

Supporting children through family change

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Supporting children through family change

A review of interventions and services for children of divorcing and separating parents

Joanna Hawthorne, Julie Jessop, Jan Pryor and Martin Richards

The **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** has supported this project as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policy makers, practitioners and service users. The facts presented and views expressed in this report are, however, those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation.

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First published 2003 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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A CIP catalogue record for this report is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1 84263 073 3 (paperback)

ISBN 1 84263 085 7 (pdf: available at www.jrf.org.uk)

Cover design by Adkins Design

Prepared and printed by:

York Publishing Services Ltd

64 Hallfield Road

Layorthorpe

York YO31 7ZQ

Tel: 01904 430033 Fax: 01904 430868; Website: www.yyps-publishing.co.uk

Further copies of this report, or any other JRF publication, can be obtained either from the JRF website (www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/) or from our distributor, York Publishing Services Ltd, at the above address.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the organisations and individuals who have responded to our (sometimes repeated) requests for information about their programmes, activities and interventions.

We are very grateful to members of our Advisory Group: Mog Ball, Erica De’Ath, Gillian Douglas, Vicky Leach, Maureen Lynch, Judith Timms, Amanda Wade, and to Susan Taylor of

the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, for their assistance, advice and support throughout this project. Jane Brotchie provided invaluable editorial consultancy for the preparation of the final report.

As always, Jill Brown and Sally Roberts of the Centre for Family Research have provided very efficient technical and administrative support for our project.

Introduction

This report will be of interest to all those who currently provide services and interventions for children of separating and divorcing parents, as well as those who may be involved in planning these. It offers a review of the most up-to-date research in relation to divorce and separation and its impact on children, and provides a framework for evaluating existing and new interventions.

During one year (2000–2001) we carried out a survey of a selection of possible service providers in the UK to establish what services and interventions were currently being provided for children. Our review of services and other interventions currently on offer shows that support services are rarely evaluated, with the result that it is currently hard to judge which interventions are working, or even whether they are reaching the children they aim to serve. The good news is that there is a great deal of activity out there: many organisations are offering services that are potential sources of vital support to children at a vulnerable time in their lives. The range of services and other interventions we found is very wide – from telephone helplines, through to leaflets and websites, to classes and counselling. A selection of these are described in Chapter 3.

The task ahead for those planning services is to build on and bring together the best initiatives, to avoid duplication of effort and to routinely evaluate the effectiveness of any new or existing service. Children will be better served by organisations that make efforts to communicate between programmes and to systematically compare or evaluate the impact they may have on families.

Based on a review of the research on children and parental divorce and separation (Chapters 1 and 2), this report offers, in Chapter 4, a framework for designing services and interventions and evaluating their effectiveness, and the concluding chapter makes some suggestions for practice and policy that may give some insights into how these tasks can be accomplished.

Our focus in this report is on separation and divorce, so our survey has excluded a much wider range of materials, services and interventions that deal with parenting more generally, or specific topics such as domestic violence or the parenting of children with disabilities. These latter issues may, of course, be relevant for some divorcing parents and their children but are not specific to, or confined to, such families.

Background to the research

It is now well established that most children and young people experience upset during periods of parental conflict and separation, and for some, there may be persistent negative consequences (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). These findings have led, in the last few decades, to the development of a wide range of support services for children and their families when transitions such as divorce and stepfamily formation occur.

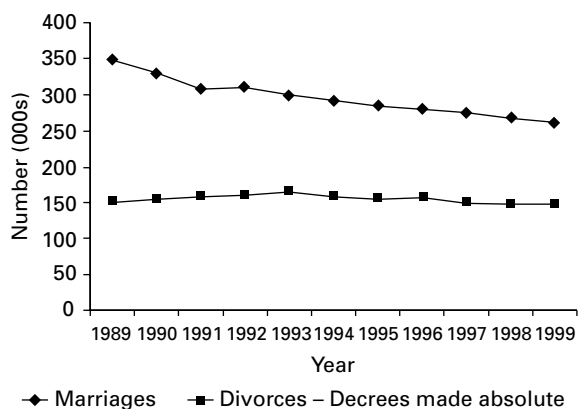
Here we will consider some of the factors that have contributed to this increase in support services.

Continuing high levels of divorce and separation

Over the past decade there has been a slight fall in the numbers of divorces in England and Wales so that there are now less than 150,000 per year (see Figure 1).

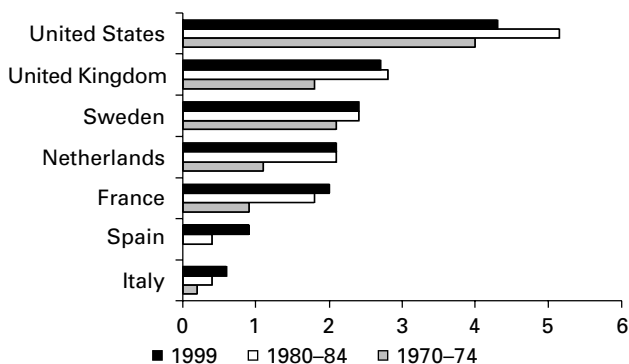
This pattern of stability or declining divorce is similar to that seen in Scandinavian countries and the USA which all have relatively high divorce rates (see Figure 2). As can also be seen in Figure 1, there has been a relatively steep decline in the annual number of marriages in England and Wales. This fall in the number of marriages is the probable explanation of static or declining divorce rates in the UK and in the other high divorce rate countries of north-west Europe and North America. As marriage rates decline, it is likely to be increasingly confined to those sections of the population most

Figure 1 Marriages and divorces in England and Wales (1989–1999)



Source: Office of National Statistics

Figure 2 Crude divorce rates per 1,000 population

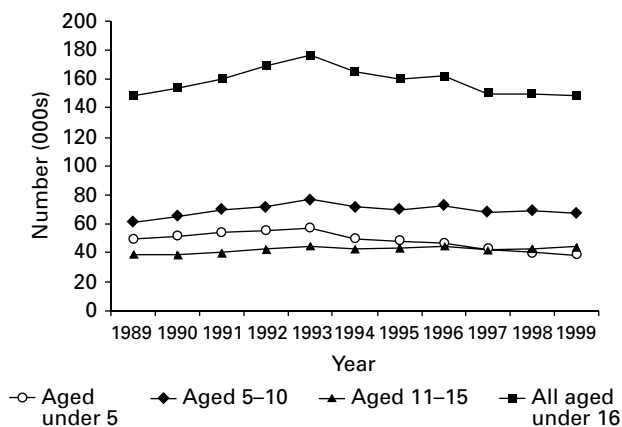


Source: Office of National Statistics

committed to enduring unions and who are less likely to experience divorce. So as this 'selection' of those marrying increases, the earlier rising divorce rates stabilise or decline.

About two thirds of those who divorce have children under 16, which means that, in total, about 150,000 children experience a parental divorce in England and Wales each year (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Children of couples divorced in England and Wales, by age of child (1989–1999)



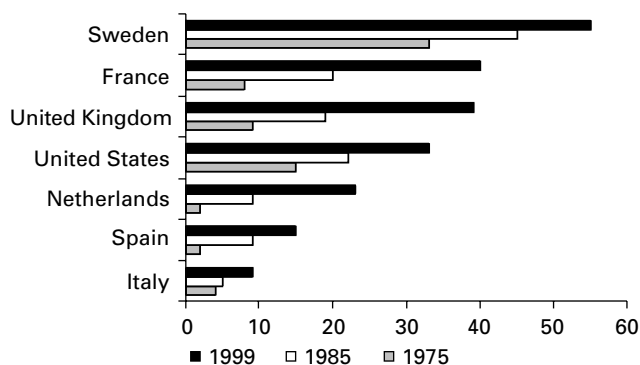
Source: Office of National Statistics

As can be seen in Figure 3, the 5–10 age group is most commonly affected. Clearly this pattern has implications for services aimed at children.

Cohabitation and separation

As marriage rates have declined, cohabitation has become more common and a growing number of children are born to unmarried couples. Figure 4 shows how this has become a general trend in Europe and the USA.

Figure 4 Percentages of births outside marriage



Source: Office of National Statistics

There is no formal registration of cohabitation, or the separation of unmarried parents, so we cannot be precise about the number of children who experience the separation of their unmarried parents. However, the figure is considerable and probably not too far short of those who experience divorce. Clearly, from the point of view of interventions and services, it is important to recognise this group, which cannot be reached via the legal procedures of divorce. Neither the formation nor the dissolution of cohabitation requires any formal or legal procedures.

Rising number of court orders

Before concluding this brief survey of the key statistics concerning divorce, separation and children we should mention the use of courts by separating parents. Government policies are designed to reduce court involvement and encourage parents to make their own arrangements, with professional support (through information, mediation, etc.). The statistics, however, show a trend of increasing court orders.

Table 1 shows the number of court orders made annually in England and Wales and indicates a rise in the number of orders regarding contact with the non-resident parent. The reason for this increase is not entirely clear, but it would appear to reflect a

Table 1 Number of court orders made annually – Private Law 1993–2000 (England and Wales)

Type of Order	1993	1995	1997	2000
Residence	22,314	25,505	25,841	25,809
Contact	27,780	35,280	40,660	46,070
Prohibited steps	6,631	5,799	5,190	5,345
Specific issues	1,563	1,741	2,108	2,457
Family Assistance orders	913	1,039	1,009	979

Source: Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service, 2002

change in professional practice, so that, in effect, more parents are being encouraged to seek formal court orders, particularly in relation to contact, rather than relying on the informal arrangements they may make between themselves.

Focus on children's well-being and rights

The research evidence that we discuss in Chapters 1 and 2 reflects a growing interest in recent years in children's well-being and their role in the process of separation and divorce. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by the British government in 1991, enshrines the child's right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters or procedures affecting themselves. Article 9 is also relevant to our discussion as it concerns parental separation and describes 'the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests' (Article 9.3).

In line with a predominantly 'caretaker' view of childhood, many of the traditional support systems have operated via parents and other adults on the assumption that their benefits will flow through to children from these adults. Parents are often 'gatekeepers' for their children in determining what, if any, access their children will have to information and support services. So the impact on children of programmes designed for parents is necessarily indirect and mediated by the parents. Whilst research suggests that children may benefit from interventions that help to improve adult relations during and after separation, children still have separate needs for support. The focus of this report is how these separate needs are being addressed (or not) by interventions directed at children.

How children access their support is an important question, which warrants further investigation. Researchers and service providers have united in arguing that children have a right to be involved in decisions and that they have the capacity to act as agents in their own lives. However, whilst there seems to have been an increase in the number of interventions directly targeted at children themselves, much of the activity we found in our study continues to give support for children by providing services and advice to parents.

Statutory and voluntary sector involvement

With the Family Law Act 1996, the state became directly involved in providing information to parents and children. The Act required that at least one member of each divorcing couple attend an information meeting. After extensive piloting of these provisions, the government decided not to implement the Act. However, in 2002 the Legal Services Commission began setting up FAINS (the Family Advice and Information Network) which aims to provide a 'fully co-ordinated, comprehensive and inter-disciplinary approach to the concerns, difficulties and problems experienced by families where marital and parental relationships are in danger of breaking down or have already broken down' (FAINS, March, 2002).

At the same time, the Lord Chancellor's Department launched a series of leaflets for children and parents, and a parenting plan. These were developed from the materials originally produced for the information meetings of the Family Law Act 1996.

In addition to these new initiatives, 2001 saw the setting up of the new unified Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services

(CAFCASS). This was already involved in the provision of information for children about its own role and services, and about proceedings more generally. However, despite these projects and their good intentions, the first Inspectorate's report on CAFCASS (H.M. Magistrate Courts Service Inspectorate, 2002) noted that there was frustration in the service about the lack of suitable information leaflets for children, families and professional agencies that explained the function of CAFCASS, the duties of the children's guardian and complaints procedures.

Clearly, with all these initiatives in the statutory sector, as well as much activity in the voluntary sector, efforts need to be co-ordinated. As we are completing our report, we are pleased to see that a report to the Lord Chancellor from The Advisory Board on Family Law (*Making Contact Work*, 2002) has reached the same conclusion. This suggests that the Lord Chancellor's Department should 'enter into immediate discussion with the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI), CAFCASS and other interested parties in a co-ordinated approach aimed at providing age-appropriate information for children on the effects of parental separation and on contact'.

While there may seem to be a great deal of activity from the perspective of those who provide services and interventions, the experiences of children whose parents were divorcing may be rather different. As yet, there is no research on which to base a firm statement. However, an informed guess would be that the majority of children experiencing parental divorce will be unaware of most, if not all, the services and interventions discussed in this report. While we found some excellent interventions, all too often the distribution or uptake seems to be limited.

Summary

This report is concerned with the provision of support services and information for children of separating and divorcing parents. It is now well established that most children and young people experience upset during periods of parental conflict and separation and, for some, there may be persistent negative consequences. These findings have led, in the last few decades, to a wide range of support services for children and their families when transitions such as divorce occur. Other factors which have contributed to this increase include:

- Continuing high levels of divorce, and separation of cohabiting parents.
- A rise in the number of court orders made concerning children and parental divorce.
- An increasing focus on children's well-being and rights.

The number of initiatives from statutory sectors and voluntary agencies indicates the need for a co-ordinated approach to providing age-appropriate information.

Support and interventions need to be grounded in evidence from research on children and divorce and should be evaluated to ensure they achieve their aims.

Part 1

A review of research on children's perspectives

1 From a child's point of view: the impact of family change

In this chapter, we review the current research about the impact of divorce and re-partnering. We consider children's perspectives on these transitions and their associated changes and losses. In Chapter 2, we will discuss what the research evidence tells us about outcomes for children who experience family change.

Change: what's new?

The lives and living situations of children have always involved change. Loss of parents through death, changes of location as a result of factors such as changing parental work, migration, and many other sources of family disruption have existed for centuries. We can assume that in the past children have had to cope with the impact of such changes by themselves or, if they were lucky, with the help of family and community members. Today, both the causes of change and rates at which it occurs are different. In the Western world children are most likely now to lose a parent through the breakdown of the parental relationship than by death, and geographical moves are often a consequence of this as families re-form and relocate. The numbers of transitions experienced by children, too, are high as stepfamilies form and, at comparatively high rates, dissolve.

Accompanying these demographic changes, views of children and conceptions of childhood have also changed as families adapt to social and cultural conditions in the twentieth and twenty-first century. As parents have fewer children, child mortality rates fall, and children increasingly become 'emotionally priceless' in relation to their parents – there is an increased focus on how family transitions affect children. Concern for their well-being has also arisen as it has become apparent from a considerable body of research that family change causes distress for most children. Some, too, experience negative consequences well

beyond the time of change, with these sometimes persisting into adulthood.

Children's perspectives on family change

It is remarkable, looking back at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that decades of research examining outcomes for children whose parents separated and re-partnered has failed, with very few exceptions, to ask how children experienced these changes. This reflects the view, often still held, that children's interests are best understood by adults and that decisions in relation to their lives are properly made by their elders (see Trinder (1997) for an account of models of children's roles in decision-making). Two exceptions to this adult-centred perspective on research were early studies in the UK by Walczak and Burns (1984), and Mitchell (1985), in which children and adults were interviewed in retrospect about their experiences of parental divorce. Several recent studies have examined children's perspectives (for example, Brannen *et al.*, 1999; Dunn *et al.*, 2001; Gorrell Barnes *et al.*, 1998; Kaltenborn, 2001; Lyon *et al.*, 1999; McDonald, 1990; Morrow, 1998; Smart *et al.*, 1999; Smith *et al.*, 1997), and from these and the earlier ones, several themes emerge:

- *Distress and sadness:* Children usually report feeling distressed, angry and sad when they find their parents are parting (Dunn *et al.*, 2001; Mitchell, 1985; Pritchard, 1998; Walczak and Burns, 1984; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). This is not, though, universal. In a recent New Zealand study thirty-three per cent of children reported an entirely negative response, twenty-three per cent had mixed reactions, and forty-four per cent had neutral or mildly positive reactions (Smith *et al.*, 1997). Neutral or positive reactions are likely to be associated with the release from

conflicted family situations brought about by separation. Children are also prone to blaming themselves for the departure of a parent from the home, especially if they are young (Kurdek and Siesky, 1980; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980) since they tend to see the world in egocentric ways. It is also apparent that those who are young adults when their parents separate experience distress and sadness (Pryor, 1999). For them the issues are somewhat different; they are, for example, likely to be put into 'parenting' and advisory roles by their parents, and to face the likelihood of re-evaluating their childhood experiences in their families. It is important to note, though, that for some children divorce is not the only or even the major issue they face (Wade and Smart, 2002). Family violence, the absence of a parent for other reasons, or unhappy mothers can be just as significant for children as parental separation.

- *Partial explanations at the time of separation:* Children are rarely told what is going on when their parents part, but find out when one parent leaves the home or they themselves leave with a parent. This was a finding of the earlier UK studies, and more recent evidence suggests that children are still often not given information by their parents. Only 5 per cent of children in the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) study whose parents had separated felt they had a full explanation of the separation (Dunn *et al.*, 2001); and in a New Zealand group interviewed about their views on their parents' separation, very few knew beforehand that it was happening and even two years later a half said they still did not know why it had happened (Gollop *et al.*, 2000).

- *Loss of regular contact with non-resident parent:* Another theme emerging from studies of children's perspectives is their distress at the loss of day-to-day contact with the parent who leaves – usually their father. One US study noted that the loss of their father was the most distressing aspect of separation reported by children (Kurdek and Siesky, 1980). For many, the loss becomes permanent since many fathers and children lose all contact with each other over time. In the UK group interviewed by Walczak and Burns (1984), those who did retain good relations with both parents felt they had coped well, in comparison with those who did not.
- *Not being consulted about what happens:* It is not often that children are consulted about the living arrangements that are made for them after separation. In two studies that have examined this, 67 per cent (Gollop and Taylor, 2000) and 75 per cent (McDonald, 1990) were not asked about their views. Yet it is clear that children and young people do have opinions about these major changes in their lives, and in situations where court processes are involved, it is increasingly understood that children's wishes should be taken into account. Indeed, as we noted earlier, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is very specific about this. However, children do not necessarily want full powers of decision-making and when asked, some say they want no input into the process. In Julia Brannen's study 28 per cent felt this way (Brannen *et al.*, 1999), and younger children are most likely to feel that they want adults to decide (Smart and Neale, 1999). A similar number of children, though, feel that they should make the decisions themselves (Brannen *et al.*, 1999). Overall, many children are able to make the

distinction between participating in decision-making, and being totally self-determining about these issues (Smart and Neale, 1999).

Other key issues emerge from a review of children's perspectives concerning their views about living arrangements after separation; who they turn to for support; and children's views if or when parents re-partner.

What do children say about living arrangements after separation?

In the majority of situations children live with their mothers after separation, and there is wide variation in the extent to which they have contact with their fathers. For many families this is a practical solution that works more or less well, since mothers commonly see themselves, and are seen, as primary caregivers. What do children feel about this? Studies in Canada, the USA, and New Zealand have asked children from the ages of twelve through to young adults what the preferred living situations would be if parents parted (Derevensky and Deschamps, 1997; Kurdek and Sinclair, 1986; Pryor, 2001). Between 61 per cent (Canada) and 68 per cent (New Zealand) said that spending equal time with both parents would be the arrangement of choice, with young children being the most likely to suggest equal time with both parents. In the Canadian study of university students, those whose parents had not separated were more likely than those who had experienced separation to say they would want to spend equal time with both parents. However, in the New Zealand group of adolescents their own experiences of parental separation or living in stepfamilies made no difference to their responses (Pryor, 2001). The second most common endorsement in this group was for living with mothers and visiting fathers, and almost no respondents suggested a situation

where one parent was not in contact with children, even where conflict was involved between the parents. Children's opinions about living arrangements, then, do not tally with the most frequently found situations, or with the commonly held view that children would rather have one home base.

