SPPD

The Separated Parenting Programme Directory

Formally known as the National Association of Separated Parenting Programmes NASSP

Standards for Programme Self Certification

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Introduction

The Separated Parenting Programme Directory (SPPD) is a national online directory. It provides a single place for separating parents and referring agencies to **find quality-assured programmes,** to give parents the tools and skills to parent effectively as separated parents.

Through consultation with leading providers we have developed the standards detailed in this document. Each programme is unique, reflecting the diverse needs of families, but the standards establish core principles of quality and safe practice that are common for all effective programmes. The standards will be regularly reviewed and updated as professional practice continue to evolve.

The standards **reassure parents that the programmes included in the directory are safe, reliable, and of proven value**, while also giving referring agencies and the courts confidence in their effectiveness.

The standards provide:

- a definition of the key components of any separated parenting programme,
- a basis for training and support of programme staff,
- a benchmark for quality
- The minimum requirements to be included in The Separated Parenting Programme Directory.

Benefits for providers

- Attract More Clients Directly: The SPPD website makes it easy for parents to find and choose a programme.
- Streamlined Referrals: SPPD's centralised directory makes it easier for schools, courts and health professionals to refer parents.
- Enhanced Professional Network: Connect with other parenting programme providers and industry professionals through SPPD.
- Quality Assurance Recognition: SPPD's quality assurance standards highlight reliability and expertise.

As a first step we invite programme providers to **self-certify** that their programmes meet the minimum required standards - see sections A1,B1,C1,D1 and E1. Programmes will be included in the directory once they have confirmed that they meet these sections. Sections A2,B2,C2,D2 and E2 provide guidance for enhanced best practice.

In time SPPD, in collaboration with programme providers, hopes to develop a robust accreditation programme that could potentially become a **recognised standard for separated parenting programmes in England, Wales and Scotland.** Providers would gain accreditation by submitting a portfolio of evidence, for review by an agreed panel of SPPD assessors. Details of the application process will be developed in due course.

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SPPD Standards Framework

Section A: Specific Interactive Programme Content

Section A1: Minimum Standard The programme **must** provide the opportunity for participants to:	
A1.1	To listen to and understand children's views on being children of separated parents.
A1.2	To consider and discuss what children need as children of separated parents.
A1.3	To recognise both their own and their children's emotional responses and adjustment process.
A1.4	Learn how to manage conflict and difficulties with their ex-partners.
A1.5	Apply these principles by planning and by imagining positive management behaviours, to put their learning into practice.

Section A2: Key course messages - objectives and content The programme **should** include the following as relevant to the specific course aims:	
Understanding and Managing the Impact of Conflict	
A2.2a	To interact and communicate effectively with each other as parents in a way that does not escalate conflict.
A2.2b	To understand and apply principles of key conflict management skills: active and empathic listening, self-regulation techniques, and non-confrontational responding.
A2.2c	To set appropriate boundaries and learn how to uphold their own, and also respect those of the other parent.
The Importance and Effectiveness of Communication	

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A2.3a	To clarify expectations of parents in listening, contributing and recognising responsibilities and capacity for change.
A2.3b	To understand the importance of language and its nuance, and the effect that words can have on children.
A2.3c	To develop a co-operative approach to decision-making together.
A2.3d	To be introduced to other programme members and to understand that they are not alone in their experiences; to use this to see things from other perspectives.
Parental Skills, Behaviour and Resources	
A2.4a	To consider key skills for parents that can make a difference and improve children's lives.
A2.4b	To identify their own strengths as parents and how these qualities might be used as a separated parent.
A2.4c	To see separated parenting as an on-going process and the necessary points along the way: the normative legal, emotional process.
A2.4d	To learn how to manage their emotions.
A2.4e	To identify any changes that they have made and plan forward.
A2.4f	Understand the options and services available for resolving issues including using mediation, family law processes etc
A2.4g	To identify resources that they can access to gain support for themselves and their children.

