless court ordered.”
  - “Funding should be increased to enable parents if they wish or need to attend more than one parenting apart session.”
  - “More than just one session each one concentrating on a different aspect of the breakdown in the relationship and how it could be better managed.”

- “Not sure if there are, but one to one advice sessions, especially for reluctant attendees could be really helpful. With reserve I wonder if a Dad's group or a Mum's group would help the reluctant.”
- Run sessions with a bigger and wider group of participants.
  - “More parents attending the groups to get a gender balance and viable numbers and good discussion.”
- The PA materials and session content
  - “The recent changes to the materials have improved the workshops by being more relevant and appropriate to the area we live in.”
  - “A better DVD would be helpful. The new one is an improvement on the previous one but could still be a lot better.”
  - “Accessing Training from Women's Aid and Rape Crisis re the nature of coercive control after separation.”
- Include children and lawyers:
  - “In the particular case that I have dealt with more recently, my client felt it would be beneficial if the person with whom she spoke at the PA Classes could speak to the child and relay his views to the Court (this matter was a lengthy contact action and involved a child who was mature enough to express their views to the Court). It is interesting to think that this could be done rather than a Child Welfare Report where applicable. It is also interesting to know whether PA Classes will be linked to proposed training for lawyers who would like to train to complete Child Welfare Reports - these can vary in quality.”
- Evaluation
  - “We really need to check back with those who have attended to find out what (if any) impact has been made.”

## 6.6 Other comments

Stakeholders made use of the opportunity to ‘make any other comments’ about Parenting Apart by drawing attention to:

- It’s relevance to all separated and separating parents:
  - “If possible it should be an activity that all parents who separate take part in. All agencies involved with children health education social work court should know of it and have a duty to refer parents to it. The benefits to the children are huge. Children are more often becoming more damaged by parental conflict which if dealt with at an early stage could be avoided.”
  - “Parenting Apart is a great service and has benefitted a number of my Firm's clients. The Sheriffs at Aberdeen Sheriff Court are also strong advocates of it and encourage parties to attend.”
  - “I think that all parents should require to attend Parenting Apart before raising a Court action re children.”
  - “Court ordered attendance and participation. Less voluntary and more mandatory.”
- Its complementarity with and enhancement of family mediation:

- “This is a fantastic new tool for me as a family lawyer. I have so far referred 3 cases and all have been delighted with the experience. It has been a very good precursor to mediation as it helps them start thinking from the perspective of the child and their responsibilities before they start.”
- “This is a great workshop that engages parents and a good way to get them into mediation prior to or instead of the court system. It is a good introduction but can also be enough in itself.”
- “As a mediator I have witnessed the impact on separating parents coming into mediation after having attended Parenting Apart, or where I have signposted them to a Parenting Apart session. With the benefit of such attendance the parties appear more able to problem solve at mediation as they have discussed their issues with peers going through the same situation. I believe every mediation with separating parents should be combined with Parenting Apart, so wholeheartedly consider it vital that its funding continues. For the avoidance of doubt, I don't work for Relationships Scotland!”
- Challenges in getting parents to attend:
  - “It is an excellent programme which people would benefit from and do - getting people to come is the difficulty.”
  - “Parents who attend seem to get a lot out of the sessions, and engage well. The challenge is still how to get more parents through the programme.”
  - “Parenting Apart can be an excellent option but it can be difficult to get both parents to attend.”
- Its positive impacts on participants
  - “It is an excellent addition to our other services and creates a different opportunity to support parents and help children.”
  - “A recent client had been referred to the PA classes by the Sheriff and she admitted to dreading it and didn't think that she would get anything from it. However, she found it to be a really positive experience and learned a lot from it. It was helpful for her to express her views and consider why her former partner and her were having such difficulties.”
  - “Great service. I refer all my clients and the feedback received is positive even from those who were reluctant to attend. Real benefit from meeting other parents in similar situations. Awareness of the other parents view really helpful.”
  - “A number of clients have attended the course and after have changed their perception of how they approach the contact problems they gave. One told of how the course made him cry and he felt the course should be compulsory for all parents in solar circumstances. The course makes a parent think and approach contact in a responsible manner and saves on the costs of litigation and shortens any conflict to the benefit of the child. Unfortunately not all parents attend and you need both parents to approach contact in this manner to obtain a positive result.”