Those who do spend considerable amounts of time in two households have been asked about their experiences. In the ALSPAC group, the majority either felt positive or expressed no negative feelings about holding 'dual citizenship'. In another group, active co-parenting met their desire to maintain good relationships with both mothers and fathers (Smart *et al.*, 2000). This latter group also spoke of their desire for parents to treat each other with respect.

To whom do children turn for support?

As we have seen, parents often do not discuss their separation with their children and it is likely to be apparent to children that their mothers and fathers are in distress at the time the separation is happening. It is not surprising, then, that children are more likely to turn to grandparents and friends than to parents for support and intimate confiding (Dunn *et al.*, 2001). Fathers are particularly unlikely to be used as confidants, perhaps because they are the most likely to leave the family home at the time of separation. Peers are important sources of comfort, especially for girls. Comparatively few children in the UK report that they turn to counsellors for support (Dunn *et al.*, 2001). This may reflect their reluctance to admit to talking to them, or it may be that they do not see counselling services as helpful to them, even if they are available. Some children do not want to talk; rather they find distraction in the form of action and doing things as a way of coping (Wade and Smart, 2002).

Children's views of stepfamilies

The ways in which children see and experience stepfamilies vary notably by age. Young children, when asked, express enthusiasm about step-parents with 70 per cent feeling favourable about stepmothers, and 77 per cent about stepfathers in one US study (Mazur, 1993). Younger children are also more involved than adolescents with stepfathers (Funder, 1996), and younger adolescents have been found to accept a new step-parent more readily than older adolescents (Buchanan *et al.*, 1996). Older adolescents are not so accepting of a new parenting adult in their lives; in a Canadian group who were living in stepfamilies, only 41 per cent included step-parents as members of their families (Gross, 1987) and in a New Zealand group of 16–18 year olds, only 54 per cent considered stepfamilies to be real families (Anyan and Pryor, 2002). The relationship between step-parents and adolescents is more likely to be seen by them as one of friendship than of parent–child, and few see step-parents as having a right to establish rules (Buchanan *et al.*, 1996). Generally, discipline can be a vexed issue between step-parents and adolescents (Gorrell Barnes *et al.*, 1998) and it may be that the optimal kind of parenting a step-parent can do is that which involves warmth and support but little monitoring and control (Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims, 1994).

Age differences in responses to transitions

Children's responses to family transitions are diverse. No one child will experience separation and stepfamily formation in the same way, even within the same family. Their responses will depend on a variety of factors including their age, sex, individual relationships with parents, appraisals of the situations, and coping abilities. Although children whose parents have separated may express distress in varying ways, it is important to remember, too, that they go through the normal transitions of childhood and

adolescence, and their behaviour may not necessarily reflect responses to the separation, but normal responses to normal changes.

It is possible, however, to identify qualitative differences in children's levels of understanding at different ages. which mean their responses to transitions are likely to differ in ways that can be described in general terms. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) have described the following kinds of responses they encountered in children of divorce:

- *Infants and pre-schoolers:* Although it is commonly assumed that infants cannot understand what is going on when parents separate, they are undoubtedly sensitive to emotional changes around them and may express sadness and regression. Pre-school children, especially toddlers, are vulnerable to the loss of an important person in their lives because although they register the loss of a parent they are unable to understand what is happening, and may fear abandonment by one or both parents. They are also, because of cognitive egocentricity, liable to blame themselves for the changes that take place. These considerations suggest that contact with a non-resident parent should be especially frequent for very young children, and that they need reassurance about their role in the separation.
- *School-aged children:* Children between the ages of approximately five and ten may show anger and sadness at the time of separation. They might still blame themselves for the loss of a parent in their day-to-day lives. They may fear loss of practical aspects of their lives such as toys and food because they think in rather concrete ways. They are also able to adapt comparatively readily to the formation of a stepfamily.

- *Adolescents:* Teenagers are able to have a more comprehensive understanding of parental separation and are less able to blame them or to fantasise that their parents will reconcile. They face issues of their own developing autonomy, sexuality, and relationships and these may be affected by parental separation and by subsequent stepfamily formation. Adolescents find the adaptation to living in stepfamilies difficult and may fail to do so since they see no point, given the imminence of leaving home.
- *Young adults:* Despite their maturity, young adults whose parents separate often experience high levels of distress. Their representations of their childhoods and families come under scrutiny as they realise that they may not have been what they seemed. They also find themselves called upon by parents for support in a way that children are not (Pryor, 1999), and experience

divided loyalties as both parents ask for understanding (see also Furstenberg and Kiernan, 2001).

What do children's perspectives tell us?

Children tell us they want to know what is happening and to be given explanations that are appropriate for them. It is particularly important that explanations are age appropriate if children are to be able to participate fully in decisions made (Lyon *et al.*, 1999). They want, too, to retain relationships with both parents and say that the quality of significant relationships with adults is of major importance to them (Wade and Smart, 2002). They often want to be included in the decision-making process that takes place about living arrangements. In short, it is not doing children a favour to exclude them from what is happening in the mistaken belief either that they will not notice, or that they are unable and unwilling to understand.

Summary

Findings from research on children's perspectives show that:

- Children are not usually given an explanation of what is happening at the time of separation.
- They are often not asked what their wishes are regarding living arrangements.
- Most children want continuing relationships with both parents, and often indicate they want to spend equal time with them.
- There are age differences in children's typical responses to parental separation that need to be taken into account.

2 Outcomes for children who experience family change

This chapter continues our review of research, focusing on what we know about outcomes for children.

The distress that children experience when parents divorce, and the associated disruption to their lives, generally dissipate as families re-establish their lives and households. Nonetheless there is a growing debate about the possible medium- and long-term impact of separation (and the subsequent transitions that often follow) on children. In this chapter, we discuss the research findings on the well-being of children beyond the initial phases of family disruption. We begin by examining the assumption we make in this report that an understanding of children's perspectives is essential if support and intervention for them is to be effective.

How are children's views associated with outcomes?

In the last chapter, we discussed what children tell us of their experiences of family change. Although what children say is not always linked with measurable outcomes, the importance of the themes described in Chapter 1 is nevertheless reinforced by research findings that indicate their relevance for outcomes.

Levels of distress and sadness are in themselves important outcomes of separation; however, we do not know in what ways, if at all, they are related to longer-term well-being. It may be that the expression of distress at the time of separation helps children to come to terms with the changes involved. Conversely, high levels of distress may signal risk for negative consequences later in childhood and adolescence. Longitudinal studies that include assessment of distress when separation occurs will help to answer these questions.

Good communication with children at the time of separation enables them to have an

understanding of why one parent is leaving the household. Those in the earlier UK studies who were given explanations at the time about why their parents were separating reported less acute distress at the time, and better adaptation later, than those whose parents did not talk to them about the separation. The most important advice these young people said they would give to separating parents is to talk to children at the time that the separation is happening (Mitchell, 1985). Parents are likely, however, to talk to children differently at different ages. They appear to want to protect younger children from what is going on, based on the perhaps mistaken assumption that what they don't know will not hurt them. In contrast, they may confide fully in adult children and rely on them for counsel and advice.

Knowledge about why a separation is occurring enables children to explain the events that accompany it. When they do not know why changes are happening, they are likely to attribute control of events to an unknown source. This attribution, in turn, is linked with symptoms of distress (anxiety, depression, and conduct disorder) in children whose parents separate (Kim *et al.*, 1997). Although an internal locus of control is usually regarded as optimal for functioning, in the case of separation it might not be helpful since it may lead a child to blame herself. Understanding why changes occur, and knowing that they are not caused by their own actions, may be the most helpful insight children can have when they are experiencing family change.

More generally, information about absent parents appears to be beneficial for children even if they do not have contact with that parent (Owusu-Bempah, 1995). Children are better adjusted on measures of behaviour, emotional well-being, and academic achievement to the extent that they have knowledge about the parent they do not see. The desire for communication and information at the

time of separation and later, then, is linked measurably with outcomes for children and young people.

Contact with non-resident fathers is also an outcome in its own right. The key factor here is the quality of relationship. Frequency of contact does not, by itself, predict better outcomes for children (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999), and this is not surprising since contact can be varied in its quality.

Although children say it is important, there is little evidence to date on the longer-term impact of having a say in arrangements that are made after separation. In the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) study, however, having some input into the decisions made about time spent in each household was associated with positive feelings about the arrangements. This suggests that there are benefits for children and young people from having some control over the decisions that are made about their living arrangements, even where they do not want full responsibility.

Evidence for the benefits or otherwise of one living arrangement over another is mixed. Although involved parenting by fathers is linked with positive outcomes, the actual amounts of time spent with each parent seem not to be so important as the quality of the relationship. Decisions that could help to foster positive parenting relationships should play a part in legal arrangements. For example, if contact arrangements are very brief and do not allow for overnight stays, it may be more difficult for parent and child to develop or continue a good and satisfying relationship.

An important factor in considering contact with both parents is the amount of parental conflict that is involved in post-separation arrangements. It is sometimes the case that the changeover from one parent's house to the other is a situation where conflict can erupt in front of children and the difficult question is faced of whether it is better not to see their father if it exacerbates conflict, or better to see him despite the conflict. Sometimes conflict

at changeover can be avoided by the use of a contact centre, another neutral place or a go-between who manages the handover while feelings still run high. Not surprisingly, the factor that most strongly predicts contact between non-resident fathers and children is the quality of relationship between parents. If this is fraught, then fathers are likely to spend less time with their children. If it is co-operative, then frequency of contact is higher and, presumably, opportunities for involved parenting are greater.

There is also little research to date that examines the importance of support for children, at the time of separation, for long-term outcomes. Links were found between feelings of closeness to maternal grandmothers and children's adjustment in the ALSPAC study. But the nature of the support, and the way it is perceived by children, are likely to be important factors. Intuitively, it would seem that accessible and appropriate support during and after separation would be of benefit to children but the research has yet to be done to clarify this.

There is some evidence that outcomes are related to children's feelings about the role of step-parents. To the extent that stepfathers were warm but not controlling in one study, family happiness, the quality of the stepfather-stepchild relationships were higher and adolescent anxiety and discipline problems were lower (Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims, 1994). However, although well-being appears to be associated with low levels of control in stepfathers, it is probable that monitoring by biological parents will be important in these stepfamilies.

What we know about outcomes for children whose parents separate

Children whose parents separate and divorce are undoubtedly at increased risk for negative outcomes in the medium- and long-term in comparison with those whose parents stay together. The risks for children whose parents separate are approximately doubled for a wide

range of outcomes, including educational attainment, psychological well-being, early school leaving and entering the workforce, and early entry into sexual relationships and parenthood (for reviews, see Amato, 2000; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). In this risk category must be included not only those whose parents divorce, but also the increasing numbers whose parents have never married but whose cohabiting relationships break down, although divorce research does not always take them into account.

Importantly, however, the majority of children do not experience long-term adverse consequences, and the variation we see in outcomes indicates that the separation or divorce in itself is not always a major explanatory factor. This is supported by the finding that for many children, 'outcomes' such as behaviour problems and low self-esteem are apparent some time before parents separate (Cherlin *et al.*, 1991; Elliott and Richards, 1991) so that the event of separation itself cannot be seen as the sole cause of poor well-being, although it does contribute to some of the risks faced by children (Amato, 2000). Another reason why separation, as signalled by one parent leaving the household, does not explain all negative outcomes for children is that, in situations where parents have stayed together throughout childhood but separate when their children are young adults, some raised levels of risk also apply for those young people (Furstenberg and Kiernan, 2001).

What we know about outcomes for children in stepfamilies

For many children, the separation of their parents is not the only family change to happen to them. Approximately one in two children who experience the breakdown of their parents' marriage or partnership enter a stepfamily when one or both of their parents re-partner. Many studies report that children in stepfamilies remain at increased risk for poor outcomes in comparison with those from

intact families and, in a few instances, are at higher risk than those in lone-parent families. For example, Kiernan (1992) found that adolescents in stepfamilies were more likely than those in lone-parent and intact families to leave home early, and to leave because of conflict in the home. In a comparison of outcomes over 21 studies, Amato (1994) found that children in stepfamilies were more likely than those in lone-parent families to have conduct problems and poor psychological adjustment. They have also been found to perform more poorly on educational outcomes than those in lone-parent families (Jeynes, 1999). However, Smith's recent comprehensive study of stepfamilies found no evidence of lower well-being in children in stepfamilies, especially when the quality of the marital relationship was taken into account (Smith *et al.*, 2001).

What we know about outcomes for children who experience multiple transitions

Stepfamilies are less stable than first marriages, so there is a significant risk that children will experience further transitions beyond a stepfamily household. This risk is exacerbated by the fact that about half of second partnerships are co-habitations and these are also at higher risk for breakdown than legal marriages. Increasing numbers of children, then, experience more than one or two family transitions; in a New Zealand cohort study (Fergusson *et al.*, 1984) it was found that nearly one in 10 had experienced three different households by the age of nine. What do we know about children who go through several household and family changes? All the evidence we have suggests that the level of risk for these children rises significantly as the number of transitions goes up. They are at increased risk for offending (Fergusson *et al.*, 1992), disruptive school behaviour and low educational achievement (Kurdek *et al.*, 1995), to be in the labour force by the age of eighteen (Aquilino, 1996) and to have borne a child outside marriage (Wu

and Martinson, 1993). However, we should note, as we have remarked earlier, that it is unlikely that all these outcomes can be directly attributed to these family changes. Such families are likely to experience more adverse factors before the first change and there are often poorer economic and social circumstances.

What factors explain outcomes for children?

As we have seen, the majority of children who experience parental separation and re-partnering do not suffer long-term negative outcomes, and it is clear that separation in itself does not explain all the variation in outcomes. Pre-existing factors are likely to be very important (Furstenberg and Kiernan, 2001). For example, the incidence of divorce is not randomly distributed throughout the population, with higher rates of divorce being found amongst lower socio-economic groups and/or couples who face various kinds of material and social adversity. Other factors, such as family conflict and parental stress, often exist before a separation as well. Given these pre-existing factors, it is not logical to attribute poor outcomes to separation and divorce alone since there often will be adverse factors existing before a separation takes place.

As well as pre-existing factors, the factors that follow are also associated with transitions, and help to explain the risks faced by children in families that undergo change.

Economic resources

An obvious candidate for explaining adverse outcomes is the drop in household income that almost always accompanies parental separation. Economic adversity is most consistently linked with poor educational performance (McLanahan and Sandfur, 1994). The relationship between household income and outcomes for children is not straightforward, however. For example, relativity

to household needs may be more crucial than the actual level of money coming into the family (Simons, 1996). Another interesting aspect of household income is that the impact of money provided through child support by non-resident fathers is greater than that from any other source, and this is probably because payment of child support is associated with levels of father-child contact and with the quality of the father-child relationship (Simons, 1996). It may, too, reflect comparatively amiable relationships between separating parents. Fathers who have good relationships with their children are more likely to pay child support.

A further complication in the relationship between household income and well-being is that in stepfamily households, levels of income are to a considerable extent restored when a lone mother re-partners. Yet the levels of risk for children in stepfamilies are the same as those in lone-parent families. One reason for this could be that the benefits brought by a raised income may be offset by negative factors associated with step-parenting, or because the earlier phase of living in a low income household has enduring effects for children.

Level of community resources

The links between families and the communities in which they reside are often ruptured when family transitions occur, as families move household, and the moves are often into less optimal areas. Stepfamilies and lone-parent families, therefore, tend to live in areas where schools have higher drop-out rates (McLanahan *et al.*, 1991). In turn, community and school resources are linked with well-being in children. Peers' educational aspirations, school quality and community support for mothers are all associated with academic achievement, employment, and avoiding criminal activity and early parenthood (Furstenberg and Hughes, 1995).

Ongoing parental conflict

Regardless of family structure, conflict is a major risk factor for children when it goes beyond normal levels of family disagreement and resolution (see Cummings and Davies, 2002, for a recent review). Conflict often precedes separation, and in some situations children are released from toxic family environments when one parent leaves the household. Sometimes, though, separation causes the focus of the conflict to become the children themselves as parents fight over financial support, contact and living arrangements. It is apparent from research on conflict that its most damaging aspects are when it is about children, is unresolved, and especially when children are directly involved as messengers between parents, or as recipients of negative information about one parent from the other. Conflict, then, can precede, accompany and follow separation. After separation continuing conflict can often erode or end the children's contact with the non-resident parent.

Parental fighting in intact families has adverse consequences for children, and evidence suggests that children may be better off when highly conflicted parents separate (Amato and Booth, 1997; Jekielek, 1998; Morrison and Coiro, 1999). This shows in levels of educational performance, behavioural problems, anxiety, depression and self-esteem. Paradoxically, it appears that children whose parents reported low levels of marital conflict before divorce may be at greater risk for poor outcomes than those whose parents reported high levels (Amato, 2000), although a recent report from Australia (Burns and Dunlop, in press) suggests that children's perceptions of parental conflict are more salient than the level of conflict in itself. Of particular importance to this report, post-separation conflict is also damaging for children. When parents continue to argue after separation, children are at ongoing risk for low self-esteem and psychological distress (Amato and Booth, 1997;

Cockett and Tripp, 1994). Since separation itself confers some degree of stress and risk, some commentators have concluded that if highly conflicted parents are going to continue to fight, then it is better for children if they do not separate (Hetherington, 1999b). Management of conflict during and after separation, then, is crucial for children's well-being.

Conflict in stepfamilies

The relationship between conflict and well-being for children in stepfamilies is less straightforward. They are vulnerable to two sources of inter-parental discord: that between their biological separated parents (inter-house conflict), and between their parent and step-parent (intra-house conflict). Yet even when these are put together, they are not linked with well-being in direct ways (McDonald and DeMaris, 1995). Nonetheless, conflict is an outcome in itself and the complexity of family relationships in stepfamilies suggests that it is hard to avoid. We know, too, that when young adults in stepfamilies leave home they are more likely to cite conflict as a reason for doing so than are young people in other household structures (Kiernan, 1992; Lyon *et al.*, 1999). A paradoxical relationship between partner discord and well-being in adolescent daughters in stepfamilies has been reported, whereby negative parental relationships are linked with high levels of well-being (Hetherington and Jodl, 1994). However, Smith *et al.* (2001) and Dunn *et al.* (1999) have, found that positive marital relationships are associated with high levels of well-being in children.

The most common path by which conflict translates into negative outcomes for children is through its impact on parenting. Parents who are distressed find it difficult to be consistent in their behaviour, and the disagreements about discipline that often accompany conflict also contribute to poor outcomes.

Quality of parenting and parent–child relationships

Pivotal to children's well-being in relation to family transitions is the nature of the parent–child relationship and of parenting behaviour.

Reductions in the quality of parenting almost always accompany separation and stepfamily formation (DeGarmo and Forgatch, 1999), and often precede separation (Emery, 1999; Simons, 1996). In turn, there is compelling evidence of the direct links between the quality of parenting and children's outcomes in intact, lone-parent and stepfamilies (Amato, 2000; Buchanan *et al.*, 1996; DeGarmo and Forgatch, 1999; Dunn *et al.*, 1998; Dunn, 2003; Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan, 1999; Simons, 1996). Broadly speaking, lack of warmth and parental support is associated with behaviour problems and antisocial behaviour while, conversely, warmth and parental support are linked with social competence, subjective well-being, and lack of externalising problems. These links between parenting and outcomes exist across all age groups. In general, the impact on children of most major stresses including economic hardship, conflict and parental distress is mediated by the impact on parent–child relationships. This suggests that a particularly potent means of supporting families is to focus on parenting behaviour.

