

No Kids in the Middle

Family group therapy for separated
parents in conflict



Anna Freud
National Centre for
Children and Families

No Kids in the Middle - Family group therapy for separated parents in conflict

No Kids in the Middle is a therapy group for families going through a difficult period of parental separation and divorce.

How can it help me and my family?

The aim is to provide group sessions for parents and children (separately) who are experiencing conflict and facing similar difficulties. It provides an opportunity to share problems and solutions and learn new ways of communicating and connecting with their family during the separation/divorce process.

All group activities and discussions are supported by an experienced facilitator.

Tell me more

Importantly, one of the central themes in the children's group is that "it's not their fault".

Often, children whose parents are in conflict have to manage the space "in the middle", which are the thoughts, feelings, and physiological symptoms that children experience when in the middle of parental separation, leaving them feeling isolated, frustrated, confused, anxious, or ashamed.

By being a part of this type of therapy, children (away from their parents) will be gently guided through activities and discussions, and supported to express their feelings in a group. Having their own group, lowers the pressure to talk if they are not ready and assures them that they are not alone.

The group sessions help children:

- understand that their parents' conflict is not their responsibility
- build resilience and have the space to share their experience with other children in a similar situation
- share their feelings with their parents if they would like to (but there is no pressure on the children to participate).

The group sessions help parents in conflict:

- gain support and learn from other families in the same situation
- find less conflictual ways of co-parenting
- identify destructive patterns of communication and make changes for their children.

What kind of families is it for?

The group is appropriate for families where children are aged between 5 and 12, whose parents have separated more than 6 months ago, and where one or more of the below issues are relevant:

- there are disagreements or concerns about the quality and/or quantity of contact with one parent
- parents want help to protect their children from the impact of their own conflict or communication breakdown
- parents in conflict want help to improve their co-parenting relationship
- there are ongoing court proceedings about contact (in order to make the group a safe place, only information about your attendance and your progress on outcome measures will be reported back to the court, and only when explicitly requested.)

The group is not appropriate for families:

- in care proceedings,
- undergoing fact finding hearings or child protection hearings
- where there is ongoing domestic abuse.

How it helps

The group can help by:

- Helping parents find less conflictual ways of co-parenting
- Supporting parents to identify destructive patterns of communication and make changes for their children
- Providing the opportunity for parents to gain support and learn from other families in the same situation
- Helping children understand that their parents' conflict is not their responsibility
- Building children's resilience and giving them space to share their experience with children in the same situation and to share their feelings with their parents if they would like to (there is no pressure on the children to participate)

Families from all social and cultural backgrounds are welcome to the group including parents from the LGBTQIA+ community



How many families will be involved in the group sessions?

Between 6-8 families. There will be a parents' group and a separate children's group. The groups take place in different rooms with different facilitators (only coming together briefly at the beginning of each group and during a short break half way).

How many sessions do I have to attend?

We will hold sessions every Tuesday evening for nine consecutive weeks.

When will the first session be?

28 February from 17:00 to 19:00.

Do I have to pay?

Each parent will pay for the group separately and the cost will differ depending on your annual salary (see below). We are in the fortunate position of being able to offer this group at a heavily subsidised rate and without charge to parents on benefits.

Annual salary	Fee per parent
On benefits	£0
Income below £24,999	£50
Income between £25,000 - £34,999	£150
Income between £35,000 - £49,999	£300
Income between £50,000 - £69,999	£550
Above £70k	£850

Anything else I need to know?

Prior to attending the group, we will meet with parents twice to discuss their participation. See contact and referrals details on the back page.

What parents say



'It has made me have a positive impact on how I'm going to reduce that parental conflict, especially around the children. It's a whole learning curve.'

'I recommend this group to anyone going through a separation or divorce. I think it's the best thing I did and I actually wish I joined the course at an earlier stage.'

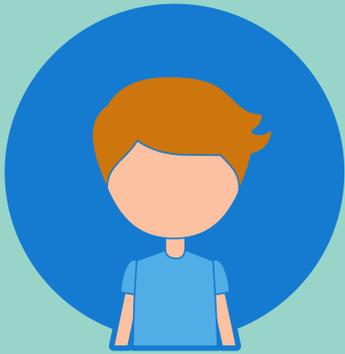


"Me and my ex are communicating, and I get to see the kids literally every day. A lot of it is thanks to this organisation and these classes. What lawyers can't do, what the courts can't do...these guys absolutely help prevent parental alienation.'

'The exercises that you do when you're sharing your experiences in a safe environment with other couples that have gone through similar situations that you can actually relate to. As well as your relating to others, your children can as well and I know that was really positive for my daughter. '



What children say



'Children should join this group because it will make them bond more with their parents'

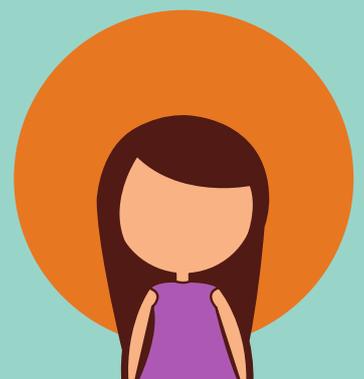
'It helps my mums agree with things'



'It makes mummy and daddy be more kind to them (each other)'



'I liked that we had food and it was fun [...]
I liked the games at the end,
and cos we got to choose the game
rather than not having a choice.'





Referrals and more information

If you have any questions or want more information, contact our clinical support officer Isabelle Greenway: isabelle.greenway@annafreud.org or our assistant Dhea Bengardi: dhea.bengardi@annafreud.org

Dr Eia Asen, Consultant Psychiatrist and Family Therapist

Dr Emma Morris, Consultant Clinical Psychologist

Dr Natasha Nascimento, Family Therapist

Renata Zampol, Family Therapist

Useful links

Other languages and formats

If you would like this leaflet in a different language or format please ask at reception or contact us at:

Email: Referrals@annafreud.org

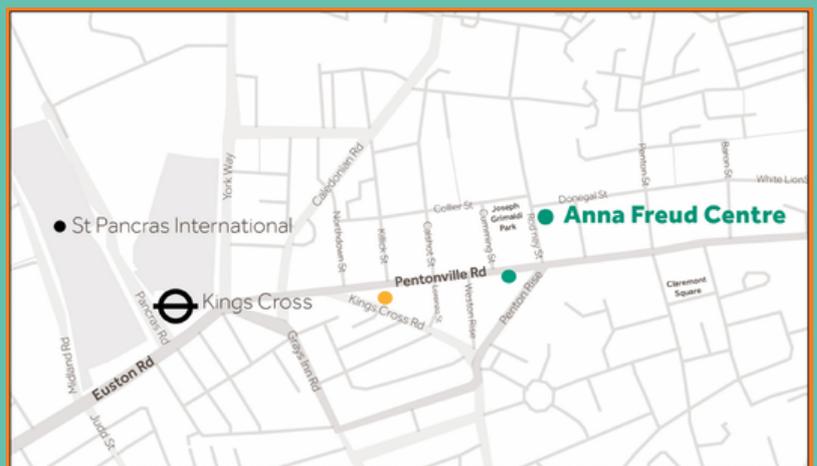
Telephone: 020 7794 231



More information and the evaluation report for the group can be found on our website: annafreud.org or scan the QR code (right) to be taken directly to the page.

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