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Section B: Approach and Delivery of Interactive Programmes

Section B1: Minimum Standard The programme **must**	
B1.1	Be delivered empathically, in a non-judgemental way and be solution focussed.
B1.2	Focus parents on helping children to thrive with parents who work together.
B1.3	Focus on empowering, educating and informing.
B1.4	Teach skills and tools to parent effectively as separated parents.
B1.5	Be based on widely accepted, evidence based research findings which have been peer reviewed and which are not selectively influenced.
B1.6	Ensure Courses evolve and keep improving content to remain relevant in line with research findings.
B1.7	Ensure appropriate language is used in the content and delivery of the courses (i.e. correct terminology (avoiding e.g. custody, access, common law spouse), use plain English, be positive, personal, proportionate, problem-solving (avoid combative language).
B1.8	Help participants to move forward and include goal setting for future positive separated co parenting.
B1.9	Have a Confidentiality Statement that i. Outlines the safeguarding policy and procedure at the start of the course ii. Ensures a general confidentiality clause is agreed by participants iii. Clarifies exceptions to confidentiality - Crime/ Persons at Risk/Children at Risk/Breaking the Law/Safeguarding
B1.10	Have a GDPR policy which is outlined to participants
B1.11	Not record sessions whether course is in-person or online
B1.12	Not provide information to a court or others (other than that the participant attended) unless a safeguarding obligation arises.
B1.13	Enable people to reach their own solutions.
B1.14	Outline the options for resolving issues including using mediation, family law processes etc so the pathway is clear.

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Section B2: Guidance for Enhanced Best Practice The programme **should**	
B2.1	Emphasise the participant's strengths and empower them.
B2.2	Promote parental responsibility and accountability to focus on the needs and rights of their children.
B2.3	Aim to offer different perspectives, without invalidating the participant's reality.
B2.4	For group courses, give parents the chance to exchange ideas constructively and focus on children.
B2.5	Signpost, refer or direct participants appropriately to other sources of support, advice or information. Trainers should have a good knowledge of early resolution options, support organisations, helpful books and resources, online resources.
B2.6	Have trainers familiar with appropriate information, research and studies on separated families i.e. Nuffield FJO; Family Solutions Group; Cafcass; MoJ; Resolution; etc.
B2.7	Have trainers engaged in ongoing professional development relevant to separated parents.
B2.8	Not be used as part of a Children's Services Plan.

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Section C: Separated Parenting Programme Providers

Section C.1 Essential Minimum Standard The programme **must**	
C1.1	Where a programme is delivered by a trainer (rather than an online self guided programme) the trainer's ability has a big impact on the effectiveness of the course. Ensure trainers are suitably experienced e.g. - Experience of working with families - Knowledge of impact of conflict on children - Understanding of child welfare - Experience of running training sessions - Knowledge of separation and divorce context - Knowledge of dispute resolution options - Understanding of conflict – impact, resolving and avoiding it - Understanding of domestic abuse concerns - Understanding when reporting obligations arise (child protection, safeguarding and DA)
C1.2	Accurately advertise the programme to potential participants and share an overview of the course content - to ensure participants know the focus of the course and the skills the trainer brings.
C1.3	Have suitable and adequate professional liability insurance.
C1.4	Have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Neutrality, impartiality, being non-judgmental is an essential part of separated parenting courses. Must not seek to diagnose, collude, provide specific answers to individual cases, show bias or build a case against another parent
C1.6	Be delivered in suitable format for learning needs of participants. All training courses to be stimulating and engaging.