The quality of relationships with non-resident fathers also has measurable links with children's well-being. Feelings of closeness between fathers and children, and nurturing, involved parenting is of measurable benefit for children. It is positively associated with academic success and negatively related to externalising and internalising behaviours (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999). In stepfamilies, however, relationships with non-resident fathers are less straightforward as children are potentially juggling relationships with two father figures. Despite this, there does not appear to be a 'trade-off' between fathers; there is either no link between the quality of the two relationships or

a positive correlation between them. Children seem able, then, to add a parental figure to their lives when stepfamilies are formed.

Close relationships with stepfathers are linked positively with educational outcomes, social competence and happiness in the family home, and negatively with behaviour problems and externalising behaviour (Buchanan *et al.*, 1996; Funder, 1996; Hetherington and Clingempeel, 1992; Smith *et al.*, 2001; Thomson *et al.*, 1994).

Another aspect of parenting that appears to be reduced in lone-parent and stepfamilies is the level of involvement that parents have with their children both in terms of time spent in joint activities, and in aspirations for their children (Sweeting *et al.*, 1998; Thomson *et al.*, 1994; Voydanoff *et al.*, 1994). In turn, lower aspirations and involvement are associated with higher likelihood of dropping out of high school (McLanahan and Sandfur, 1994).

Support from grandparents, other extended family members and friends

At the time of separation parents are often ill-equipped to serve as supports for their children since their own distress levels are high. The importance of grandparents and other family members outside the immediate household is being increasingly recognised; as we saw in an earlier section, children turn to grandparents more than anyone else for intimate confiding at the time of separation. Grandparents have been described as 'volunteer fire-fighters' at the time of adversity, providing emotional and often practical support for children, and there is some evidence that this support is linked with longer-term well-being for children although findings are mixed (Dunn and Deater-Deckard, 2001; McLanahan and Sandfur, 1994; Simons, 1996).

The importance of grandparental support around the time of transitions, though, is well established, and one study has noted that closeness

to grandparents is highest in young people living in stepfamilies, compared with those in lone-parent and intact families (Kennedy and Kennedy, 1993). This suggests that grandparents step in and provide support at times of transitions and that this intervention leads to close relationships between them and their grandchildren. This is not, however, inevitable; there appears to be a link between the nature of grandparental involvement before and after divorce. The extent of childcare support, for example, is a continuation of what was provided by grandparents when parents were still married (Douglas and Murch, 2002). Furthermore, it is more likely to be provided by maternal than by paternal grandparents, and more generally contact between paternal grandparents and grandchildren is less frequent than that with maternal grandparents.

Wade and Smart (2002) found that friendship played an important role for children in their study but that they were discriminating in the kinds of help that they looked for and the friends they would accept help from. Some friends offered opportunities for diversion and being 'cheered up' emerged as an important coping strategy. Other friends allowed emotional expression and confiding but children were very cautious in choosing confidants, not trusting all friends to respect the privacy of personal information. In the ALSPAC study, too, friends were frequently cited as those to whom children turned for confiding, ahead even of mothers and fathers (Dunn and Deater-Deckard, 2001).

Child-based differences

Although individual differences in children are often acknowledged, they are less often measured. Yet children respond to and appraise changes in very different ways (Kim *et al.*, 1997; Kurdek *et al.*, 1981) and this in turn is related to their ability to cope with transitions. One factor that is often implicated in the differences in children's responses is temperament or behavioural style. 'Difficult' children tend to be irritable, hard to soothe, active

and reactive to change; it is likely that these children will find adaptation to the changes associated with divorce difficult. Not surprisingly, parents who have children with 'difficult' temperaments are more likely to separate (Hetherington, 1991), raising the question of what comes first in such families.

Children also differ in the ways in which they appraise situations, including conflict between their parents (Cummings and Davies, 2002; Harold and Conger, 1997; Harold *et al.*, 1997). Broadly speaking, appraisals include attributions of blame and control, and coping mechanisms that children use (Cummings and Davies, 2002).

There are also some gender differences in the ways children respond, although they are complex. Boys appear initially to be more disturbed by parental separation, yet there is a greater long-term impact on girls. Similarly, boys find adjustment to stepfamilies comparatively easy whereas girls, especially in early adolescence, find stepfamily formation more difficult (Bray, 1988; Lee and Burkham, 1994). In established stepfamilies there appear to be few gender differences in adjustment (Hetherington, 1999a).

The impact of children's ages at the time of transitions is also complicated. Some studies suggest that younger children are more adversely affected, while others find no age differences (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). Age effects are probably best interpreted as being different for particular age groups rather than, for example, better or worse for younger children. They are, though, as we discussed earlier, important in terms of explanations and interventions, and there are age differences in the ways in which children respond at the time of transitions.

Cultural/religious factors

We know that cultural and religious factors play a part in how families deal with divorce and separation, and what might be considered appropriate support for children. Beyond this, we

have not been able to identify any research studies that have specifically addressed this question. Despite the lack of research these are clearly important issues to consider in developing services in a multicultural society. A study into the provisions associated with the Family Law Act 1996 (Bridge, 2001) showed there was a growing need to respect cultural diversity and to tailor interventions to meet specific ethnic and religious needs.

What do these research findings mean for developing services and interventions?

Children's responses to family change are varied, and the level of risk they face as a group conceals the diversity and individuality of their experiences and outcomes. Research is able, however, to give us some indication of factors that will either exacerbate or alleviate both their distress and the risks they face as a consequence of parental separation and stepfamily formation.

Research that considers the perspectives of children, and the factors that contribute to their outcomes after parental separation, gives a strong basis upon which support and interventions can be established. Although there are significant gaps, it is important that what is known is used in the development and evaluation of interventions for

children and their parents. What stands out in clear relief is that children not only have views and perspectives, but also that they want to be heard, and that it is in their best interests to be listened to as decisions are made that affect their lives profoundly. They also want and benefit from good, age-appropriate explanations and information.

Range and type of interventions suggested by research

Support services and interventions need to be grounded in evidence from research on children and divorce. Chapters 1 and 2 of this study provide a resource on which those planning or delivering services can base their decisions. We will now summarise some of the key factors from the research that are important for interventions.

Table 2 shows the range and type of services that research suggests are needed to support children both at the time of separation and in the longer-term. The table does not describe exactly what these services might be but describes their broad purpose. The rationale in the right column is intended to be read in conjunction with the more thorough analysis of research findings presented in Chapters 1 and 2.

Supporting children through family change

Table 2 Implications of research for interventions

**Type of service/interventions
needed to support children**

Rationale based on research

Facilitating communication

Services that aim to help parents to talk with and include their children where possible, and to minimise the conflict between them.

Separation is rarely a benign event for those involved. The distress and anger experienced by adults both makes it difficult for them to support their children, and poses a risk factor for children should it continue. In practice, parents often find it difficult, or feel it inappropriate, to involve their children, in the belief that they are better protected from adult affairs. Children tell us, however, that they do want to know and indeed, to the extent that they are kept in ignorance, they cope less well than if they have appropriate and sensitive information and involvement.

Helping children to understand

Programmes/services that help children to understand the changes, and that help them to cope actively and effectively.

Services and information should be designed to be age appropriate, culturally appropriate and take into account other differences such as gender.

Related to the above are children's appraisals and understanding of what is happening, and their coping strategies. Children need help to manage the transitions to avoid long-term adversity.

Facilitating children's networks for support

Services that facilitate children's contact with grandparents and other extended family members and that support their friendships with peers.

Children seek and gain support from people outside the immediate family and grandparents are particularly acceptable sources of confidence. Contact with paternal grandparents often reduces at the time of separation, yet they are a potential source of help for children that can be encouraged. Peer contact is also important.

Maintaining school and community links

Programmes and services that enable parents and children to continue links with schools and community groups after divorce and separation.

Schools and teachers were seen by a considerable proportion of children in the National Youth Advocacy Service study in Liverpool as sources of information and help (Lyon *et al.*, 1999). Continuing links between parents and schools and other community groups is also important. In practice it is often difficult for parents to maintain these after separation; however, to the extent that they can be helped to do so, their children will benefit.

Table 2 continued

Type of service/interventions needed to support children	Rationale based on research
<p>Enabling conflict management and reduction Programmes that focus on enabling parents to manage and reduce conflict. Services that help children understand and manage conflict in intact families and in stepfamilies.</p>	<p>Particularly important in outcomes for children is the impact of conflict before, during, and after divorce. Parents may need help to avoid directly involving children in their arguments. The extent to which parents are able, or are helped, to reduce their conflict and to remove it from the children’s awareness is crucial for children’s coping and well-being.</p>
<p>Parenting support Support for the resumption of ‘good enough’ parenting could include a range of approaches aimed at reducing stress, and encouraging warmth, nurturing and monitoring.</p>	<p>The quality of parenting by resident parents commonly reduces at times of family change, yet as we have seen it is a pivotal aspect of children’s well-being.</p>
<p>Facilitating contact with non-resident parents Information and support directed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-resident fathers (or mothers) to enable them to continue their involvement and parenting of children • resident mothers to encourage them to facilitate contact between the non-resident father and the children. In the less usual situation of a father being the resident parent, the reversal of these roles apply. 	<p>The evidence from what children say, and from research on outcomes, indicates strongly that contact and good relationships with non-resident parents are critical aspects of post-separation life since for a variety of reasons contact between children and fathers reduces considerably after separation. To the extent that fathers can parent their children effectively, i.e. involving support and monitoring, both fathers and children will benefit.</p>

The risk of poor outcomes for children

Factors related to the risk of poor outcomes for children include:

- low family income
- ongoing parental conflict, particularly when it directly involves the children
- conflict in stepfamilies
- reduction in quality of parenting and quality of parent–child relationships
- the level of resources available in their community
- lack of access to support, especially from grandparents and extended family members and friends
- individual child-based difficulties in managing stress and transitions
- lack of awareness of cultural/religious factors.

Part 2

An overview of services and interventions

3 Services and interventions available to children in the UK

Between October 2000 and October 2001, we carried out a systematic search for organisations that might provide services for children experiencing divorce and family change. Details about how the survey was carried out are in Appendix 1. This report is based on information received from 86 national and local organisations that provide services and information for children. Whilst we attempted to make the survey as broad-ranging as possible, this overview does not claim to be comprehensive. It is a snapshot of what was available during one year. Other important services may have been set up since and some may have been missed due to the way the survey was designed. The descriptions we include here illustrate the kind of services and interventions that are on offer – they are not intended as a directory.

The programmes and interventions we describe vary widely. Some are comparatively modest, taking the form of leaflets that are available through agencies and schools. Others are courses lasting some hours or even weeks. There is considerable variation, too, in the basis upon which their content rests. There are those that take an evidence-based approach, using the available research to inform the material. Others are more intuitive, relying on the sometimes limited experience of those who deliver them. Although the focus of our inquiry was interventions for children, we have also included some interventions with parents because research shows that these can also be important to the well-being of children. Where we discuss the latter, the focus of our interest is how the interventions with parents may benefit children.

As well as the content and nature of interventions, we also consider questions of coverage, access and uptake. Since most of the services are not being currently evaluated, we cannot comment on the impact of programmes on children and families. In the absence of evaluation,

we have adopted different assessment criteria that reflect the various aims of the interventions. In the few instances where specific evaluations have been carried out, these are described and reviewed.

In Table 2 we outlined the range of interventions that research suggests children need for immediate and long-term support. Since the aims of many services overlap we have clustered them into two sets:

- facilitating communication; helping children to understand; facilitating children's networks for support; and encouraging school and community links
- facilitating conflict management and reduction; parenting support; and encouraging contact with non-resident parents.

While many of the services and interventions did not necessarily specify their aims or present a rationale for their existence, most do in fact fall within these broad headings. Table 3 shows how the services that we review here map onto these sets.

Communication, understanding and support

The kinds of services and interventions that we describe in this section are those that are broadly aimed at communication, understanding and support, as suggested in the first cluster in Table 3. As we have seen (see Chapter 2), research tells us that good communication at the time of separation is likely to be linked to the longer-term well-being of children. Similarly, helping children to make sense of what is happening to them and their family, and helping parents and children to communicate through the process of separation, reduces the risks of longer-term adverse outcomes for children. Crucial in this process are likely to be

Table 3 How the services map onto the types of support we know children need

The types of support that research suggests children need	Services identified in the survey and featured in this review
Facilitating communication, helping children to understand, facilitating children’s networks for support, and school and community links	Counselling through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone helplines and e-mail • School and community-based projects Information provision through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflets • Websites • Book lists and books • Audio-visual, CD-Rom and games.
Facilitating conflict management and reduction, parenting support and encouraging contact with non-resident parents	Mediation Classes and information sessions for parents Parenting plans Contact centres

children’s (and parent’s) own support networks at school, in the community and amongst peer groups.

In this section we present the findings of our survey, identifying general themes and issues for each type of service. Based on our findings, and where possible, evaluative research, we conclude each discussion with a look at the factors that are likely to be important for the service to be of most help to children (and/or parents) who need it.

Many organisations refer to the kinds of difficulties children may face in their family relationships and suggest that counselling can help to alleviate the distress they may be feeling.

Counselling of varied kinds for children experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties is available on a limited basis. Children themselves can access counselling by using helplines, where children can talk to trained counsellors and can find out what services exist locally. Counselling may also be available to children in schools. Many ethnically-based organisations offer counselling to individuals and groups. For example, the Nafsiyat

Intercultural Therapy Centre offers a Turkish Women’s Therapy group, and the African Caribbean Family Mediation Service provides counselling services for women, men and youths. Some of these organisations offer several languages either through staff or volunteers. However, most of these services are for adults and, except for one youth group that we identified, children are not specifically targeted.

First we will look at the two main avenues to counselling, and associated support, that children themselves may access: helplines and school-based programmes. We will then discuss our findings concerning other forms of communication and support: leaflets, websites, booklists and books, and other forms of information for children.

Telephone helplines and e-mail

The use of telephone helplines can be an invaluable source of support for vulnerable children. A helpline is also one of the few services that children can access directly.

Examples of helplines and e-mail support identified in the survey

The National Council for One Parent Families provides two helpline numbers, one for general information, and another which deals specifically with maintenance and money issues. These helplines received 14,000 and 2,293 calls respectively for the twelve-month period to March 2001, with approximately 5 per cent of the queries relating directly to children. Most helpline calls result in further information being passed on via information leaflets, or telephone numbers being given for specific organisations which may be more appropriate for particular concerns.

The Child Psychotherapy Trust Helpline provides professional support for parents, children and other professionals who deal with children. It also offers a 50-minute counselling session with a trained therapist to children on a pre-arranged call-back basis. However, as with many of the smaller organisations, it is unclear how people get to know that these services are available, or indeed to use them.

The most well-known helpline aimed specifically at children is ChildLine, which was started in 1986. Since its inception it has received over one million calls from children and is currently responsible for giving help and support to over 130,000 children a year. This helpline is open to all children and is staffed by trained volunteer counsellors who offer support and advice and refer children on to other organisations where appropriate. A breakdown of the most common problems that children call about puts abuse as the most frequent problem, with 'family relationships' accounting for 13 per cent of all calls; only 2 per cent of calls were predominately concerned with the issue of divorce and separation. The distinction between categories is, however, somewhat arbitrary with many problems overlapping and no way of knowing exactly how many children phone for advice or information because their parents are separating or divorcing.

The confidential nature of ChildLine means it is not possible to know the age of callers unless the information is offered. However, of the children that chose to tell ChildLine their age about 22 per cent were 11 or under, 62 per cent between 11 and 15, and 16 per cent between 16 and 18; with the vast majority being girls. One of the successes of the ChildLine helpline, which has resulted in many more calls being made than it is possible to respond to, has been in its high profile: it is well known among children. This is probably the result of wide-ranging advertising and media attention. It also has links with secondary schools through the ChildLine in Partnership with Schools (CHIPS) projects which now includes almost 1,000 schools throughout the UK, and which sets up pupil-run groups to deal with issues such as anti-bullying and befriending schemes.

Other helplines include the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline which deals with all areas of abuse. And from a legal perspective there is a helpline run by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) which offers independent and confidential advice to children on any legal issues.

Some websites, such as The Dawn Project's 'Share-Zone', provide the facility for children and adolescents to e-mail an 'agony aunt' for information or advice on their specific circumstances. And some websites provide e-mail addresses for further information.

(Continued overleaf)

The main, and probably most well-known general helpline, is The Samaritans. This offers free 24-hours-a-day support to anyone, adults, children and young people, who may feel the need to talk to a sympathetic listener about anything that is troubling them. Parentline Plus, run by Parentline, Parent Network and the National Stepfamily Association, also offers a freephone helpline. This confidential helpline offers help and support to anyone caring for children, and provides a text-phone service for those who may have hearing or speech impediments.

Making helplines and e-mail work for children

One of the important aspects of the work of helplines is in the guaranteed confidentiality and the ease of access. Unless telephone numbers are well advertised, response will be minimal. Many organisations, probably because of a lack of funding or facilities, provide office-hours only helplines which is probably a major limitation of their use. With e-mail services, we were not able to find out how well used they were, or how much regard is paid to child protection issues, such as the monitoring of exchanges, in order for this medium to be safe and effective.

For those helplines offering counselling-type support, staff training and supervision is particularly important.

School-based interventions

Separation and divorce are now topics widely covered under family diversity as part of the Personal, Social and Health and Education (PSHE) curriculum. However, one study (Lyon *et al.*, 1998) reports that the information given is not necessarily relevant or sufficient for children needing support.

There are several school-based projects that aim to support children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Several organisations offer counselling, and others offer supportive groups where children can share their difficult experiences and feelings with a qualified adult. Few specifically target children from divorcing and changing families. They do, however, aim to provide a supportive and safe place for children in schools to build up their self-esteem, manage behaviour and

stress, and share difficult feelings. For this reason, we have included these in our study because, although the support is generalised, they are important sources of support for children whose parents are divorcing or separating. Indeed, for some children, a wider remit may be helpful as exclusive focus on divorce and separation may raise the problems of stigmatising children who enrol.

Some programmes provide awareness-raising classes for teachers, others send in their own trained counsellors to work with children.

A selection of school-based programmes

Some programmes focus on preventing behavioural difficulties turning into problems that need remedial help.

Some school-based programmes

The National Pyramid Trust aims to help primary school children by building their self-esteem and resilience. Pyramid schemes are run in 18 local education authorities and Pyramid clubs operate in 87 schools (Review 2000, The National Pyramid Trust). The school identifies those children between 7–9 years old thought to be needing help in building their self-esteem and resilience, with the help of professionals from different disciplines, and the selected children are offered the chance to attend a Pyramid club. The clubs run for ten weekly after-school sessions with up to ten children in each group. External evaluation showed that those who attend the clubs show marked improvements in their emotional and social skills, confidence and self-esteem (Skinner *et al.*, 1996). Although this organisation does not name divorce and family change specifically, they say that some of the children may well have this as part of their background.

The Whole School Quality Circle Time model focuses on improving the environment of the whole school where everyone can express their feelings safely, and feel valued, respected and listened to. Using this approach, it is claimed that the behaviour and the culture of the whole school can become more positive and consistent about rules and rewards. Menon (2000) reports that, of the 500 schools that have used this approach, 69 per cent had been inspected by OFSTED. Of those, 97 per cent received a positive evaluation report in the areas of personal, social and emotional, behavioural and cultural development. These are the areas in which the Circle Time approach might have had an effect. Clearly, a comparison group is needed before conclusions can be drawn, and there may well be a selection effect in the schools choosing to use the programme.