## 6.7 Summary

The stakeholder survey is strongly representative of people who refer/signpost individuals to Parenting Apart and also of those PA facilitators who are delivering the most sessions.

Referrers/signposters regard PA sessions as likely to be most beneficial in enabling parents to see the situation from their child/ren's point of view.

Stakeholders considered that the greatest impacts of the PA sessions are in enabling parents to make better decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren, and better able to communicate with the other parent about their child/ren. Several stakeholders commented on the need to develop follow-up measures to effectively assess impact.

Stakeholders noted the relevance of PA to all separated and separating parents; and its complementarity with and enhancement of family mediation work. However, they also noted that there are challenges in getting parents to attend a PA session.

The main area for improvement was identified by stakeholders to be promotion of the service: this could be much better. The provision of more – and more accessible – sessions was also identified as a key area which could be improved.

All PA facilitators who responded to the survey said that they had used their learning through the PA project, and PA resources in other areas of their work, notably in family mediation and contact centre work.

## 7 Conclusions and recommendations

Parenting Apart reached 424 separated parents and indicatively 731 children between October 2015-September 2016.

Parents themselves, Parenting Apart facilitators and wider stakeholders (including referrers/signposters) all regard PA as benefitting parents and children; in particular by enabling parents to:

- See the situation from their child/ren's point of view, and be better able to address their needs.
- Better communicate with the other parent about their child/ren.
- Make better decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren.

Parents say that they are more likely to use family mediation services and agree child maintenance arrangements; and less likely to seek a court order after participating in a Parenting Apart session. Stakeholders note the relevance of PA to all separated and separating parents; and its complementarity with and enhancement of family mediation work.

Stakeholders stressed the need for ongoing effective and light touch monitoring and evaluation to evidence the benefits and impacts of Parenting Apart sessions.

Better promotion of Parenting Apart was the main area for improvement identified by stakeholders. The next most important area for improvement was the provision of more, and more accessible, sessions. By making improvements in these areas Parenting Apart would reach more parents, and make delivery of sessions more efficient – currently most PA sessions are delivered to very small groups – three individuals on average.

The development of the skills base of Parenting Apart facilitators, and of the Parenting Apart resources provide a potential legacy of the project. Significant added value has already been provided through Parenting Apart as facilitators have described how they have used both their learning through the PA facilitator training, and the PA resources in other areas of their work, notably in family mediation and contact centre work.

### 7.1 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Relationships Scotland seeks funding for continued delivery of Parenting Apart.
2. Continued delivery of Parenting Apart includes:
  - a. Clear articulation of the links between Parenting Apart, mediation and courts.
  - b. Improved promotion of the service.
  - c. More accessible delivery of Parenting Apart sessions.
  - d. The development of ongoing effective and light touch monitoring and evaluation to evidence the benefits and impacts of Parenting Apart sessions.

## 8 Appendices

- A. RS services involved in Parenting Apart
- B. Before and After PA session questionnaire
- C. 3 month review questionnaire
- D. Independent review stakeholder survey questionnaire
- E. Groupwork Guidance

## Appendix A: Parenting Apart facilitators

<b>Member Service</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>Total</b>
AVENUE	3 family mediators, 2 counselling background	5
Borders	3 family mediators 1 family support worker	4
Central	5 family mediators	5
Dumfries & Galloway	1 family mediator, 1 child contact centre worker 1 manager, 1 counselling background	4
Highland	2 family mediators 1 family support worker	3
Lothian	8 family mediators	8
Orkney	2 family mediators, 1 family support worker 2 counselling background	5
Shetland	3 family mediators	3
South Lanarkshire	5 family mediators	5
Tayside & Fife	3 family mediators 2 family support worker / counselling background	5
West of Scotland	5 family mediators	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>52</b>

Service Name

Individual Client code

V2

Date mm/yyyy

First half of postcode

Your comments are important and help us to secure funding and to improve our service to clients. Information you provide will be kept confidential.