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Section C.2 Guidance for enhanced best practice The programme and trainers **should**	
C2.1	Demonstrate the relevant experience and qualifications of all Trainers
C2.2	Have experience of delivering interactive training in small groups.
C2.3	Have experience of working with separated families
C2.4	Have experience of and understanding of online coaching (if included in programme)
C2.5	Have experience of and understanding of therapeutic approaches (if included in programme)
C2.6	Courses should have suitable regular review and supervision of trainers.
C2.7	Have appropriate trainer/delegate ratios Online: Ideally up to 4 participants per trainer but with a maximum of 5 for interactive online courses to bring different training insights and experience to provide a 'balance' of information. In Person: For interactive courses one trainer with no more than 4 delegates and two trainers for more than 4 delegates.
C2.8	Have suitable facilities if undertaking group working online or face to face: a. Breakout space (in-person or online), safe (i.e. private, not in general waiting area) b. Safe space for the group (people become emotionally charged) i. Private space (nobody else in the participant's room especially vital that no child is present or can overhear) ii. no interruptions

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	iii. not overlooked iv. not recorded
C2.9	Send out information about i. the overview of the course content ii. the objectives of the course, iii. whether the course is information giving/lecture style or interactive iv. additional educational material as a future resource which could include v. v. participants starting to make goals with an opportunity to prepare them vi. whether for individual parents or couples vii. potential emotional impact of the course viii. impartiality/role of the trainer ix. processes in place to help safety/wellbeing of participants x. private space (nobody else in the participant's room, especially vital that no child is present or can overhear) xi. obligation to report to relevant authorities in certain circumstances (e.g. child welfare/domestic abuse).
C2.10	Set group agreement and rules that participants sign up to :- - personal responsibility, - safe space, - respect, - confidentiality, - engagement, - guidelines for course participation, - silent phones, - speak for self, - use of chat function
C2.11	Send SPPD and annual update that includes how many referrals have been received via SPPD

Section D: Safety

Section D1: Minimum Standard The programme **must**	
D1.1	Ensure courses safeguard participants with respect to DA and Coercive Control. There must be a Service Safeguarding Policy and Procedure which highlights the designated lead on safeguarding and includes a clear code of conduct for appropriate staff behaviour when interacting with parents. The Service Safeguarding Policy and Procedure must include a procedure regarding responding to disclosures of abuse and give parents information about appropriate support services. The Service Safeguarding Policy and Procedure must ensure that safeguarding incidents are securely recorded.
D1.2	Ensure courses consider safeguarding issues for the children and young people who may be affected by their parent's participation on the course with respect to child protection and children at risk.
D1.3	Ensure that trainers are clear that a course may not be designed or appropriate for parents who have experienced domestic abuse in cases where there is a potential risk of harm. Court referred participants, where domestic abuse is an issue, must be helped to receive appropriate resources and support.
D1.4	Have a safety check-in ahead of in-person or on-line group starting. Emphasis on participants getting the most out of the course, e.g. by having a private space where the participant can speak freely and to ensure that no child is present or can overhear.
D1.5	Have clear rules regarding use of the chat function for participants (noting that participant interactions can be a source of support and encouragement). Chat function to only be used for a.trainer to participant or whole group or b.participant to whole group or trainer (not amongst group members privately).
D1.6	Clearly communicate courses must not be recorded (by the programme or by participants.)
D1.7	Have ability to use breakout room for individual use, not multiple person use (unless a trainer present) online and in person.
D1.8	Ensure the Health and safety of the environment for in-person courses

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Section D2: Guidance For Enhanced Best Practice The programme and trainers **should**	
D2.1	Properly prepare participants on relevant safety issues - a. Information about impact of course b. Need for private space for participant (if course online) c. Related participants not to attend together - unless a course is designed for couples d. Obligation to make referrals to relevant organisations if safety/welfare concerns require this.
D2.2	Enable individual safety assessments, including emotional/ mental readiness, ahead of in-person group starting to ensure safety and wellbeing of all participants can form part of outcomes tool for the provider.
D2.3	Ensure digital safeguarding and consider encrypted digital communications with participants.

Section E: Feedback/Complaints

Section E1: Essential Minimum Standard The programme **must**	
E1.1	Seek and collate feedback
E1.2	Inform delegates about how feedback will be used
E1.8	Provide an annual update to SPPD for statistical and quality control monitoring on • number of attendees referred via the Directory • feedback received

Section E2: Guidance For Enhanced Best Practice The programme **should**	
E2.1	Record how feedback and complaints have been used to develop the provision and delivery of Parent Programmes on an ongoing basis

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