Cheiron – A Quiet Place offers emotional and therapeutic support to children in primary schools with a view to furthering their long-term inclusion in regular classes by improving their emotional literacy. A room is set aside within a school for all kinds of therapy including psychotherapy, massage and bio-feedback computer de-stress. Children attend a six week programme and the goal is to provide a safe environment for families and children in crises. Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are selected for the programme, which aims to diagnose and treat vulnerable children early, so that inappropriate behaviour might be minimised and school exclusion rates are reduced. Parents and teachers have access to this programme, and parents are encouraged to come to discuss their children's problems, as well as take part in the complementary therapies offered. An evaluation by Spalding (2000), done on a small sample, failed to show a statistically significant benefit, but a qualitative analysis suggested that A Quiet Place had a positive effect overall on emotional development.

The Place to Be runs counselling for children in primary schools, and is aimed at children with all kinds of emotional difficulties, including coping with divorce. An audit by the Place To Be found that schools' rates of exclusion had been dramatically lowered, as children learned to cope emotionally, negotiate conflict better, notice other people's feelings, and become more open to learning and

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co-operation (Baxter, 2000). Trained personnel provide one-to-one therapy for children, group sessions, drop-in pupil counselling sessions (The Place to Talk), and staff training, all within the school setting. Work is also done with parents to support their parenting and to share aims. If parents request personal support, they are referred to the appropriate agency. The training of school staff involves basic counselling skills and communicating through play. The Place to Be (P2B) was originally based in London and South Kent, but has now opened programmes in other parts of the country, such as Nottingham and Edinburgh. The internal clinical audit of the programme showed that teachers and parents reported positive changes in behaviours for 60 per cent of the children, and in more than half of these the improvement was clinically significant (Baxter, 2000).

There are other programmes that more specifically address issues for children related to divorce and family change.

The Rainbows programme exists worldwide, and organisations and schools pay for the training and use of the programme. Although this programme is becoming increasingly popular in schools, Skitka and Frazier (1995) found that there was a negligible difference between a Rainbows group of 6-12 year olds, and a control group, on measures such as the Children's Beliefs about Parental Divorce Scale, and the Behavioural Academic Self-Esteem Scale completed by the children's teachers. However,

in a survey conducted by Rainbows (USA) 32 per cent of 163 children aged 7-11 years liked the Rainbows programme 'for letting me talk - felt better' (Hues newsletter, www.rainbows.org). In the survey of 360 parents, 97 per cent said they felt their child had benefited from the Rainbows programme, as they saw an improvement in communication, attitude and self-esteem. The divergent results illustrate how different approaches to evaluation may produce different results and that asking participants for their views often gives more positive evaluations than the more valid control or comparative studies.

Rainbows

Rainbows was founded in the USA by a divorcing mother who wanted support for her children. Its aim is to help children who have been bereaved through parental death, and those who are experiencing parental separation or divorce, by working through the grief process. Although Rainbows is a Catholic project it also provides secular versions of its programmes. Rainbows trains co-ordinators and facilitators in schools, churches and communities to carry out the programme using journals, story books, games and activities. Rainbows does not describe its programme as counselling or therapy, but rather a supportive programme where children can share their experiences and common feelings, and benefit from peer support and an adult facilitator. Small groups of children of similar ages work with the facilitator for two blocks of six weeks (or often a total of 20 weeks). The major assumptions underlying the Rainbows programme is that low self-esteem and depression will improve once problematic beliefs about separation and divorce are addressed through thematic discussion, expression of divorce-related beliefs and games that facilitate this process (O'Halloran and Carr, 2000).

The Changing Families and Dawn Projects

The Changing Families Project in Devon is designed to support young people in changing families by increasing their self-confidence and achievement. It is a ten-week intervention where the young people put together a magazine sharing their thoughts about changing families and divorce with other young people. Other work includes problem-solving tasks, and social and outdoor activities which are thought to increase self-confidence and develop social and intellectual skills. Residential weekends are claimed to have been successful and may show the value of peer support. Parents and family support agencies are also involved to increase the support of the young person. Internal evaluation by the young people taking part has been positive.

The Dawn Project was founded to respond to the needs of families experiencing separation and divorce. It supports the work of Rainbows, and provides workshops for teacher and parents. Workshops for young people in schools on issues of family change are set up in school lunch hours. There are six sessions lasting one hour each where common stories are shared, contact with the absent parent and communication with parents are discussed, and strategies for managing feelings. The Dawn Project also runs courses for parents, 'Helping your child survive the breakup' (see 'Classes and information for parents'), and there are courses for teachers, and clergy.

The Dawn Project was originally church-based. Several other religious organisations offer support in schools. The Jewish organisations that we contacted had a number of schemes that offered

support to families but we did not identify any that were specifically for children. Similarly, we were unable to locate any Muslim groups specifically for children of divorcing or separating parents.

The Catholic Children's Society

The Catholic Children's Society covering three Dioceses provides a school's counselling service in junior and senior schools, and has ten counsellors working in 26 schools. The sessions are for 45 minutes per week, and there are usually 6–8 sessions per year seeing 200 pupils experiencing divorce and family change.

This organisation states in its leaflets that 'parents separating or divorcing' are one of the problems children and young people may encounter.

Making school-based interventions work for children

O'Halloran and Carr (2000) looked at the findings of six (American) child-focused school-based interventions which were premised on either psycho-educational or cognitive behavioural principles. These interventions were not specifically focused on targeting children of divorcing and separating parents, but their findings are likely to be important for targeted programmes as well as more

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generalised ones. Their conclusion was that the most effective of the interventions were those that combined a supportive group-based psycho-educational programme with problem-solving skills training, social skills training and stress management. It was also found that outcomes could be enhanced with parallel parent-focused work which emphasised the importance of listening and discipline skills.

Combining affective and behavioural strategies

The need for multi-faceted interventions was also found by Fischer (1999) in an assessment of the USA pilot study in which children aged 9–12 attended a school-based course spread over an eight-week period. Included in the programme were sessions based on acknowledging and accepting change and also on learning skills to deal with anger and frustration. This pilot was evaluated with respect to both process and outcome, with the views of parents, teachers and facilitators being incorporated into the analysis. Overall effectiveness was, however, inconclusive, with 40 per cent of parents and teachers disagreeing on outcome. This highlights some of the problems associated with the measurement of the success of interventions and specifically the difficulty in assessing subtle changes over time.

In the UK, an evaluation of the Family Links Nurturing Programme was conducted, which looked at the provision of school-based parenting programmes (Barlow, 2000). This evaluation was based on qualitative interviews with parents taking part and suggested that programmes which combine both affective and behavioural strategies work best to provide effective benefits to parents.

Individual sessions or group?

Wilson and Edwards (2003, in press) have studied the outcomes associated with individual versus group interventions in school settings in England. This study looked at programmes in seven separate schools and sought feedback from teachers, parents and children themselves. Interviews were conducted prior to, just after and six months after taking part in the project, and supplementary questionnaires were used to investigate the impact of support on areas such as children's self-esteem, relationships, mood and behaviour. Whilst both the individual and the group sessions were regarded positively, children who had individual sessions showed moderately more improvement on outcome measures, on average, than children in the group sessions.

Advantages of access weighed against problems of stigma

The advantage of having programmes in schools is that the service is potentially accessible to children, whereas there can be long waiting lists for outside support services, and children mostly have to rely on adults to take them to the appointment. Wade and Smart (2002) found that the majority of the children in their study preferred to keep their home lives private at school, suggesting that if schools are to take on a wider personal support role, it is best done by outside non-teaching staff and with safeguards for children's privacy. Wade and Smart also found that for young children who had received counselling (not necessarily at school), talking was less popular than using physical activities and games to express (and sometimes resolve) feelings. The children also enjoyed learning practical skills such as breathing exercises which helped them to relax.

One of the disadvantages to a school-based intervention is that the child may feel stigmatised. However, in a Cambridge primary school-based study (Wilson and Edwards, 2003, in press), the issue

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of stigma did not arise. The majority of children reported that they did not worry about leaving class or missing out on things in order to do the support work, although some were anxious before the sessions. The research showed that their feelings about their situation, their friendships and schoolwork had improved. The study did find, however, that some children did not want problems that were troubling them at home brought into school.

Leaflets

Producing leaflets is a common organisational response to the need for information, so we discuss leaflets in some detail. We describe leaflets for parents separately from leaflets for children, but discuss the general issues together, since themes of access and distribution, for example, are common to both.

Leaflets for children

There appear to be relatively few leaflets aimed specifically at children whose parents are separating or divorcing. Most come from counselling or mediation services and, whilst mentioning briefly some of the negative feelings which may be associated with divorce, their main aim is to inform children who to contact should they feel the need to talk to a sympathetic adult. Many leaflets also try to get a message across that

the feelings that children may experience during separation and divorce are not unusual and are shared by other children in the same situation.

There is often duplication of material and ideas as various organisations and specific research centres influence the format and content of material used. Many mediation services, for example those working in association with NCH, produce almost identical leaflets. In many cases it might be more efficient to use the original leaflet, rather than copying it, particularly if it has been assessed and piloted with children. Some other organisations recommend the leaflets produced centrally by the Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD). While using a single national leaflet may have some advantage, locally produced leaflets might offer new and better approaches and it is important that innovation and experimentation is not lost.

Lord Chancellor's Department leaflets

The series of leaflets commissioned by the Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD) are based on research which aims to acknowledge family diversity and change, emphasise feelings which may be experienced, and encourage children to talk about their situation to a sympathetic adult. They are also based on the views of children about contact and the most appropriate format and content for specific age groups.

The leaflets that are aimed at three different age groups are bright, clear and easy to understand (see Figure 5). They provide sections on why parents divorce, what could happen in the future, and leave spaces for children to write their own feelings down. Activities, such as quizzes and word-searches, are included, as is a brief outline of the legal process and terminology which may be encountered. Examples of other children's experiences are given through the use of stories told in children's own words, and further sources of help and advice are listed. These leaflets are available in English and Welsh and are distributed through national organisations including Parentline Plus and NSPCC.

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An early version of the leaflets described a number of emotions that children might feel when they learnt that their parents were separating. In the focus groups conducted with children which were held as part of the evaluation by the Newcastle study (Stark and Rowlinson, 2001), there was a general view that this was too prescriptive and that children might well feel they ought to experience the emotions listed. As a result of this feedback, in the next version of the leaflet the emotions were described via a series of first-hand accounts by children.

Subsequent feedback suggested that this is a much more satisfactory way of conveying information to children and allows them, if they wish, to identify with another child's experience without any feeling that this is something they ought to do. Indeed, much of the attraction for children and young people of fictional accounts of children's experiences of parental separation is that it allows them the possibility of identifying with another child's experiences and emotions. This can help a child to feel that they are not alone in their feelings and that their emotions are validated by the experiences of others.

These leaflets illustrate some important points of good practice in the development of leaflets. The Lord Chancellor's Department leaflets were:

- research-based – using research about appropriate content as well as presentation
- targeted to specific age groups
- piloted amongst children themselves – further good practice would be to assess the impact of a leaflet after its publication. We have found no examples of any organisation doing this in our survey.
- available in Welsh (although not in any other languages). As an official publication, this is legally required under the Welsh Language Act.

As this example also illustrates, an important issue with respect to leaflets, as well as other material produced for children, is the level of prescriptiveness. A recurrent theme in different leaflets, which highlights the collaboration and/or duplication of ideas, is the use of a series of diagrammatic faces depicting a range of expressions which are intended as a device for initiating discussion of children's own feelings.

These faces, which are also used to illustrate the range of emotions that the separation and divorce may have engendered, can be found in leaflets from various organisations, and also in other forms of communication such as websites. Whether or not children find this approach helpful or appealing has not been tested.

Problems of access and distribution

How children gained access (or did not gain access) to the information in the example of the LCD leaflets highlights some of the key problems. The Newcastle study (Walker, 2001) found that, of the parents who were given the LCD leaflets for children at the pilot information meetings, only 16 per cent passed them on to their children. Various reasons for not doing so were given, such as the children were too young (or too old), it was the wrong time or that they thought the leaflet might upset the children. Given the emotional nature of divorce for adults, together with their role as gatekeepers of information, this issue is something that affects all forms of dissemination. This is a major problem in using leaflets as a way of reaching children.

Our survey showed that the main avenue of distribution for the majority of leaflets is through

Figure 5 Leaflets commissioned by the Lord Chancellor's Department for different age groups: young children (top) and young people (bottom)



parents rather than directly to children. Mediation service leaflets are often distributed through solicitors, or placed in mediation waiting rooms, and may form part of a mediation pack which includes information for parents, children and/or teenagers. Such an approach, however, is dependent on the parents using mediation or solicitors. It also means that these professionals are placed in the position of gatekeepers of information.

Other leaflets, such as those produced by organisations running helplines, only become accessible at the point of contact itself, at which time it is likely that children are already having difficulties in dealing with the situation. These leaflets are also often distributed by post, an approach that may be inappropriate in situations where children do not want their parents to know that they have sought advice or information.

While a few organisations have used schools or other venues that children frequent as a distribution point for leaflets, this seems rather the exception. However, this form of dissemination may not be appropriate for some children who do not want their home circumstances known at school and wish to keep the school as a 'safe' environment free of the troubles they may be experiencing at home.

Making the content appropriate

The content of leaflets for children varies according to the overall aims of the organisation, and ranges from fact sheets to workbooks which are designed to be used by children with an adult as a means of getting young children to talk about how they feel.

For information and advice to be successfully passed on through leaflets the content has to be appropriate on a number of different levels. These include:

- age and 'stage'
- gender
- cultural and linguistic.

Age and 'stage'

It appears that most leaflets are aimed at specific age ranges, such as young children or teenagers, which helps to reduce the likelihood of material being found either too complex or patronising. The examples below feature a magazine format, a popular choice in our survey for targeting teenagers; and for younger children, the English leaflets adopt a different style.

Alongside the issue of age, is that of stage appropriateness and the need to target children who are experiencing a specific stage of the separation/divorce process, as the next examples illustrate.

Guides to the law for children

'You Matter' (produced by the Scottish Office), is an A4 glossy magazine-style booklet that is intended as a guide to the law. The section relating specifically to separation and divorce provides a clear guide to the legal processes, aims to reinforce children's own importance, and is illustrated by first-hand descriptions of children's experiences. The booklet also sets out the responsibilities that parents have towards their children and the action children can take should they feel that their parents are neglecting them.

In England the only specifically legal leaflets (provided through the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services – CAFCASS) appear to be aimed more at younger children, with bright smiley faces and drawings, which set out the role of guardian ad litem and court welfare

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officers, and are intended for use with adult participation. A more general booklet, produced by the Department of Health, provides a guide for children and young people to the Children Act and the courts. This is a multi-coloured A5 booklet which describes children's legal rights and the processes which they might be involved in. The section on separation and divorce is clear, informative and non-patronising. It explains what happens legally and provides further helpline and advice addresses.

Durham Family Mediation leaflets

The series of leaflets produced by Durham Family Mediation (with NCH) and distributed in schools, was designed to cater for the needs of three separate age groups, and also included what was presumably seen as regionally specific language (for example using 'mam' rather than 'mum'). These leaflets were, however, heavily criticised by a section of the national press for being inappropriate for children in schools. This criticism seemed to be based on the view that such leaflets might tend to normalise and so encourage divorce, as well as give information to children at an inappropriately young age, and to those who had not experienced divorce.

Another aspect of this is the recommendation of books that may not be appropriate for the stage a particular child is experiencing. For example, a child who recently learnt his or her parents are separating might be further upset by a book that dwells on issues about remarriage and step-parenting.

Gender

The use of both boys and girls to illustrate points works to make information more gender neutral. However, the style and approach of much information is very unisex with very few examples of explicit attempts to appeal to girls or boys in rather different ways. Given that most commercial teen magazines are very gender specific, this begs the question whether leaflets should be designed for one or other gender rather than aiming at a unisex audience.

Cultural and linguistic

Ethnic and cultural diversity is not well represented apart from the inclusion of non-white faces in drawings or photos. None of the main national organisations produced their leaflets for

children in anything but English, with the exception of the Lord Chancellor's Department whose leaflets and website information are available in English and Welsh. Some of the mediation services produced general information leaflets in languages that reflected their local population. Apart from the inclusion of some multicultural images of children, there appears little recognition of ethnic or religious differences in the divorce experience. There may also be cultural and religious issues to take into account in how information and support is provided for different groups, as well as the content of that information.

Leaflets for parents

There are relatively few leaflets that aim to provide specific information and advice to parents on parenting, what their children might be experiencing, and how best to deal with it. However, of those that are available, there are a number of innovative, research-based booklets and leaflets which provide clear practical advice and guidance, in easy to understand and attractive formats.

Divorce: Telling your children

The Family Mediation Service (in association with the Institute of Family Therapy) produce, as well as general information on mediation, a leaflet entitled 'Separation – Divorce: Telling your children'. This three-fold, A4 leaflet, is comprehensible, research-based, and looks at child development and adjustment issues as well as discussing children's understanding of parental conflict. It considers what children of different ages might be experiencing, and also addresses gender issues. It emphasises the need to communicate, and goes on to give practical advice on ways of telling your children, including the inclusion of other people (for example, grandparents) where appropriate. Mediation is suggested if problems arise.

Other leaflets distributed by mediation services, especially those produced in association with NCH also emphasise the need for communication and the benefits for children of talking to an outside adult where necessary. Many are, however, provided as part of an information pack which is designed to be given out at the point of adult mediation and as such would presumably only reach that small minority of parents who chose to use mediation services in the first place.

Leaflets produced by the Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD) as part of the Family Law Act 1996 pilot project were also provided as part of an information pack.

Different organisations employ various styles for their leaflets. A common format is a series of questions and answers. Many incorporate quotes from children which relate directly to the topic being covered.

Information meeting pack

The Lord Chancellor's Department pack included over 20 different leaflets dealing with various aspects of the separation and divorce process, from information on marriage counselling, to step-by-step legal advice, information with respect to tax and pensions, and a guide to children's rights and how to help them through the divorce process. These leaflets were given out at the end of the pilot information sessions as a means of backing up and extending information received, and were also sent to the partner who did not attend the meeting. Whilst the provision of standardised information was found to be limiting by some of the participants involved, many parents appreciated having information that they could keep and refer back to at a later time (Stark, Laing and McCarthy, 2001). Currently, the LCD has a revised version of the information meeting parenting leaflet which is also available on their website, together with leaflets for children (these were discussed above).

Parentline Plus and Gingerbread leaflets

Parentline Plus produces a small colourful booklet (see Figure 6) which includes quotations from children and explains why talking, listening and being honest is important to them. It also sets out how children may feel and/or react to particular circumstances. Whilst obviously highlighting difficulties which may be encountered, it ends on a positive note by stressing the fact that whilst divorce can be difficult it can also lead to positive changes in the lives of both adults and children. Although relatively short it manages to convey a strong message, and it provides the Parentline telephone number should further information or advice be required.

The single-parent group, Gingerbread, produce a small, bright, folded booklet that is based on interviews and discussions with children from local Gingerbread groups (see Figure 8). It is written from a child's perspective and emphasises the importance of talking and listening to children, and discusses specific issues children feel are important, such as conflicting loyalties. It goes on to give practical advice on what parents can do to help their children, together with information on other sources of advice.

Figure 6 The Parentline Plus leaflet



Copies of this leaflet can be obtained from Parentline Plus (www.parentlineplus.org.uk or from the Helpline on 0808 800 2222).

Figure 7 The Gingerbread leaflet



Whilst it is not always clear what the main aims of the specific leaflets are, the majority appear to

have as their central theme ongoing communication between parents and children.