**Client Questionnaire – Before a Parenting Apart Session**

**1. What is your age and gender?** (please tick)

Male  Female  Other   
Prefer not to say

16-19  20-29  30-39  40-49  50-64  65+

**2. How many children do you have in each of these age ranges?**

0-4 years ..... 5-8 years ..... 9-12 years ..... 13-16 years .....

**3. Are you....**

considering separation?  separated less than 2 years?  separated more than 2 years?   
or have you never lived together with your child/children's other parent?

**4. How well are you, as parents, able to.....**

Very well → Very poorly

discuss issues about your child/children?       
make arrangements for your child/children?       
sort out arguments or disputes?

**5. How well do you think**

Very well → Very poorly

you are coping with your current family situation?       
your child/children are coping with their current family situation?

**6. What proportion of time do your children spend with you?**

All of the time  More than half  About half  Less than half  None of the time

**7. How satisfied are you with the current arrangements for your children?**

Very satisfied → Very unsatisfied

**8. Are you attending mediation to discuss arrangements for your children?**

Yes No

**9. Are you using solicitors to discuss arrangements for your children?**

**10. Are you currently seeking a court order?**

**11. Do you have an agreement about child maintenance in place?**



## Client Questionnaire – After a Parenting Apart Session

**1. To what extent has participating in this session increased your understanding about**

	A lot	→	A little
how to cope with your current family situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
what your children may be experiencing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
how to help your children cope better?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
how to discuss issues about your child/children more effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
how to make arrangements for your child/children more effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
how to sort out arguments or disputes more effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**2. What do you plan to do differently as a result of participating in this session?**

**3. Are you now more or less likely to:**

	More	Less	No change
attend mediation to discuss arrangements for your children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
use solicitors to discuss arrangements for your children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
seek a court order?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
agree a child maintenance arrangement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4. At this stage do you think what you have found out will improve your family situation?** Yes  No

**5. Would you recommend Parenting Apart Sessions to others?**

**Please write any comments you have about the Parenting Apart Session here**

To help us to improve our service, and to meet the requirements of our funders, we will contact you in three to six months for a follow up review. We may use your comments anonymously in materials. We may ask if you would be willing to share your experiences to help us to spread the word to other parents that support is available. Getting some positive publicity can make a real difference.

**Thank you for completing this form.**

Service Name

Individual Client code

V2

Date mm/yyyy

First half of postcode

16-19  20-29  30-39  40-49  50-64  65+

Male  Female  Other   
Prefer not to say

Children in each age range:

0-4 years ..... 5-8 years ..... 9-12 years ..... 13-16 years .....

considering separation  separated less than 2 years  separated more than 2 years   
or never lived together with your child/children's other parent?

**Client Questionnaire – Parenting Apart Follow up Review**

Your comments are important and help us to secure funding and to improve our service to clients. Information you provide will be kept confidential.

**1. How well are you, as parents, able to.....** Very well → Very poorly

discuss issues about your child/children?

make arrangements for your child/children?

sort out arguments or disputes?

**2. How well do you think** Very well → Very poorly

you are coping with your current family situation?

your child/children are coping with their current family situation?

