

Dispute Resolution Separated Parents Information Programme

The Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP) is a course designed to help separated parents become clear about what their children need most from them and learn the fundamental principles of how to manage conflict and difficulties – including how to put this into practice.

The Programme encourages parents to take steps for themselves. It is often better to reach an agreement away from court and the Programme can help make sure that any agreement made is based on the child's needs. The Programme will give you ideas and signpost ways in which you can get help outside court, and you are expected to make use of these where possible. The Programme also aims to help both parents to improve communication skills as separated parents. The majority of parents that go on the course find it very helpful.

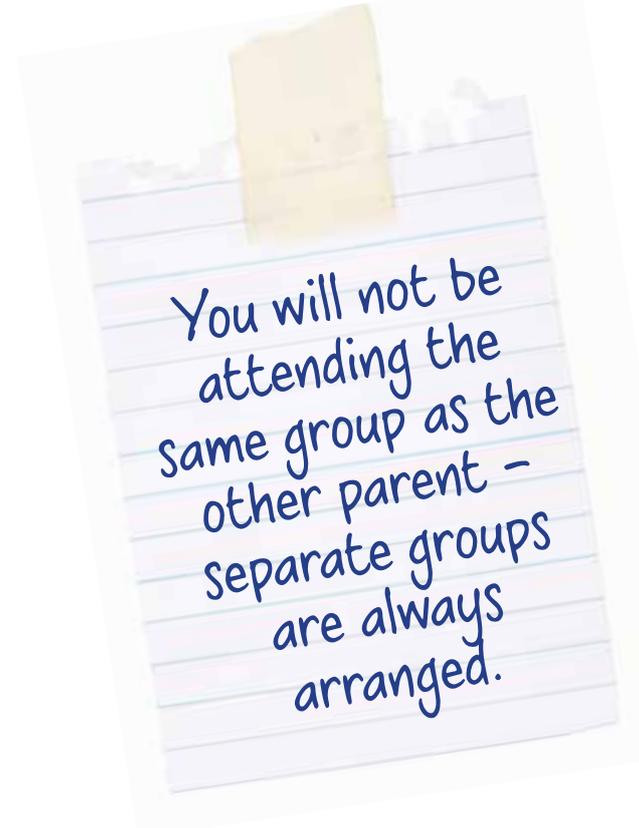
The Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP)

- * Is usually delivered to mixed groups of parents in two, two-hour sessions or one four-hour session. You need to be there for the whole programme.
 - * Separated couples do not go on the same course, but it is important that both parents go on a programme.
- A SPIP might be appropriate for parents (or other parties) when:
- * you have difficulty focusing on your children's needs due to ongoing conflict
 - * you find that your feelings and reactions to the separation are affecting your ability to communicate about your children
 - * you would like communication to improve – perhaps you are thinking about mediation
 - * there are no safeguarding concerns about children or parents.

The programme covers

- * Working as separated parents in the best interests of your children.
- * What children need: you will watch a powerful DVD made by young people that follows a family over a six month period.
- * Parent communication – you will be asked to think about prepared scenarios from other viewpoints. You will also see and try out some methods that can help both parents react better to stress in practical ways.
- * Emotions – you will look at the emotional effect of separation or being separated parents and the options for moving forward.





You will not be attending the same group as the other parent – separate groups are always arranged.

How to join a SPIP

You will need to find a provider local to you on the Cafcass website. Providers are also listed on <http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/about-cafcass/commissioned-services-and-contact-activities/information-for-service-users.aspx>

It is strongly recommended that both parents attend the group. You will not be attending the same group as the other parent – separate groups are **always** arranged. Attending a SPIP can also be useful for new partners and for extended family but is not suitable for children.

You will need to contact your chosen SPIP provider who will book you on to a course. You should also look at the Parenting Plan which has some important questions about potential risks to adults and children; group providers will ask you these questions so you should think about them in advance.

The SPIP has been developed and evaluated by Cafcass, Relate and the Department for Education, and has been delivered to more than 50,000 individuals, most gave good feedback and almost all wished that they had

attended much earlier – before going to lawyers or court. Men and women, resident and non-resident parents rate the group equally highly.

The cost of attending a SPIP is £150 each. This will include discussions about your needs in advance of the group, and help with finding next steps following the group. There are local pilots where the cost of attendance is partly or fully subsidised by the Department for Education; please enquire from your local provider.

This is what other parents have said after attending the group:

“The right thing for my children, and myself – in that order.”

“I know this is how I need to be for my children.”

“I’d recommend the course to anyone who has separated from their partner, with children – even where conflict is minimal.”

“The trainers have and displayed in depth understanding of the matters involving parent children relationship.”

“Great clear, concise information and opportunity to hear other people’s experience and ask questions to improve my children’s emotional environment in the separation process.”

“I found this course very informative and it certainly changed my outlook and views. (Brilliant).”

“A very useful course, helped understand both parties situation and how we can make the separated process better for children.”

“Excellent presentations. Very well prepared and made the day relaxed. A lot better than expected.”

Feedback

Providers of the SPIP will ask for your feedback about the group – to inform their practice. Cafcass is also asking for information about where the SPIP fits in to your pathway towards resolving your dispute. There is no feedback to any other organisation or to court but we may ask you if you are willing to participate in any future research study.



Supported by Cafcass

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