The Children's Society leaflets

A more comprehensive set of booklets dealing with particular stages of the divorce process is produced by The Children's Society. This includes one booklet on what may happen during the actual separation and divorce, and includes information on on-going parental responsibilities and the effects divorce may have on children of different ages. A further booklet deals with the formation of new partnerships or stepfamilies and deals with how children may react adversely to new relationships. Both give practical advice, such as keeping children informed of what is happening and continually showing that you care, and provide lists of useful organisations and booklists for both parents and children of different ages.

Material produced as part of a radio or TV series has the advantage of being able to reach a wide and presumably relevant population. The

disadvantage is that it is essentially a one-shot approach and there is no outlet once the programme has passed.

Booklets linked to TV programmes

An example of a booklet which covers a wide range of issues and offers practical advice is that produced by the BBC Educational Unit and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This 30-page, A5 booklet was published as part of an educational programme on children of divorce, and is specifically about 'helping your child to cope'. It provides a clear, straightforward approach dealing with the effects of divorce on children, and has sections on questions children might ask and what measures can be taken to help children through the divorce process. It covers the practical issues surrounding contact, offers insights into identifying problem behaviour both pre- and post-divorce, and looks at the effects of new partnerships or stepfamily formations. It also provides a comprehensive list of useful organisations and a list of books suitable for different age groups.

The 'popularity' of divorce as a media subject has also led to the production of a booklet by Channel 4 which accompanies their 'breaking up' series. Whilst the main emphasis is on making divorce less painful for adults, there is also a brief section highlighting the problems which may arise for children.

Making leaflets work for parents and children

The Newcastle based study (Walker, 2001), mentioned earlier, is one of the most comprehensive evaluations of information leaflets for both adults and children. As well as parent and practitioner views, children's views were independently obtained through focus groups. The study established that, to be effective, leaflets for children need to be bright, easy to understand and age specific. Many of the leaflets we have assessed in this section have incorporated such findings and, as well as being research-based, provide age specific and appropriate material.

Depending on what form of intervention is intended, leaflets do offer a relatively effective way of disseminating information. However, they suffer two major drawbacks in the way that organisations are currently using them:

- How do leaflets reach their target audience? Although it is clear that many organisations go to great lengths to ensure the content of their leaflets reflects specific aims, it would appear that less attention is paid to the issue of distribution. Leaflets for children that rely on parents as intermediaries are limited in their effectiveness. Leaflets for parents tend to rely on parents themselves recognising problems and seeking help. A diversity of distribution strategies is likely to be effective, although this may make monitoring of impact / uptake more difficult.

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- How do we know whether the intended messages are being received and what parents or children do with this information? This may not be problematic where the aim is simply to make parents or children aware of particular sources of information or other available services. However, if the aim is to encourage a more wide-ranging change in parent/child communication or to foster a better parental relationship for the sake of the child, then there appears little way of assessing whether particular leaflets are being successful without well-designed evaluative research.

Another key issue is accuracy. Whilst this may appear obvious, accuracy is crucial in leaflet development. Some leaflets we saw provided information that was not up-to-date or incorporated careless mistakes which may detract from the overall messages being sent out.

Leaflets that provide telephone numbers, addresses, websites, etc. need to be checked for all spellings and information, such as opening hours. We found several examples of long out-of-date telephone numbers in leaflets, and of organisations being listed which have ceased to exist. Those giving facts and figures should also regularly update their statistics, and those dealing with legal issues reflect any changes in law which may occur.

Terminology is also important. In the majority of instances 'parents' is used as a generic term. So specific problems associated with mothers and fathers, together with those living with or apart from their children, are often conflated.

When we consider the effectiveness of leaflets as an intervention, it is useful to look at the context in which they are being used. Walker (2001) found that whilst the overall view was that adults preferred messages that were clear and focused on specific issues, written information on its own was not a particularly successful way of encouraging change. People tend to take what they want to hear from written information, so it tends to confirm behaviour rather than produce change (Walker, 2001). Although this research was with adults it is likely that this is also true for children and that leaflets are likely to be most useful when combined with other approaches.

To sum up, best practice indicates that general areas that need to be addressed when choosing leaflets as an intervention strategy are:

- access
- accuracy
- appropriateness.

These three criteria provide a useful way of appraising other services that aim to provide information and we will be using them again (see below).

Using the Internet: websites

Internet access and usage has grown exponentially over the last decade and is becoming an integral part of the way information is accessed. In the UK approximately 45 per cent of households have

internet access (ONS Survey, 2000), and the majority of children have access through schools and public libraries.

Not only is the Internet increasingly used as a site of e-commerce but also most voluntary

organisations and charities, along with the public sector and local and national government, have their own websites as a means of disseminating information. An appraisal of websites directed specifically at parents, conducted by the NSPCC, in conjunction with the Parenting Education and Support Forum and *Family Circle* magazine, looked at a range of commercial and independent sites. The main conclusions were that there were a number of high quality sites that provide a wide range of useful parenting information but that the resource remains under-utilised (Griffey, 2001).

Research into the 'usability' of sites designed specifically for children (for example, see Nielsen, 2002, www.useit.com) highlights practical considerations that need to be addressed, such as simplicity and age-appropriateness.

In assessing websites that are aiming to get information and advice to children, we looked at the content and ease of use of particular sites as well as the means by which they become known. As with all information, it doesn't matter how good it is if it is not reaching the target audience. As yet, there is very little information on what children do with information available on websites when they do access it.

This present assessment is based on a systematic search for Internet websites that are specifically aimed at children who may be seeking help or advice on the separation or divorce of their parents, together with our accessing of sites reported to us through our contacts with organisations that provide them. Due to the nature of the Internet, however, what cannot be known is

exactly who uses these sites and how useful they may be in achieving their goals. Also, without knowing how helpful children of divorcing parents themselves found the sites or particular web pages, it is difficult to make anything other than general comments on what would constitute the 'best' format for disseminating web-based interventions.

Whilst the vast majority of national organisations and charities now appear, as a matter of course, to have their own websites, there are still very few sites that deal directly with the issues of separation and divorce. Although the Internet has the advantage of being able to be accessed privately and at the users' convenience, even the better-designed, informative sites can be difficult to find.

What's on the sites?

The most attractive sites appear to be those that are easy to access, provide bright, age-appropriate material with easy to follow instructions and links, together with the facility to print off or download information if desired.

There is a lot of information duplicated across sites, especially in the case of national organisations that link different charities and research organisations. Whilst this is not necessarily a bad thing, especially if the material used is of proven benefit for children, there appears to be a tendency for some organisations to provide links or recommend books simply because this is what has been done on other sites.

The content of specific websites is, as would be expected, variable, reflecting the different aims of the particular organisation or company concerned.

childline.org.uk

childline.org.uk sets information out in a magazine-style format that appeals to both boys and girls (aged approximately 10–15), and includes star interviews, other children's experiences, and has the facility to print out factsheets on a variety of different topics. Whilst there are factsheets on both bereavement and stepfamilies they do not provide one on separation or divorce.

Supporting children through family change

Whilst the format of some sites makes it easy to perceive their overall aim, such as to give legal advice or sell services, others appear more diffuse

with a range of pages covering different aspects of the separation/divorce process and dealing with emotions and feelings.

The BBC website

The BBC website provides an exceptionally comprehensive array of materials for both adults and children and is often referenced by other sites as an authoritative source of information and advice. This public sector site incorporates health and parenting sections and contains its own search facility that accesses numerous articles. It also contains specific sites for children, aimed at a variety of age ranges, which direct them to relevant pages that can be printed out. The information on separation and divorce is relatively brief but stresses the fact that it is not uncommon; it emphasises family diversity, and provides a list of helpful tips. It also provides web links and other sources of further information and help, such as the telephone number for Childline and the Samaritans.

One of the specific links on the BBC site is to itsnotyourfault.org. This site, which was set up by NCH, was funded by the Lord Chancellor's Department in an attempt to provide help and information to children whose

parents are separating or divorcing. In many respects this site exemplifies the very positive use of web-based interventions; however, it also highlights some of the problems that can be encountered.

The NCH website

itsnotyourfault.org offers a very clear, bright opening page that directs children, teenagers and parents to specific sections of the site. The children are led through a series of colourful pages that deal with different scenarios that they may encounter and with difficult emotions that they may experience. It shows children's own views of the experience and offers a list of further sources of advice and help. As the name of the site suggests, it continually reinforces the point that 'it's not your fault'. The site is advertised by small cards (see Figure 8), which are being distributed widely to places that children frequent, although, as yet, it is unclear how successful this strategy may be in reaching children.

Whilst the site is based on research, it encounters a series of problems; the first of which is access. This site did not appear on any of our initial web searches, although this could have been because at that stage it was relatively new. Although it has appeared on later searches there appears no consistency as to placing, a fact that highlights the arbitrary nature of web searches and

their variation over time, and the need to advertise through other media and web links.

Secondly, the high quality graphics and sound on the site, whilst obviously devised as a means of attracting children, means that only the latest computers are capable of running the programme without having to download additional software. If children are looking for information without

Figure 8 The colourful small card advertising the site www.itsnotyourfault.org



© NCH 2003. To find out more about the work of NCH, please visit their website at www.nch.org.uk or call NCH Supporter Helpline on 0845 7 626579.

parental help, the prospect of having to download add-ons may prevent many children from accessing the site. Even if parental help is available, the procedure did not turn out to be straightforward and resulted in several failed attempts. The lack of easy access at the time of an initial visit could easily work as a deterrent to future attempts. (Feedback to NCH about this aspect of the site has, however, resulted in a non-flash version being made available.)

The problem of computer specificity is also relevant to those sites that aim to provide

interactive style information. Again, whilst this format may appeal to children, and is a useful way of targeting information, it does require more up-to-date configurations and may not be suitable for all age groups.

Using websites as an intervention begs the familiar questions: How do we know whether children are using it? and How do we know whether or not it is helping them? Monitoring a website is one way of addressing questions about usage both by looking at the number of 'hits' a particular site gets and how long people stay on

Monitoring the NCH website

The NCH is monitoring the usage of their site itsnotyourfault.org.uk. but the information gathered so far can be somewhat difficult to interpret. For example, a summary of three months from 1 February to 30 April in 2002, showed a steady increase in users with just under 7,000 sessions being undertaken during April. This figure, however, when looked at in conjunction with the number of page views showed that the majority of these visits to the site (68 per cent, representing 12,118 over the three-month period) resulted in accessing only one page and would therefore indicate that the site, once entered, was not deemed appropriate.

The time spent by each visitor on the site averaged just under two minutes, although the majority of the sessions lasted one minute or less. Nearly 12 per cent (2,078) of sessions lasted between two and five minutes, and occasionally one lasted for over an hour (although, of course, this could merely have been the result of someone forgetting to log out of the site for whatever reason).

particular pages (see below). It is also possible to build a clearer picture of site users by monitoring which sites are accessed before and after another particular page or site. Monitoring a website is clearly important but interpreting the information is not straightforward, as our example illustrates.

Although it is not possible to know exactly who and why specific people are using a site, as the use and sophistication of monitoring becomes more advanced, it will be possible to develop sites and adjust information and style on the basis of what appears to be most appropriate for the target audience.

Finding the sites

One of the main ways that information is found on the Internet is through the use of search engines. The responses were variable, with the more refined search engines bringing up only a few links, and the more general engines bringing up well over a thousand. Through using basic search techniques it was not easy to identify sites that were specifically aimed at children.

Some of the sites for parents had particularly relevant information and advice on what may be best for their children (for example, divorce.co.uk – linked with Cambridge Family and Divorce Centre). However, others were purely commercial with any advice offered being packaged in between advertisements for services (for example, divorceuk.com). There also appears to be no particular logic to the inclusion of sites by a search engine, with some sites being included on grounds of popularity, and others because the site owner

simply paid the required fee. Other than going through each site individually, it is difficult to identify those that may be most relevant for particular purposes.

Some sites advertise by other means and many websites are either accessed directly through their addresses being advertised in other forms of media, are personally recommended, or found through links from other sites. Indeed, as the web expands, the role of search engines seems bound to decline.

Parentlineplus was not picked up by any of the main search engines in our initial search, illustrating how difficult it may be to get information to the people who may be looking for it.

One of the better-known search engines has, however, recently added a site that searches the Internet for websites that are particularly applicable to children. A search with this engine (www.yahooligans.com) provided only three links for 'divorce'. These links, although American in origin, provided good, clear, research-based advice and provided information for children of varying ages in a format that was not only useful but also easy to download or print out. Indeed, the transnational nature of the Internet means that a wide range of relevant information can be accessed from other countries. However, country-specific information and advice may be easier for children to understand and relate to, and is especially necessary when referring to legal advice and procedures which vary from country to country.

parentlineplus.org.uk

One of the parenting sites, which is often referred to in other media on separation and divorce, is parentlineplus.org.uk (produced by Parentline and the National Stepfamily Association). This site deals with many aspects of parenting in a clear, magazine-style layout. It contains several research-based articles on children and divorce, which can be easily downloaded from the site, and links to various other sites, including childline.org.uk, which is aimed specifically at children.

Making websites work for children

The Internet has the potential to be an informative source of help and advice for children. At present, however, there is still very little known about what children themselves see as the most important features of web-based information, or indeed what they may search the web for. Whilst it is true that most children are web users it does not necessarily follow that they will use the web to search for information related to family and emotional problems. It is perhaps surprising that government and voluntary organisations have invested so heavily in the web without basic research evidence of children's web use in this area.

To be effective, websites need to address their potential limitations, over and above the validity of content.

Access

Computer access and literacy levels will continue to grow but there remains inequality in access, and not all children will have either the knowledge, the equipment or the inclination to seek information from websites. Those that do may be hindered by a system that is not always easy to navigate and on which, unless specific addresses are known, it is not always easy to find the most appropriate sites.

Appropriateness

Age and stage: The site needs to be age-appropriate, either in terms of the level of computer literacy required, or in relation to the content of specific web pages and links. This is a particular issue where sites are aimed at 'children' without differentiating age ranges, and can result in younger children being directed to information that may be beyond their comprehension, and teenagers feeling that the level of the material is either patronising or inappropriate.

Gender: We know very little at present about whether boys and girls use the Internet in different ways. This may be an important factor in designing sites in the future.

Cultural and linguistic diversity: Although some Internet sites provide the facility to translate website material into other languages, the vast majority of sites are in English (though the Lord Chancellor's Department site provides information for parents and children in Welsh). There also appears to be little acknowledgement, beyond some 'multicultural' images, of cultural or religious differences. While this may be due to financial considerations rather than a lack of awareness of these issues, it was also the case that none of the specifically ethnic or religious sites accessed provided pages that addressed children and divorce directly.

Name of site: Another issue in designing websites is the thought put into the name. The name of a site can influence obtaining 'hits', and it can also work to detract from a site if the name does not appear to be directly relevant to the type of information required. Specific domain names can be misleading. For example, the Children's Information Service, which is cited by several children's organisations, looks like a service children can access for information but is actually part of a social services childcare/placement network.

(Continued overleaf)

Accuracy

As with other forms of information, errors can undermine the effectiveness of sites and generally work to detract from the credibility of other information on the site. Careful checks need to be made, for example, on references to other site addresses, telephone numbers, etc. and also on the appropriateness of specific sites that are recommended. In some cases web addresses were no longer valid and in others the links followed resulted in access to sites that did not specifically deal with separation and divorce, or were not particularly suitable for children.

Booklists and books

Booklists are often provided by organisations as a way to alert both adults and children to other forms of information, both factual and fictional. Non-fiction and research-based books allow for dissemination of information across a wide range of audiences, and fiction books provide an accessible way to broach and explore difficult themes with younger children, and can work to broaden older children and teenagers' understanding of the complexities of family life.

Children's storybooks, teenage fiction and TV soaps frequently deal with themes of parental separation and divorce, and these are often very popular with children and young people. There have been major changes in the common themes of writing for children over the past half-century. While themes of loss and abandonment are the classic themes of children's literature, in the post-war era popular children's writers like Enid Blyton or Arthur Ransome generally told stories

of children's lives among other children with parents portrayed as distant benign authority figures. For a later generation, authors such as Judy Blume or TV series like *Grange Hill*, brought themes of domestic relationships and conflicts to the forefront. By this era, even dinosaurs had divorce – a situation unknown in the world of Beatrix Potter's animals, though there are a few single parents.

The books on the lists represent a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction titles on divorce and separation, aimed at a variety of different age groups. There are a large number of books, from illustrated storybooks for young children, dealing with divorce through fictional and animal characters, to novels by popular authors, which have family conflict as the main theme and are aimed at teenagers.

Various organisations provide lists of their own general or professional publications, which are aimed either at parents or practitioners.

A booklet on adolescence

The Trust for the Study of Adolescence produces a 30-page illustrated booklet for both parents and professionals, which deals with all aspects of adolescence. This includes a number of books listed which deal with separation and divorce, some for teenagers and others to inform parents of issues which may be relevant for their teenage children. The booklet provides brief information on the Trust, together with an order form and details of payment methods. The booklet is available on the website.

How can books and booklists help children?

As with the other media, there is little evidence of the 'effectiveness' of books, but some of the most widely selling fiction titles for children and young people have divorce and separation as a central theme. We found no examples of attempts to evaluate the usefulness of booklists.

The booklists aimed at children that appear to be the most accessible are bright, colourful and provide a photograph of book-covers to stimulate interest. In addition to matters of presentation, organisations that use books and booklists as interventions need to address the following issues:

Access

Organisations need to know to what extent parents and children themselves have access to the lists and, if they do, whether they find them useful.

Appropriateness

Booklists recommend suitable books, preferably ones that have been proven to be popular and are based on a clear understanding of the issues involved. A balance needs to be found between being comprehensive and providing overwhelmingly extensive lists. Many of the books listed are American in origin, which raises the issue of cultural specificity. Although the main themes of family and divorce cross over many ethnic and cultural divides, the use of language is often different and may detract from perceived appropriateness. Although many of the storybooks do contain pictures of ethnic minority families, all were in English and none of the booklists provided information on books written for those speaking a different language, even though there are, for example, books written in Welsh.

Accuracy

The most useful booklists are those that divide books into specific age-range categories and provide information on publisher, price and availability. The latter is particularly important. Indeed, one of the most widely recommended books for younger children (*The Dinosaurs' Divorce*) is out of print in the UK and has to be ordered from the USA.

Audio/Visual, CD-Rom and games

A few organisations that provide written material

also use other forms of dissemination. A selection is featured overleaf.

Audio and video tapes

The Trust for the Study of Adolescence produces audio and video tapes on various aspects of parenting teenagers. As part of this series, they produce audiocassettes, with accompanying booklets, dealing with teenagers and divorce. The series covers issues such as preparing teenagers for the divorce, custody and access, and continuing conflict, all from the point of view of the teenagers themselves. The materials provide advice on dealing with practical aspects of divorce, and booklists for further reference. A video dealing generally with teenagers has also recently been produced. This video is part of the 'skills for parents' series and includes issues such as bullying and sex, and has a 10-minute section on changing families. This highlights some of the problems that may be associated with stepfamilies through a format that presents different scenarios and then has a panel discussing particular points raised.

CD-Rom

'Coping with Family Change' is produced by The Rotary International in conjunction with various independent organisations, including the NFPI, NCH, Parentline Plus, Rainbows and Relate. It provides an interactive format that is bright, colourful and relatively easy to navigate, with an animated figure that talks you through the various sections. Whilst the main aim is to disseminate information to children, there are also separate areas specifically aimed at parents and teachers, and school governors. The CD-Rom contains various innovative sections for children, one is in the use of video-clips to provide children's own views and experiences, and another is the presentation of books (for example, *The Dinosaurs' Divorce*). The CD also provides practical advice on dealing with particular situations and, because there are different CDs for primary and secondary school-aged children, activities and information that are more age-appropriate. It provides the option of printing out specific sections that children may find useful, and it gives further links to organisations such as ChildLine and the NSPCC should children want to talk to someone directly.