**3. What proportion of time do your children spend with you?**

All of the time  More than half  About half  Less than half  None of the time

**7. How satisfied are you with the current arrangements for your children?** Very satisfied → Very unsatisfied

**5. Are you attending mediation to discuss arrangements for your children?** Yes No

**6. Are you using solicitors to discuss arrangements for your children?**

**7. Are you currently seeking a court order?**

**8. Do you have an agreement about child maintenance in place?**

**9. Did attending a Parenting Apart Session improve your family situation?**

**10. Have you recommended Parenting Apart Sessions to others?**

**11. Do you have any comments about the Parenting Apart Session and the impact this had on your family situation?**

We may use your comments anonymously in materials.

Would you be willing to share your experiences to help us to spread the word to other parents that support is available? Getting some positive publicity can make a real difference. If you are, we would contact you again for you to find out more about how this would work in practice. Yes  No

**Thank you for your time to provide this feedback.**

## Parenting Apart Nov 2016

### Introduction

**The Scottish Government has funded Relationship Scotland to support Parenting Apart information sessions since April 2015.**

**Relationships Scotland has commissioned SMCI Associates ([www.smciassociates.com](http://www.smciassociates.com)) to review the (potential) impacts of Parenting Apart, and will report to the Scottish Government in December 2016.**

**A key aspect of SMCI Associates' independent review of Parenting Apart is this survey of the views of people who signpost parents to Parenting Apart and people who are involved in delivering Parenting Apart sessions.**

**This questionnaire will take you no more than 10 minutes to complete.**

**Your responses are totally confidential. SMCI Associates is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998: registration number is Z1092649.**

**If you have any queries about the survey, or would like any further information, please don't hesitate to contact Dr Sheila Inglis, Director, SMCI Associates [sheila@smciassociates.com](mailto:sheila@smciassociates.com), phone: 07894 337317.**

1. Have you heard of Parenting Apart?

Yes

No

Not heard of Parenting Apart

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2. Would you like to know more about Parenting Apart?

Yes

No

Would like to know more about Parenting Apart

3. If you would like to know more about Parenting Apart, please provide your email address below and SMC I Associates will pass this to Relationship Scotland so that they can send you information about Parenting Apart.

Heard of Parenting Apart

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4. Do you refer or signpost people to Parenting Apart?

Yes

No

Don't refer or signpost

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5. Please tell us why you don't refer or signpost people to Parenting Apart



Referrers/signposters

6. Please tell us approximately how many people you have referred to Parenting Apart in the last year

- fewer than 5
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- more than 30

7. Please tell us how you thought that the people you referred to Parenting Apart sessions would benefit at the point at which you signposted/referred.

Not relevant at all    Slightly beneficial and relevant    Beneficial and relevant    Very beneficial and relevant

They would meet other parents who live apart from their child/rens other parent

Please comment

They would learn from hearing about the experiences of other parents who live apart from their child/rens other parent

Please comment

They would find out about ways of coping better with separation

Please comment

They would be better able to see the situation from their child/rens point of view

Not relevant at all    Slightly beneficial and relevant    Beneficial and relevant    Very beneficial and relevant

Please comment

They would find out about ways of better communicating with the other parent about their child/ren

Please comment

They would be better able to make decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/re

Please comment

They would be better able to manage conflict more effectively

Please comment

They would be better able to consider alternatives to court

Please comment

Involved in delivery of Parenting Apart???

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8. Are you involved in the delivery of Parenting Apart?

Yes

No

Involved in delivery of Parenting Apart

9. Are you

- An agency manager?
- A Parenting Apart facilitator
- Both a manager and a Parenting Apart facilitator
- Other (please specify)

Done PA training??