Some organisations also produce materials such as card games or board games that deal with the issue of separation and divorce. Most of these games aim to stimulate discussion of topics that

children may be having difficulty dealing with, and are meant to be played with adult, usually professional, supervision.

Divorce games

The 'Celebrating Families' card game produced by the Dawn Project, in conjunction with the West Midlands Family Court Welfare Service, is based on the 'happy families' format. It is meant for children of four and over, and sets out with the aim of alerting children to the fact that 'happy families' do not always have two parents and two children, and acknowledges and celebrates family diversity. Some of the positive images portrayed include ethnic and mixed-race families, and also disabled people (an issue which we did not find addressed by any of the other interventions).

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As part of the Lifegames series, produced by The Children's Society, there is 'The Divorced and Separated Game' (Searle and Streng, 1996). The series provides therapeutic board games for children and adolescents that are 'devised to facilitate the understanding and disclosure of the many painful and complex feelings experienced by children when they are confronted with traumatic life events'. The game is designed for use with children whose parents are separating or divorcing and looks at issues such as guilt, loneliness, contact and talking to others. The board game format was used as a medium that would be familiar to young people, and the suggested age range is between six and 16. However, it is debatable whether older children would find it appropriate.

Making audio-visual, CD-Roms and games work for children

As with most other interventions we looked at, we have not found any evidence of the effectiveness of these products or of how widely they may be distributed.

On a general level the more media that can be used to disseminate information, the more likely information and advice will reach its target audience. The use of up-to-date technology, such as the CD-Rom, may work to enhance the appeal of material for children. Depending on the age of the child, this may also provide the ability to access information independently of parents and other adults.

As with other forms of information, there is a general need to ensure that material is regularly updated, clearly this is much easier with a website than a CD-Rom or tape. Some of the audio tapes still being distributed are over ten years old and, although dealing with relevant issues, may lose authority with out-dated presentation styles.

The main distribution of the audio-visual materials was through schools. Whilst potentially this means access to a large population, other avenues for distribution need to be explored as some children may not associate school-based material as particularly relevant or appropriate, or may feel uncomfortable about accessing it within the school environment. Once the materials are in a school they must, of course, be made available to children.

Conflict management and reduction, parenting support and contact with non-resident parents

The services and interventions that we discuss below are those that are more likely to be directed at the parents, but may have important benefits for children. Although children may not be directly involved and consulted in such services, there is arguably a case to suggest that they should be (see Chapter 2). Research confirms that managing conflict between

parents, both at the time of separation and afterwards, is crucial for children's well-being. Parents may need extra help and support as the quality of parenting is almost always impaired at the time of separation and also during stepfamily formation (see Chapter 2 for a full discussion of this research). Research also tells us that a good relationship with non-resident fathers has measurable links with children's well-being and schemes that enable this contact to continue are important.

Mediation

Mediation is the process through which a trained and independent mediator works with parents towards a settlement of their financial affairs, the arrangements for the children, and other divorce-related issues. Mediation is now an accepted part of some divorce resolutions. As well as mediation being a way of focusing parents' attention on their children, there are growing arguments for including children directly in the mediation process (Gollop *et al.*, 2000).

An Australian study carried out by McIntosh (2000) looked at 13 families whose mediation involved direct consultation with children (aged between four and 17). The overall outcome was positive, with 15 out of the 17 children saying that they benefited from the experience, and the majority of parents believing that the chance for the children to 'off-load' and gain information had been helpful. Feedback from mediators to parents on the children's views was also assessed as leading to better understanding between parents

and children. Although those taking part believed the experience to have been useful, this was a voluntary programme and most participants had good communication with former partners and children prior to taking part. Indeed, as with all non-mandatory interventions, it is generally the case that those who may benefit most are the ones that are least likely to take part (Shifflett and Cummings, 1999).

Mediation can work well alongside counselling and family therapy, but is not available everywhere in the country. Several organisations, such as NCH (Child's Eye) and Family Mediation Scotland, provide mediation services with child involvement. This gives the chance for the child's voice to be heard in a protected setting with a third party present. However, the number of children who experience involvement in mediation is very small indeed. All the NCH mediation projects have children in divorce and separation centres equipped with books, web access and the CD-Rom 'Coping with Family Change' (see below).

Making mediation work for children

Mediation is not widely available and is used by a minority of divorcing parents. Where it is available and where it helps to produce a resolution, it can have clear benefits for children. There are also ways in which children can be more directly involved and helped to feel that their views and feelings are important in the decisions that are being made.

Involving children

Although mediators are often trained in working with children, most mediators do not do so and it remains rare. Clearly it is important to keep adult and child issues separate but there are ways in which children can be involved. Where it does happen, practice varies. For example:

- One approach is for the mediator to see children on their own. Sometimes a second mediator sees the children to avoid conflict of interest. Then, with the child's consent, the mediator reports back the child's view to adults in another session.
- An alternative approach is that parents only are involved in the mediation, and they are encouraged to think about children's needs and to talk to the children outside the mediation. When a settlement has been reached, the parents and children are invited to the final sessions at which the parents tell the children what arrangements have been made. This practice helps the children to discuss details and ask questions. Many children seem to appreciate this involvement.

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It is important that 'involvement' is not a token gesture. Wade and Smart (2002) report that children are happiest disclosing their feelings and opinions with someone they know and trust, so contact with practitioners should not be one-off. Such contacts, Wade and Smart suggest, meet the needs of the legal process better than those of children.

Making mediation culturally and ethnically aware

Several ethnically-based organisations provide mediation services. The African Caribbean Family Mediation Service provides a Home-School mediation service, but most mediation services are for adults and not children. Ethnic and cultural differences are addressed by some of the larger national charities: NCH runs its Mediation service 'Eye to Eye' – where it has a multicultural team of professional mediators and Legal Aid is available – for parents from all cultural backgrounds, though it predominantly serves an African-Caribbean population.

Family Mediation Scotland carried out a research project on responses to mediation by Pakistani, Chinese, African-Caribbean and Indian origin parents (Pankaj, 2001). Interestingly, minority groups did not think they particularly needed family mediation services for a specific group. They were happy to visit the established mediation services. Many were concerned that confidentiality should be maintained, and were worried about the presence of someone from their own community or an interpreter. The need for mediators aware of cultural diversity, and bilingual mediators, was stressed, as well as the need for older mediators, and for more male mediators. It was also seen to be important for the mediator to be culturally sensitive, and to understand the views about separation and divorce in different ethnic communities.

The main recommendations from the report were that family mediation services should be adapted to meet the needs of extended family groups, be available to couples who hope there is some chance of reconciliation, have two mediators present (one male and one female), have minority-group mediators from different communities, be seen to be culturally sensitive and professional (some ethnic-group members respect doctors and lawyers, but not always professionals from other disciplines), and disseminate information in appropriate languages and formats (audio-visual and leaflets). There was also a general need to explain what family mediation was and distinguish it from counselling.

Classes and information sessions for parents

The Family Law Act 1996 would have made attendance at an information meeting mandatory for at least one of the parties in any divorce proceedings. As the Act has not been

implemented, attendance at any form of information session or parenting class is not compulsory. However, the parenting plans that were developed as part of this work are still available.

Parenting plans

Although not specified by the Family Law Act, a parenting plan was devised as part of the early work examining the usefulness of information sessions. This consisted of a slim A4 booklet that contained information about the needs of children, together with a pro-forma plan, under nine broad headings, in which parents could enter arrangements being made for their children. Whilst it was found that, in fact, very few parents actually filled in the plan, it was perceived useful as a means of setting an agenda and highlighting areas to be discussed (Stark, Laing and Richards, 2001). It was also found helpful as a source of reassurance and validation that parents were doing the right thing and had covered the main areas that needed to be addressed. The parenting plan appeared to work best as a co-operative tool; however, this required parents to communicate directly with one another and as such was not always applicable. A revised version of the parenting plan is now produced by the LCD and is available on their website.

Figure 9 The Parenting Plan commissioned by the Lord Chancellor’s Department for parents



The government subsequently started to develop the Family Advice and Information

Network (FAINS), through the Legal Services Commission.

The Family Advice and Information Network (FAINS)

Initially at least, all the 'suppliers' of the FAINS programme will be solicitors. FAINS aims to 'facilitate the dissolution of broken relationships in ways which minimise distress to parents and children and which promote ongoing family relationships and co-operative parenting. It will also provide tailored information and access to services that may assist in resolving disputes and/or assist those who may wish to consider saving or reconciling their relationship'.

It is proposed that FAINS suppliers will:

- provide tailored information to those seeking help and advice
- help to identify issues requiring legal advice and action
- encourage the use of relationship counselling for those who want it
- encourage the use of mediation services where appropriate
- offer support to parents in talking to children
- offer support to children who need it through referral to expert children's services.

Several voluntary organisations run courses for parents who are experiencing difficulties, and some offer specific classes aimed at parents who are separated or divorced. Other organisations, such as Gingerbread and the Association of Shared Parenting, run advice shops and self-help groups which aim to encourage parents to share

experiences and gain support from each other. Various local mediation centres provide information sessions for parents as a means of explaining the process of mediation and assessing whether mediation is appropriate in specific cases.

On a local level, several organisations (for example, Fegans Child and Family Care, Coram

The Dawn Project

The Dawn Project, which is linked to the Sheffield Diocese, runs a variety of initiatives for both parents and children. As well as their work in schools (see *School-based interventions*, page 00) with children, they also run short courses and workshops ('Surviving the Break-Up') that are open to people experiencing separation and divorce. These courses are designed with the help of clinical psychologists and are run by trained staff. The main aim is to offer people a safe and caring environment in which to share feelings and experiences, to look at issues such as communication and conflict, and to help people devise positive strategies for coping and moving forward. Each two-hour workshop deals with how to explain what is happening to children, and distinguishes between 'normal' behaviour and that which may indicate a problem needing help. Workshops also provide access to a range of resources, including books and videos, for both parents and children. Although no formal assessment of outcomes has been done, the courses are evaluated by individual participants in terms of their usefulness, and all the Project's interventions are regularly audited and reviewed.

Family) run initiatives advertising courses and work on a response basis to the needs of the local population. Many of these organisations have religious links, and there are also a range of courses provided by individual Church of England dioceses as part of their pastoral outreach programmes.

A more directive approach to intervention has been taken, under the auspices of Family Mediation Scotland (FMS), which provides a Parenting

Information Programme (PIP). This programme is based on research into similar services available in the USA which found that education for parents leads to better outcomes for children. It was initiated through the legal system and is supported by the Sheriff Courts, though attendance is voluntary. The aim of the PIP is to provide parents with an awareness of what to expect for themselves and their children following separation and/or divorce.

Parenting Information Programmes (PIP)

The programme consists of a series of one-off meetings which last approximately two hours. Information is given on children's feelings and rights, what parents should expect, what the legal requirements are, and how to cope with difficult situations arising from the separation/divorce. The meetings are run by Family Mediation Scotland trained mediators and take place at local community venues. The sessions include a talk structured around the content of an explanatory booklet (*Parents Apart*), which is issued to all participants. A video is shown in which parents and children talk about their experiences and, although participants are not asked to talk about their particular circumstances, a question and discussion session is included.

This programme was extensively evaluated by the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (Mayes *et al.*, 2000). As well as the views of the participants and legal professionals, the perspectives of children and those working with children, such as child mediators and counsellors, were also incorporated. The overall findings were that the PIP represented 'an excellent prototype for interventions' which aim to provide information to parents in order to help them help their children through parental separation and divorce. However, it also reported that, whilst meetings should not be made compulsory, a more active and effective referral route needs to be developed. The importance of trained staff, both male and female, for the delivery of the presentations, was also highlighted.

The findings of this report were echoed by those of Walker (2001), in the evaluation of the

information meetings which were to be part of the provisions of the Family Law Act 1996. It was likewise found that although the majority of participants believed that the meetings should not be compulsory, 80 per cent of those taking part assessed them positively. In Canada, some interventions are compulsory in some states, for example the Alberta Parenting After Separation Seminar (PASS). This programme is based on group sessions, totalling six hours, held over a period of time. An evaluation of PASS found that, whilst the mandatory nature of the programme was sometimes resented, 80 per cent of those attending assessed the programme as positive, and that many participants would like the programme time to be longer than the six hours (Walker, 2001). (Mandatory attendance only involves those couples who were legally married and not cohabiting couples.)

Making parenting and information sessions work for parents and children

General parenting classes, dealing with various aspects of parenting, are becoming increasingly available as part of local initiatives to promote positive or 'good enough' parenting. Group sessions represent a relatively cost-effective way of not only disseminating information to parents who are separating and/or divorcing but, by supporting them through a difficult time, may minimise parental distress and foster better overall communication. Those that appear most effective are the ones that combine a variety of different formats, such as presentations, videos, workbooks, etc., and are run by trained personnel of both sexes. While the evidence suggests that many parents find these programmes useful, there is less evidence of their possible indirect benefits for children, though the limited evidence available is also positive.

The voluntary nature of parenting classes and information sessions in the UK means there is a need to actively promote attendance and to make participation as relevant as possible. Different avenues of referral, over and above the legal and mediation routes, need to be fostered and advertising needs to be widespread and attractive. Both married and cohabiting couples should be included. Any stigma that may be attached to attending programmes should be minimised, and the location of venues should be easily accessible and appropriate. It is also important that parents receive information early in the separation process when important decisions regarding children are likely to be made and when children are most likely to be distressed by what is happening.

Contact centres

Several organisations provide contact centres where parents who do not live with their children can meet them in a safe and pleasant environment with supporting volunteer staff. The National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC) supports over 280 member centres. Some centres offer supported contact, while others can also provide supervised or assessed contact. Referrals are usually made by solicitors, but also by family

court welfare officers, Social Services, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, family mediation and Relate, and some centres also accept self-referrals. The NACCC publish a directory of child contact centres. An introduction to contact centres, called *Ben's Story* by Linda Wyon, has been translated into Welsh. Contact centres involve about 19,000 children a year, 60 per cent of whom are under five years old, and aim to keep a relationship going with the non-resident parent (NACCC, 2000).

Making contact centres work for children

Where parents are in conflict and feelings are running high, handover at contact centres where staff are present can ease the situation and can be useful until all parties are more settled. As we have discussed earlier in this report (see Chapter 2), children are likely to do well if they have a continuing good, or 'good enough', relationship with both parents. The main point that emerges from research is that it is the quality of contact that matters, rather than the quantity, and this clearly has implications for the way that contact centres might operate.

(Continued overleaf)

Contact centres can play an important role where parents live some distance apart and the non-resident parent has nowhere beyond public playgrounds and fast-food outlets where they can take their children. It is important to distinguish this kind of facility, which may provide play and quiet space and perhaps some refreshments, from contact centres that can provide facilities for supervised access. In rare situations where there may be child protection issues associated with contact, courts can order access to be undertaken only with supervision. Clearly for these cases, supervision must be provided by appropriately trained staff. There are also some rare instances where no contact is in the child's best interests.

Less a conclusion, more a beginning...

As we have shown in this chapter, there is a wide range of diverse services and interventions, some of which will directly benefit children whose parents are divorcing or separating. Others have potentially an indirect effect. However, in the absence of any systematic comparison or evaluation of the impact they may have on children and families, it is hard to judge which interventions are the most effective in achieving specific aims. What we have tried to do here is to describe a selection of the interventions that are currently in place and to indicate what would help each approach to be most effective.

Criteria for assessing different interventions vary according to the type and aims of the services and support provided. General areas that need to be addressed, however, include:

- *Access:* No matter how effective an intervention or service may be it will only be successful if it reaches its target audience. In many instances it was unclear how leaflets, etc. were actually being distributed, or they were only available at the point of therapeutic contact, which may be of little help to those needing information or advice in the early stages of separation or divorce. Access to web-based services could also be problematic due to the necessity for specific software and the variability of search engine information. Counselling and mediation

services are only available to a small minority of children and are usually dependent on parental involvement. Access to direct services varies widely depending on locality.

- *Accuracy:* Across all forms of information, accuracy is a vital component in sustaining credibility. As well as the need for advice to be grounded in research, information regarding telephone numbers, addresses, websites, etc. needs to be checked and regularly updated. Several examples were found of information being provided which was inaccurate and out-of-date or which incorporated careless mistakes that could detract from the overall message being sent out.
- *Appropriateness:* Information aimed at children needs to be appropriate to both the age of the child, and also the specific concerns with which they are currently dealing. Information that does not address these issues risks being seen as patronising or too complex. Cultural and religious diversity also needs to be addressed.

The most significant problem in this survey was the lack of evaluation taking place in the field. Given that significant resources are going into these services it is important that this is addressed. In the next chapter we open the discussion about how

interventions and services might be designed and evaluated in the light of current research evidence.

This is not intended to be a blueprint, but to stimulate thought and action.

Summary

Although there are undoubtedly some excellent services available, our survey raises many questions about the effectiveness of some of the material used, and the extent to which these may be grounded on the principles established by research in the field.

- While many good and probably effective programmes exist, we found that evaluations are not commonly carried out by those providing support and intervention services, probably because of the costs involved.
- Parents tend to act as ‘gatekeepers’ for information for children. There are relatively few direct services for children.
- We need to know more about whether interventions reach their target audiences.
- There is a lack of cultural diversity and appropriateness in programmes, especially those provided by national organisations.
- General areas that need to be addressed in developing effective interventions are: access, appropriateness and accuracy.

Part 3

Conclusions and implications

4 A framework for designing and evaluating services

There is a growing consensus, based on research, on what types of interventions parents and children would benefit from, and also on the need for various forms of dissemination. However, there is, as we have seen in Chapter 3, a lack of systematic evaluation of interventions that are currently available. Many organisations duplicate information produced by other organisations, and there is often no assessment of the benefits or otherwise of specific materials used. Evaluations are often based on retrospective accounts from people looking at how helpful certain information or services were. Such an approach ignores issues associated with distribution and uptake of services. Many programmes rely simply on participant feedback as a means of evaluating the interventions, with no comparison group and, as such, non-participants are not included.

This chapter offers a framework to guide the design and evaluation of services for children of

divorcing and separating parents. We look in more detail at the aims and outcomes of services and, from this base, develop a framework for evaluation. This framework, whilst not definitive, is useful in identifying relevant issues that need to be taken into account when designing and evaluating interventions.

Aims and outcomes arising from research

At the end of Chapter 2 we identified the kind of services that research suggests can help children (see Table 2). We will now look in more detail at the aims and outcomes of interventions and support services directed at children and parents in the light of the research findings discussed earlier. Table 4 suggests a framework from which we can start to identify the key questions in designing and evaluating support for children.

Table 4 Aims and outcomes of services and interventions for children and parents

Services/interventions	Outcomes for children (direct or indirect benefits through parents)
For children they should aim to include:	
Provision of someone to listen to their experiences and perspectives	Maintenance/ restoration of children’s well-being
Help in age-appropriate ways to understand the processes they and their parents are going through	Reduction of anxiety and stress
Help to develop skills for appraising and coping with conflict and distress	Increased understanding about what is and has happened
Fostering aspects of well-being such as self esteem	Good communication with parents, extended family and friends
Encouragement to seek support from extended family members and friends	Appropriate appraisal and coping skills
Consultation with children about the intervention and their consent to take part	Ongoing relationships with both parents, where appropriate
Respect for different individual wishes and needs, as well as age and stage differences	Coping with loss of a parent, where this happens
	Support from extended family and friends
	Minimal interruption of school attendance and performance

(Continued overleaf)

Table 4 Continued

Services/interventions	Outcomes for children (direct or indirect benefits through parents)
For parents they should aim to include:	Avoidance or reduction of behaviour problems Assurance that children have taken part freely, have not felt an invasion of privacy or have been pressured to take part in the programme Avoidance of any stigmatisation of children
Assistance to communicate adequately with their children about what is happening and why	Good communication between parents and children
Provision of help for their own distress	Supportive and appropriate parenting
Support for and information about parenting	Reduction or minimising of parental distress
Information about and opportunities to develop skills for containing and managing conflict	Minimal conflict and no involvement of children in parents' disputes
Encouragement to foster regular contact for children with extended family on both sides, and with children's friends	Optimal living and visiting arrangements for children
Help to make arrangements for the future, including encouragement to foster involvement of both parents in their children's lives	Successful fostering of children's relationships with the other parent and wider kin
Encouragement to maintain close and stable links with schools and to ensure regular school attendance by children	<i>Medium- and long-term outcomes may include:</i>
Confirm and reinforce existing positive patterns, and build confidence in these	Stability for children in living arrangements and relationships, including friends and family members
	Continuing well-being and reduction or absence of behaviour problems
	Authoritative (non-authoritarian) parenting with warmth
	Ongoing contact with both parents and wider kin (except in situations when this is not in the children's interests)
	Good relationships with school, including parental involvement and positive educational outcomes

Key questions in designing support and interventions

By asking fundamental questions at the beginning of a service, and involving those who are likely to benefit (children themselves), a different approach to delivering services may well emerge. This

involves some lateral thinking. For example, research tells us that grandparents are important sources of support to children at the time of divorce and separation. A possible strategy, then, might include providing information for grandparents and seeing them as possible sources of information

for children. However the service is finally designed, the only way to know if good intentions have reached their target of helping children is to evaluate them. The questions that follow, then, are intended to guide the design and planning of services. Not all of these questions will be appropriate for all services and interventions. They are intended to map out the kinds of questions that are useful to ask when setting up a service and they also provide a basis for evaluating services that are already running.

Who are we aiming to reach?

The first question to be addressed is which groups of children are the intended recipients of the programme? Some programmes, for example, may be provided for all children in a school or a classroom regardless of their family experiences. Others may be intended only for children who have or are experiencing their parents' separation. Still others may target children who already have problems that have been identified by teachers, parents or themselves. The aims and outcomes for all of these will vary. Our comments here are focused on the aims and outcomes arising from research reviewed in Chapter 2 that are appropriate for the second two groups: children who have experienced parental separation and those that have problems.

How do children gain access to the programme?

There are several ways in which children are able to take part in interventions, although, as we have already commented, many of these are mediated by parents. Among the problems associated with this approach is that parental consent may be required in order for children to participate, and sometimes there are difficulties in gaining consent from both parents if they are living apart. Furthermore, children's own assent may or may not be gained for them to be involved.

Questions of privacy and confidentiality also arise as there may be some stigma attached to

children's attendance at programmes, especially if they are based in schools where it is well known that children with 'problems' attend. Children, too, sometimes do not want teachers and peers to know that their family is breaking up.

There are many other ways in which children access information and this is an area that requires further research involving children themselves. We know little, for example, about how children use the Internet, the role of children's television and children's literature. For older children, the role of peers may prove to be an important source of support and information.

What are the aims of the programme and are they specified to the participants?

Programmes may exist simply to make children feel better, in a non-specific way. Or they may be targeted to particular outcomes such as increasing self-esteem, or reducing conflict, or to increase communication between parents and children. Participants, whether parents or children, should be informed of the aims so that they can make a judgement about whether or not a service will be useful to them.

Does the choice of intervention match what we are trying to achieve?

As we saw in the last chapter, there are many different ways of approaching support services for children. It is worth considering whether the intervention that we think of first is, in fact, the most appropriate. Perhaps leaflets are not the best response to an information need – children, if asked, might suggest alternative strategies, perhaps enlisting children's magazines to run a series on divorce and separation or using television stars to raise issues in children's discussion programmes. Today, fiction, TV and video, and popular culture more widely, are a major part of the social worlds of children and are likely to be a more important source of information and influence than the relatively small amount of material produced

specifically about separation and divorce for children and young people.

The key questions are: will children find the intervention, use it and benefit from it?

Does the content of the programme reflect its aims?

As aims vary, so should the content of a programme. The content should also reflect awareness of children's perspectives and research findings on outcomes and factors associated with them. This question does not apply to all services: helplines, for example, have their agendas set by issues that callers raise.

Are the aims of the programme based in research?

Table 4 suggests a number of ways in which the aims and content of programmes may be designed with reference to evidence, clearly linked with what is known about children and family change.

Are trained personnel involved?

Does the programme require people who have training specific to the programme's aims, for example children's counsellors? Staff or volunteers may be trained professionally but not necessarily in the skills called for by the programme – do they require extra training to meet the needs of the programme? Untrained workers, voluntary or paid, may also need specific preparation to deliver the service.

Is the programme age-appropriate?

As well as individual differences, children at different ages have varying levels of language, comprehension, and concept formation. Does the service address these? Similarly, issues for children experiencing family change may vary by age group. For example, the issues for adolescents will be rather different from those for pre-schoolers.

Is the programme culturally and religiously appropriate?

Attitudes to families, divorce and stepfamily formation vary according to cultural and religious beliefs. Is the service designed to be culturally and religiously appropriate both in awareness of beliefs and practices, and in inclusion of multicultural personnel who are knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural differences?

Evaluating programmes

During our review of services and interventions we found that few were evaluated and those that were often relied on measuring satisfaction through participant feedback, and did not address many of the key questions or issues about dissemination or uptake. Attempts to assess effectiveness, or indeed efficiency, were rare. This confirms the findings of the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI) consultation document (Henricson *et al.*, 2001), looking at family services throughout England and Wales. Of the 2,000 service providers who responded, 73 per cent (1,456) claimed to have undergone some form of evaluation, either in-house or through their funding organisation. It was found that whilst the stated emphasis on evaluation appears to be on 'best practice' (or 'best value'), this tends to be based on a 'customer culture' type appraisal, i.e. satisfaction with the service, rather than systematic appraisal of processes or outcomes.

There are reasons for this lack of evaluation. Evaluation research is demanding and requires the support of skilled and experienced researchers and it does not always receive the grant support it deserves. All too often the impetus and funding goes to set up new programmes and to develop these. Particularly for voluntary organisations, it is often very difficult to obtain the necessary support for evaluation. We should acknowledge and

applaud, however, those voluntary organisations (such as Barnardo's) who have been innovators in focusing on the need for (and developing methods for) evaluating services.

It is important to consider several questions when designing and undertaking an evaluation. These are also helpful questions when reviewing and critically reading evaluation studies:

- Is the evaluation of outcomes, or of processes? *Have the evaluators looked at the processes, or experiences of the intervention, or have they measured outcomes in some way?*
- Who is included in the evaluation? *Does the evaluation question children, parents, teachers, leaders?*
- How many participants were there in the evaluation?
- Does the evaluation match the stated aims of the programme?
- How long after the programme finished was it evaluated?
- What are the findings of the evaluation?
- How will the findings be implemented?
- Will the evaluation be published in a peer-reviewed journal or, if not, will it be reviewed by peers?

In practice, many evaluations do not lend themselves to this level of scrutiny, and generally the evaluation of social interventions is fraught with both conceptual and methodological

difficulties. Not only is it necessary to define specific types of evaluation such as process, output and outcome, but there also needs to be systematic measurement of the effectiveness of particular interventions (Statham, 2000). At the same time there is a growing need for social interventions to be seen to be cost effective and accountable.

Specific organisations and funding bodies are, however, becoming more aware of this lack of clarity with respect to evaluation and are producing guidelines (for example, Parent Education and Support Forum) and assessment books (National Association of Children's Information Services, 2000) which aim to help parenting services through the process. Nevertheless, difficulties remain in both assessing long-term outcomes, and also in the ability to translate evaluations into practice (Grimshaw, 1999).

As with parenting services in general, there appears to be no agreed standards for evaluating interventions for children, or for assessing how such evaluations are used.

The evaluation of programmes and interventions designed for children and their parents who experience divorce and stepfamily formation calls for a set of questions that need to be asked. In addition to specific aims and desired outcomes, there are several other aspects that should properly be examined. These are the questions we have identified as being key to planning a service at the outset but are also important to ask again when the service or intervention is up and running.

Questions for evaluations

The following evaluative questions may be asked of interventions and support programmes before a service is started and when it is up and running:

- How do children or parents gain access to the programme?
- Are the aims of the programme specified?
- Are the aims of the programme based in research?
- Does the content of the programme reflect its aims?
- Are the personnel involved appropriately trained?
- Is the programme age appropriate?
- Is the programme culturally or religiously appropriate?
- How do we know the programme has reached the children or parents who need it?

5 Implications for practice and policy

As our review of research emphasises, the majority of children who experience parental separation and re-partnering do not experience long-term harm. For the minority who do, it is important that we find out which services and interventions are most effective in helping them. We also need more research evidence to identify the children who are most at risk.

Although we are not able to predict which children may fare worst in the long-term, some targeting is still possible (Richards and Ely, 1998). Clearly there is not one simple way to reach all children. Policies and services are likely to be most effective if they adopt a wide variety of approaches based in research about what children need and what works with children.

Using a mixed strategy

As Wade and Smart (2002) have reported, although children's experiences and life chances are very diverse, there is considerable agreement about what matters to children when parents separate and the support that they find helpful. The research evidence is clear about what children are asking for and what they need. Table 2 outlines the broad areas of support that research suggests should be available and Table 4 describes the aims and outcomes that services might concentrate their efforts on.

In the absence of routine evaluation of services, we are less clear about which interventions, in which combinations, are most effective. It is likely, however, that a mixed strategy is more effective than relying on one approach.

In Chapter 2, we outlined a number of factors which may contribute to, or moderate, adverse outcomes for children. These factors included:

- low family income
- ongoing parental conflict, particularly when it directly involves the children

- conflict in stepfamilies
- reduction in quality of parenting and quality of parent-child relationships
- the level of resources available in their community
- lack of access to support, especially from grandparents and extended family members and friends
- individual child-based difficulties in managing stress and transitions
- cultural/religious factors.

Most of these factors suggest ways in which organisations can design services to help support children (see Table 2). A selection of these have been discussed and illustrated in this report. The first factor, low income, is the exception. Few organisations that we surveyed are in a position to give financial help. This is an issue that takes us into the broader context of national debates about child poverty. Any initiatives that aim to help families in poverty will include children of divorced and separated parents, since these are often in families in low-income groups.

We have dealt with the need to design and evaluate services at some length and this is a key message of our research. It is difficult to justify investment of time, money or other resources in the development of services without a corresponding concern with evaluation. There is also a good case for asking children of separating parents about the kinds of support that they would find helpful and for surveying them systematically about how they access services and interventions.

Consulting children

What we are advocating here is not simply the traditional plea of research reports for 'more research'. It is a message directed at service

providers, as well as researchers, to look at the ways in which services and interventions are designed from a new perspective. When an organisation considers setting up a service or intervention, what people tend to think about first is the media they will use – perhaps a website, a helpline or setting up a group. The next question is content – sometimes this is research-based, often it is not. What we are suggesting is that services and interventions stand a better chance of being used and being effective if those who set them up can first consult a group of children who are experiencing, or have experienced, separation or divorce. Questions that might be asked include:

- What kinds of support do they access?
How do they find it?
- What kinds of needs do they have that were not met?
- What do they think of the kinds of materials and interventions that are already available?
- What would they like to see made available and how?

Whilst these are questions that need answering from larger-scale research studies, they are also pertinent to any service provider setting up a service for a particular section of children or young people. By asking a representative group of children first, the choice of interventions or services may well be different from those that adults assume will benefit children most.

We still know so little about the best ways to offer support to children. We need to know more about children's expectations and knowledge of where and how they can access information related to different domains of their lives. For example, given the great explosion in the use of the world wide web, including use by children, it is not surprising that this has been seen as a good way of providing information to children. However,

current evidence does not suggest that this is very effective. Even if children do have access and are computer users, it does not necessarily mean that they will use the web to search for information about parental separation. It is perhaps surprising that there have been few attempts to develop e-mail information services. Furthermore, not all children, and especially younger ones, want opportunities to read about, or talk about their domestic troubles, with strangers. Support from trusted adults or interventions that actually change their circumstances may be much more significant.

Issues of gender may be important here. Just as research shows that gender plays a part in the way that boys and girls respond to family transitions, we might expect some gender differences in where children look and how they search for information and support. ChildLine's experience, for instance, is that girls are more likely to use phone lines than boys.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

The national programmes with their broad appeal make few concessions to the cultural or linguistic diversity of the population. However, there are local services aimed at particular communities or groups, and probably more than the relatively few that were found in our survey. Indeed, our search strategy is likely to have been biased toward the larger, and national, organisations and service providers. There are several rather different issues here:

- If a leaflet or website is being produced for a potentially national audience, it needs to have versions for at least the larger linguistic and cultural groups, and appropriate distribution strategies to reach them.
- There is clearly scope for community groups which may offer local services to their own local community and which can be tailored to their own communities' needs. This

approach, however, relies on there being localised concentrations of the particular group that is being targeted. Some of the UK ethnic minorities have, in part at least, scattered settlement patterns with single families in small communities where they run retail or other small businesses, for example. Imaginative strategies will be needed to reach these families.

- It is not just language that varies amongst ethnic groups, but also approaches and attitudes to divorce that need to be accounted for in material presented.

It is important to respect the sensitivities of children so that they may seek and receive information without this necessarily becoming known to their parents or peers. Given the large number of children whose parents are not married, it is obvious that the courts or solicitors will provide a route only to divorcing parents and the small minority of separating, unmarried parents who use legal services.

What do our findings add to current debates?

While there are often strongly-held views that the state should not intervene in domestic matters of family life, except in very serious circumstances, there seems a wide consensus that some intervention on behalf of the children of divorcing parents is warranted. The evaluation of the information meetings piloted for the Family Law Act 1996 showed that parents, in particular, appreciated information. Matters concerning children were a special concern for them. They were especially interested in the leaflets about parenting and for children. The parenting plans were also well received, not least as a welcome support and confirmation of the arrangements they had made (Stark, Laing and Richards, 2001). Had the Family Law Act been implemented, it would have been mandatory for at least one of the parties

in any divorce proceeding to attend an information meeting. There is wide support for the idea of parents being required to attend such a meeting, as they are in a number of other jurisdictions, particularly in North America. The PASS scheme (see Chapter 3) in Alberta Canada, for example, requires divorcing parents to attend a six-hour parenting course. However, with the demise of the Family Law Act there are no legislative plans for any scheme involving compulsory attendance. Instead, as outlined in Chapter 3, the Legal Services Commission has begun to set up the Family Advice and Information Network (FAINS).

An action research programme has been set up alongside FAINS to assist in its development and evaluate its impact. The Advisory Board on Family Law: Children Act Sub-Committee has recently reported on a consultation on the facilitation of arrangements for contact between children and their non-residential parents (The Advisory Board on Family Law: Children Act Sub-Committee, 2002). The Committee suggested that two kinds of information are needed. The first is the general need to promote understanding of the importance of the involvement of both parents in the upbringing of children, which they see as largely a role for the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI). The second is more specifically linked to the court or divorce process where they see FAINS having the major role.

The Committee argued strongly for a co-ordinated approach to providing information for both parents and children on a national basis, using the widest possible number of outlets, including videos and the Internet.

The conclusions we draw from our survey broadly support those of the Sub-Committee, but there are a number of points to be made:

- There is clearly a need for a co-ordinated approach to providing information to children and their parents involving the Lord Chancellor's Department, CAF/CASS, FAINS,

NFPI and the major children's and parents' charities already involved in providing information, as well as a very wide range of local groups. Voluntary organisations concerned with parents also have a major role to play. Information needs to be provided in a variety of ways and in a variety of formats.

- In our survey we found much duplication of information and formats. Many leaflets are simply re-jigged and re-branded versions of leaflets produced by others. Duplication can be pointless and wasteful, although there may well be reasons to modify a national leaflet to include local information or to adapt it for use in a particular cultural community. The survey also identified examples of new ideas and approaches. There is always a need to encourage experimentation and innovation. We have much more to learn about ways of reaching and supporting children. A national scheme for distribution – if this comes about – should not be allowed to exclude innovation and development. One size will not fit all, so we need to retain a diversity of approaches.
- Before any leaflet, website or other intervention is made widely available, systematic evaluation should be carried out. As a second step, the effectiveness and efficiency of the distribution or dissemination system needs to be assessed.
- Information provided and tailored for children will only be one source of knowledge for them. There is much in children's literature and popular culture that may help and support them. An important part of tailored information that may be provided is to draw attention to this, as several do through the production of booklists.

In summary

There is a great deal of information and potential help available for children whose parents are separating or divorcing. However, most of this is aimed at parents and can influence children only indirectly. Though services for children have probably increased, they are still small in number and, overall, our investigations suggest that their impact on children may be quite limited. Better evidence about the actual or potential usefulness of these services is badly needed. One way to obtain this evidence would be to take a representative sample of children whose parents have divorced or separated and assess their needs, the services and interventions that they may know about, and those they use. Such information could provide a valuable indication of where resources might best be placed in order to develop effective services and interventions for children. Clearly, whatever is offered should be appropriate to the age of children that are being targeted, and it is important in this regard to remember that the majority of children experiencing parental separation and divorce are young. Seventy per cent of those whose parents separate are under ten.

When thinking about services and interventions for children of separating parents, we need to see them in the broad context of children's concerns. To target parental divorce alone may be something of an adult perspective since, as Wade and Smart (2002) found, for some children 'divorce was not necessarily the only, or the major issue in an otherwise uneventful landscape of family life'. Rather, it was one of many issues in their lives and often not seen by them as the most important. In fact, it can come fairly low down a list of their troubles and anxieties. Broadly based interventions concerned more generally with family change, upheavals and difficulties may, then, sometimes be more appropriate.

Key messages from the study

- It is difficult to justify the expense and other resources involved in setting up a service if it is not evaluated, or based on an evaluated model.
- Evaluation of services before wide dissemination is essential.
- We need to ask children about effective ways of designing services, and what are the best ways for them to gain access to services. Not all children want the same services or will access them in the same way.
- There is a need for early and effective provision of information for children and parents.
- Although there is a need for a co-ordinated approach to provision of services in order to avoid unnecessary and wasteful duplication of resources, this should not be at the expense of diversity and innovation.
- Given research that suggests that divorce in itself is not the predominant source of stress for them, it may be worth exploring further whether a broadly focused intervention for children may be the most effective.

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Appendix 1: How the survey of services was conducted

The aim of this project was to locate and describe the kinds of interventions and services that exist and that are readily accessible to help and support children experiencing parental separation and divorce. It was not part of this research to provide a directory of all available services for children. Although there are many general programmes aimed at children, and ones that specifically deal with issues such as bereavement, domestic violence and abuse, the interventions we looked at are those that explicitly address the issue of family change within the context of separation and divorce.

In addition to a systematic search of organisations, names of organisations were provided by members of our advisory group and other colleagues, and were taken from research references. Internet searches were also made for relevant websites. Questionnaires were sent to 172 organisations stating the aim of the study, and asking if their organisation provided services for children from divorcing and changing families (see the sample questionnaires in Figures A1.1 and A1.2). A stamped, return-addressed envelope was included. Reminders were sent up to three times. The overall response rate was 75 per cent, with 43 of the organisations not replying at all.