10. Have you done the Parenting Apart facilitators training?

Yes

No

11. Have you delivered any Parenting Apart sessions?

Yes

No

Delivered Parenting Apart sessions

12. Please tell us approximately how many Parenting Apart sessions you have been involved in delivering in the last year

- Fewer than 5
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- More than 20

Please comment

Trained but not delivered

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13. Please tell us why you have not delivered any Parenting Apart sessions

Wider use of PA training & resources

14. Have you used your learning from the Parenting Apart facilitators training in any of your other work with families?

- Yes
- No

15. If you have used your learning from the Parenting Apart facilitators training in any other your other work with families please describe below

16. Have you made use of any of the Parenting Apart resources? Please tick all that apply

- Booklets
- DVD: Children's Voices
- Interactive exercises
- None of these resources
- Other (please specify)

17. If you have made use of Parenting Apart resources in any other aspects of your work with families, please describe below



18. Have you been involved in delivering Parenting Apart sessions in any venues outwith your agency?

Yes

No

19. If you have been involved in delivering Parenting Apart sessions in venues outwith your agency please describe below

Impact etc

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20. Please tell us how much impact you think the Parenting Apart sessions have by telling us how much you agree with the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Strongly agree	N/A
Parents are less likely to go to court to sort out child contact and residency issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				
Parents cope better with separation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				
Parents are better able to communicate with the other parent about their child/ren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				
Parents are better able to make decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				
Children experience less parental conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				
Parents who live apart are better able to put their children's needs first	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				
Parents who live apart recognise the importance of their child's relationship with their other parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				
Parents who live apart develop effective co-parenting relationships	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Please comment	<input type="text"/>				

21. Please tell us about any ways that Parenting Apart could be better

22. Please add any other comments that you have about Parenting Apart here

23. Please tell us which of the following describes you. Please tick all that apply

- Agency manager
- Counsellor
- Family Lawyer/solicitor
- Family mediation/counselling agency manager
- Family Mediator
- Family Support Worker
- Social Worker
- Sheriff/Judge
- Other (please specify)

24. Please tell us which local authority area/s you work in. Please tick all that apply

- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire
- Angus
- Argyll & Bute
- Clackmannanshire
- Dumfries & Galloway
- Dundee City
- East Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- East Lothian
- East Renfrewshire

- 
- Edinburgh, City of
  - Eilean Siar
  - Falkirk
  - Fife
  - Glasgow City
  - Highland
  - Inverclyde
  - Midlothian
  - Moray
  - North Ayrshire
  - North Lanarkshire
  - Orkney Islands
  - Perth & Kinross
  - Renfrewshire
  - Scottish Borders
  - Shetland Islands
  - South Ayrshire
  - South Lanarkshire
  - Stirling
  - West Dunbartonshire
  - West Lothian

**PARENTING APART Practitioners and Managers Learning Forum**  
**8<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

**Knowing that – and how – it's made a difference**  
**Groupwork: 10.45 – 12.45**

**Group facilitator**

Please identify a facilitator for your group. The role of the facilitator is to keep the group discussion focused on the issues that we are asking you to consider.

**Group scribe**

Please also identify a scribe for your group. The role of the scribe is to note the groups agreed response to each issue, and to note any key areas of disagreement, using the worksheet provided. **The worksheet should be used to note the conclusions of your group, and handed to Sheila – you don't need to do any writing up after this workshop!**

**Group spokesperson**

Finally, please identify a person who will report back during the plenary on your discussion.

Parenting Apart aims to make sessions available across Scotland to as many parents who live apart as possible to improve outcomes for children.

As a group, please consider the following questions:

- What is it that Parenting Apart is doing?
- Are these the right activities to improve outcomes for children? Is anything missing?
- How do you know whether Parenting Apart has improved outcomes for children?

Please use the tables overleaf to record your discussion.

	What is it that Parenting Apart is doing?	How does this activity improve outcomes for children?	How do you know whether Parenting Apart has improved outcomes for children?
Give parents opportunities to learn from other parents			
Help parents to cope better with separation			
Help parents to see the situation from the child's point of view			
Help parents to communicate effectively with the other parent about their child/ren			
Help parents to make decisions and plans about arrangements for their child/ren			
Help parents manage conflict more effectively			
Help parents to consider alternatives to the court			
Any other activities that Parenting Apart should be doing to improve outcomes for children			