On the basis of information provided on the first questionnaire, a second questionnaire, again

with a stamped, return-addressed envelope, was sent asking for information about distribution and numbers of children receiving the services in the relevant categories. These letters asked about the relevant categories of intervention listed by each organisation. Reminders were sent up to three times either by letter, e-mail or telephone. Of the original 129 organisations that replied, 84 (65 per cent) gave relevant information and are listed in Appendix 2. Therefore, out of the original 172 organisations contacted, 49 per cent said they provided services for children experiencing divorce and family change (see Appendix 3 for list of category interventions provided by relevant organisations).

The study showed that it was difficult to get information about distribution and uptake of services. Although the majority of the organisations who provided information were extremely helpful, some organisations could not provide the figures asked for in the second questionnaire, and in one case, would not provide the figures asked for. Some of the addresses we used were inaccurate or had changed, and in some cases it was impossible to locate the relevant person in the organisation who might have been able to provide the requested information.

Supporting children through family change

Figure A1.1 Example of first letter/questionnaire sent to organisations

Dear

Interventions and support services for children experiencing divorce and family change

We have recently begun work on a review of services and other interventions aimed at children experiencing divorce and family change. The review has been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and aims to provide practitioners and policy makers with an overview and evaluation of what is currently being offered in the UK.

We are writing to you because we think that you, or your organisation, may offer relevant services. These are defined below. If you do offer relevant services we would like you to tell us what these are. In a second stage of the work we will be asking relevant service providers for more information about what they do. We are aiming to cover:

- All programmes and interventions aimed directly at children relating to divorce, separation, parental loss, step-parenting, parental conflict and domestic violence.
- All programmes and interventions for parents that have children's wellbeing as a focus and that deal with the issues listed above.

So, for example, we are not covering general parenting support programmes but we would be interested in a parental divorce experience course that includes issues related to the needs and well-being of children. Or, for instance, a parenting plan for divorcing parents would be relevant.

The range of interventions might include: leaflets and other written material; courses, programmes, class discussions, and group work – school or community based; book lists; websites; CDs; helplines; counselling services; mediation which has child involvement; relevant theatre and drama activities.*

If you offer any of the relevant interventions or services we would be very grateful if you could fill in the accompanying form. When the project is complete a report will be sent to all the organisations offering relevant services.

Thank you for your assistance.

*No theatre or drama activities were reported by the respondents, so these do not feature in the report.

Response Form

Interventions and support services for children who experience divorce and family change. A review of services and their effectiveness.

Prof. Martin Richards

Dr. Joanna Hawthorne Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge

Dr. Jan Pryor School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Name of Organisation: _____

Contact person: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Please list the services or interventions you or your organisation offer:

In the case of leaflets and other publications it would be helpful if you could include copies with your response. In the case of other interventions, if you have written descriptions that you can easily send it would be very helpful if you could enclose these too.

Many thanks for your help with this project.

Figure A1.2 Example of second questionnaire

Interventions for children experiencing divorce and family change

Use of Services

Counselling for children

Frequency _____ week/month/year

Average no. of participants _____ (per week/month/year)

Number of hours per session _____

Other _____

Leaflets for children

Number of leaflets distributed _____ (per week/month/year)

Self-help meetings

Average number of participants per session _____

Number of sessions _____ (per week/month/year)

Length of each session _____

Fee charged (yes/no)

Helpline for adults

Number of calls _____ (per week/month/year)

Helpline for children

Number of calls _____ (per week/month/year)

Appendix 2: Useful addresses

The following organisations provide relevant services and materials. Details were correct at the time of carrying out the research, but may have changed since.

African Caribbean Family Mediation Service
2– 4 St John’s Crescent
Brixton
London SW9 7LZ

Agunot
c/o Yakar Educational Foundation
2 Egerton Gardens, Hendon
London NW4

Asian Counselling Services
ASRA Conference Centre
80 Burleys Way
Leicester LE1 3BD

Asian Family Support and Conciliation Service
694 Leabridge Road
Leyton
London E10 9AW

Association for Shared Parenting
1 Kendal Drive
Burnt Green
Birmingham B45 8QA

Barnardo’s
Tanners Lane
Barkingside
Ilford
Essex IG6 1QG

Board for Social Responsibility (C of E)
Church House
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3N2

Boys & Girls Welfare Society
BGWS Mediation
Goss Chambers
Goss Street
Chester CH1 2BG

British Broadcasting Corporation
BBC Broadcasting House
London W1A 1AA

Cambridge Family & Divorce Centre
Essex House
71 Regent Street
Cambridge CB2 1AB

Catholic Child Welfare Council
St Joseph’s
Watford Way
Hendon
London NW4 4TY

Catholic Children’s Rescue Society
390 Parris Wood Road
Didsbury
Manchester M20 5NA

Catholic Children’s Society
49 Russell Hill Road
Purley
Surrey CR8 2XB

Changing Families Project
Brownswell Farm
Ashburton Down
Ashburton
Devon TQ13 7EZ

Cheiron – A Quiet Place
c/o Univ Liverpool, Room 216
126 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool L69 3GR

Child Psychotherapy Trust
Star House
104–108 Grafton Road
London NW5 4BD

ChildLine (England)
ChildLine
Studd Street
London N1 0QW

ChildLine (Glasgow) ChildLine Freepost 1111 Glasgow G1 4BR	Eye to Eye Mediation (NCH) NCH 231 Camberwell New Rd London SE5 0TH
Children 1st Children + Families Project (RSSPCC) 16 Melville Street Falkirk Scotland FK1 1HZ	Families Need Fathers 134 Curtain Road London EC2A 3AR
Children in Divorce & Separation Service (NCH) 3 Dogs Head Street Ipswich Suffolk IP4 1AE	Family Links New Marston Centre Jack Straw's Lane Oxford OX3 0DL
Children's Express 3-11 Pine Street London EC1 0JH	Family Mediation (North Wilts.) 34 Milton Road Swindon Wilts SN1 5JA
Children's Legal Centre University of Essex Wivenhoe Park Colchester C04 3SQ	Family Mediation Centre 42 Charles Street Cardiff CF10 2GE
Coram Family 49 Mecklenburgh Square London W1CN 2QA	Family Mediation Scotland 18 York Place Edinburgh EH1 3EP
Cruse Bereavement Care 126 Sheen Road Richmond Surrey TW9 1UR	Family Mediation Service (Gtr Manchester) (NCH) 21 Knowsley Street Bury Lancs BL9 0DL
Dawn Project 95-99 Effingham Street Rotherham South Yorkshire SG5 1BL	Family Mediation Service (NW Yorks) (NFM) 13 Dragon Parade Harrogate HG1 5BZ
Durham and Darlington FM (NCH) First Floor 72-76 North Road Durham City DH1 4SQ	Family Rights Group The Print House 18 Ashwin Street London E8 3DL
	Family Welfare Association 501-505 Kingsland Road London E8 4AV

Supporting children through family change

Fathers Direct
Herald House
15 Lambs Passage
Burnhill Row
London EC1Y 8TQ

Fegans Child and Family Care
160 St James Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN1 2HE

Friends United Network
404 Camden Road
London N7 0SJ

Gingerbread
First Floor
7 Sovereign Close
Sovereign Court
London E1W 3HW

Grandparents Federation
Moot House
The Stow
Harlow
Essex CM20 3AG

Herts and Essex Family Mediation Service (NFM)
Sewell House
349 The Hides
Harlow CM20 3QY

Institute of Family Therapy & FMS
24–32 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HX

Jewish Marriage Council
23 Ravenhurst Avenue
London NW4 4EE

Keeping Children Safe Project (Barnardo's)
29 Upper Duke St
Mornington Terrace
Liverpool L1 9DY

Mediation UK
Alexander House
Telephone Avenue
Bristol BS1 4BS

Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre
278 Seven Sisters Road
Finsbury Park
London N4 2HY

National Association of Child Contact Centres
Minerva House
Spaniel Row
Nottingham NG1 6EP

National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley St
London EC1V 7QE

National Council for One Parent Families
255 Kentish Town Rd
London NW5 2LX

National Early Years Network
77 Holloway Road
London N7 8JZ

National Family & Parenting Institute
430 Highgate Studios
53–79 Highgate Road
London NW5 1TL

National Family Mediation (head office)
9 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9SN

National Pyramid Trust
84 Uxbridge Road
London W13 8RA

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
99–105 Argyle Street
Birkenhead
Merseyside CH41 6AD

NCH
85 Highbury Park
London N5 1UD
Northumberland and Tyneside FM (NCH)
4th Floor, MEA House
Ellison Place
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8XS

NSPCC
42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH

One Plus One
First floor
7–15 The Wells
Roseberry Ave
London EC1R 4SP

Oxfordshire Family Mediation
125 London Road
Headington
Oxford OX3 9HZ

Parenting Education and Support Forum
Unit 431 Highgate Studios
53–79 Highgate Road
London NW5 1TL

Parentline Plus
520 Highgate Studios
53–79 Highgate Road
London NW5 1TL

Primary Learning Support Service (Camden LEA)
100 Stanhope Street
London NW1 3JX

RADICLE
36 Causton Street
London SW1P 4AU

Rainbows
5 Wrattling Road
Haverhill
Suffolk CB9 0DA

RD4U (Youth Involvement Project)
The Friends Meeting House
6 Mount Street
Manchester M2 5NS

Relate (National)
Herbert Gray College
Little Church Street
Rugby CV21 3AP

Relate (York & Harrogate)
13 Dragon Parade
Harrogate HG1 5BZ

Samaritans
The Upper Mill
Kingston Road
Surrey KT17 2AF

Scottish Parenting Forum
Children in Scotland, Princes House
5 Shandwick Place
Edinburgh EH2 4RG

Shropshire Mediation Services
48 Walker Street
Wellington
Telford TF1 1BA

Southall Black Sisters
52 Norwood Road
Southall
Middx UB2 4DW

Southwark Diocesan Wel-Care Service Trust
Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court
Borough High St
London SE1 1HW

Southwell Diocesan Council for Family Care
2 Pelham Court
Pelham Road
Nottingham NG5 1AP

Stepfamilies
17 Barkers Road
Sheffield S7 1SD

Supporting children through family change

The Bridge Childcare Development Centre
First Floor
34 Upper Street
London N1 0PN

The Children's Foundation
PO Box 2YB
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne NE99 2YB

The Children's Society
Edward Rudolf House
Margery Street
London WC1X 0JL

The Place To Be
Edinburgh House
154-182 Kennington Lane
London SE11 4EZ

The Raphael Centre
PO Box 172
Stanmore

Middx HA73WB

Trust for the Study of Adolescence
23 New Road
Brighton BN1 1WZ

Whole School Quality Circle Time
8 Westbourne Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire BA14 0AJ

Young Minds
102-108 Clerkenwell Road
London EC1M 5SA

Young Voice
12 Bridge Gardens
East Molesey
Surrey KT8 9HU

Appendix 3: Intervention categories and relevant organisations

Direct services for children

Telephone Helplines

Association for Shared Parenting
Board for Social Responsibility (C of E)
Child Psychotherapy Trust
ChildLine (England)
ChildLine (Glasgow)
Children's Legal Centre
Cruse Bereavement Care
Families Need Fathers
Family Rights Group
Gingerbread
Grandparents Federation
Jewish Marriage Council
National Council for One Parent Families
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
NSPCC
Parentline Plus
RD4U (Youth Involvement Project)
Samaritans
Young Minds

Counselling/Mediation

African Caribbean Family Mediation Service
Agunot
Asian Counselling Services
Asian Family Support and Conciliation Services
Barnardo's
Boys & Girls Welfare Society
Cambridge Family & Divorce Centre
Catholic Children's Rescue Society
Catholic Children's Society
Changing Families Project
Cheiron – A Quiet Place
Child Psychotherapy Trust
Children 1st
Children in Divorce & Separation Service
Dawn Project
Durham and Darlington FM (NCH)
Eye to Eye Mediation

Families Need Fathers
Family Links
Family Mediation (North Wilts.)
Family Mediation Centre
Family Mediation Scotland
Family Mediation Service (Gtr Manchester)
Family Mediation Service (NW Yorks)
Family Welfare Association
Fegans Child and Family Care
Herts and Essex Family Mediation Service
Institute of Family Therapy & FMS
Jewish Marriage Council
Keeping Children Safe Project (Barnardos)
Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre
National Family Mediation
National Pyramid Trust
NCH
Northumberland and Tyneside FM (NCH)
One Plus One
Oxfordshire Family Mediation
Primary Learning Support Service (Camden LEA)
Relate (National)
Relate (York & Harrogate)
Samaritans
Shropshire Mediation Services
Southall Black Sisters
Southwark Diocesan Wel-Care Service Trust
Southwell Diocesan Council for Family Care
The Bridge Childcare Development Centre
The Place To Be
The Raphael Centre
Whole School Quality Circle Time

School-based interventions

African Caribbean Family Mediation Service
Catholic Children's Rescue Society
Catholic Children's Society
Changing Families Project
Cheiron – A Quiet Place
ChildLine (England)

Supporting children through family change

Children in Divorce & Separation Service
Dawn Project
Family Links
Family Mediation (North Wilts.)
Mediation UK
National Family Mediation (head office)
National Pyramid Trust
NSPCC
One Plus One
Oxfordshire Family Mediation
Parentline Plus
Primary Learning Support Service (Camden LEA)
Rainbows
Relate (York & Harrogate)
The Place To Be
Whole School Quality Circle Time

Information for children

Leaflets for Children

Cambridge Family and Divorce Centre
ChildLine (England)
Children in Divorce & Separation Service
Children's Legal Centre
Durham and Darlington FM (NCH)
Eye to Eye Mediation
Family Mediation Scotland
Institute of Family Therapy & FMS
National Association of Child Contact Centres
National Family Mediation
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
NCH
Northumberland and Tyneside FM (NCH)
NSPCC
Oxfordshire Family Mediation
Parentline Plus
Rainbows
Relate (York and Harrogate)
The Children's Society
The Place to Be

Website address of organisations

(These addresses were correct at the time of carrying out the research but may have changed since.)

Agunot www.agunot.co.uk
Asian Counselling Services
www.acserve.org
Association for Shared Parenting
www.sharedparenting.org.uk
Barnardo's www.barnardos.org.uk
Board for Social Responsibility (C of E)
www.flame.ukfamily.co.uk
British Broadcasting Corporation
www.bbc.co.uk/education/archive
Catholic Children's Society
www.catholicchildrenssociety.org.uk
ChildLine (England) www.childline.org.uk
Childline (Scotland) www.childline.org.uk
Children's Express www.childrensexpress.org
Cruse Bereavement Care
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
Dawn Project
www.dudley-gateway.co.uk/cz/dox/dphome.htm
Durham and Darlington FM (NCH)
www.nch.org.uk
Eye to Eye Mediation www.nch.org.uk
Families Need Fathers www.fnf.org.uk
Family Links www.FamilyLinks.org.uk
Fathers Direct www.fathersdirect.com
Gingerbread www.gingerbread.org.uk
Grandparents Federation
www.grandparents-federation.org.uk
Jewish Marriage Council www.jmc-uk.org
Mediation UK www.mediationuk.org.uk
National Association of Child Contact Centres
www.naccc.org.uk
National Children's Bureau
www.ncb.org.uk
National Council for One Parent Families
www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
National Family & Parenting Institute
www.e-parents.org

Appendix 3: Intervention categories and relevant organisations

National Family Mediation (head office)
www.nfm.u-net.com
National Pyramid Trust www.nptrust.org.uk
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
www.nyas.net
NCH www.nch.org.uk &
www.itsnotyourfault.org
Northumberland and Tyneside FM (NCH)
www.nch.org.uk
NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk
One Plus One www.oneplusone.org.uk
Parenting Education and Support Forum
www.parenting-forum.org.uk
Parentline Plus www.parentlineplus.org
Rainbows (USA) www.rainbows.org
Rainbows (GB) www.rainbowsgb.org
RD4U (Youth Involvement Project)
www.rd4u.org.uk
Relate (National) www.relate.org.uk
Samaritans www.samaritans.org
Southwell Diocesan Council for Family Care
www.bigfoot.com/~family-care
Stepfamilies www.stepfamilies.co.uk
The Children's Society
www.the-childrens-society.org.uk
Whole School Quality Circle Time
www.jennymosley.demon.co.uk
Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk
Young Voice www.young-voice.org

Booklists/books

Barnardo's
Cambridge Family & Divorce Centre
ChildLine (England)
Children's Legal Centre
Cruse Bereavement Care
Dawn Project
Eye to Eye Mediation
Family Mediation Scotland
Grandparents Federation
Mediation UK

National Early Years Network
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
NCH
NSPCC
One Plus One
Parenting Education and Support Forum
Parentline Plus
Rainbows
Shropshire Mediation Services
Southall Black Sisters
The Bridge Childcare Development Centre
The Children's Society
Trust for the Study of Adolescence
Young Minds
Young Voice

Audio/visual material/miscellaneous

Association for Shared Parenting
Boys & Girls Welfare Society
Children in Divorce & Separation Service
Dawn Project
Family Rights Group
Friends United Network
National Association of Child Contact Centres
National Family & Parenting Institute
NCH
RADICLE
Rainbows
Southall Black Sisters
Trust for the Study of Adolescence

Direct services for parents

Classes and Information sessions for parents

Association for Shared Parenting
Board for Social Responsibility (C of E)
Child Psychotherapy Trust
Coram Family
Dawn Project
Family Links
Family Mediation (North Wilts.)

Family Mediation Centre
Family Mediation Scotland
Fathers Direct
Fegans Child and Family Care
Gingerbread
NCH
One Plus One
Oxfordshire Family Mediation
Parentline Plus
RADICLE
Relate (York & Harrogate)
Southwark Diocesan Wel-Care Service Trust
The Children's Society

Information for parents

Leaflets and Parenting Plans

African Caribbean Family Mediation Service
Asian Counselling Services
Association for Shared Parenting
Barnardo's
BBC
Boys & Girls Welfare Society
Cambridge Family & Divorce Centre
Child Psychotherapy Trust
ChildLine (England)
Children 1st
Children in Divorce & Separation Service
Cruse Bereavement Care
Dawn Project
Durham and Darlington FM (NCH)
Eye to Eye Mediation
Families Need Fathers
Family Mediation (North Wilts.)
Family Mediation Scotland
Family Mediation Service (Gtr Manchester)
Family Mediation Service (NW Yorks)
Family Rights Group
Gingerbread
Herts and Essex Family Mediation Service
Institute of Family Therapy & FMS

Jewish Marriage Council
National Association of Child Contact Centres
National Council for One Parent Families
National Family & Parenting Institute
National Family Mediation
NCH
Northumberland and Tyneside FM (NCH)
NSPCC
Oxfordshire Family Mediation
Parentline Plus
Rainbows
Relate (York & Harrogate)
Scottish Parenting Forum
Southwark Diocesan Council for Wel-Care
The Children's Society
The Place To Be
Young Minds

Cultural and religious organisations

African Caribbean Family Mediation Service
Agunot
Asian Counselling Services
Asian Family Support and Conciliation Services
Barnardo's
Board for Social Responsibility (C of E)
Catholic Child Welfare Council
Catholic Children's Rescue Society
Catholic Children's Society
Coram Family
Family Welfare Association
Fegans Child and Family Care
Jewish Marriage Council
Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre
RADICLE
Rainbows
Southall Black Sisters
Southwark Diocesan Wel-Care Service Trust
Southwell Diocesan Council for Family Care
The Children's Society
The Raphael Centre