

## Information for Solicitors

### Training Courses for separating parents - A guide to accessing the service

**What is Parents Apart?** It is a four hour workshop, usually delivered in two sessions of two hours. It is designed for parents who are in the process of separating and it specifically focusses on the needs of the children involved so that the harmful effects of separation can be avoided.

**Do Ex-partners attend together?** No. Clients attend in groups with other parents (applicants and respondents) from other families. It is better for parents to meet other parents so that there is an opportunity for one parent to see the impact of a mirror of their behaviour on a peer.

**Who delivers the course?** It is delivered by Relate professionals who have been specially trained. Courses are arranged for groups of parents with a trainer in a ratio of 1:6.

**How does this course compare with the Separated Parents Information Programme imposed by Court Order?** We use the same course material, as developed by Relate. We are now able to offer this as early intervention without the need for a Court Order.

**How will Parents Apart benefit my clients?** The course is recommended for clients at the beginning of their separation process when they first seek legal advice. It offers them help in achieving an amicable and peaceable separation with specialist guidance in how to help their child(ren) cope with the negative effects of separation.

The course will help separating parents avoid a costly and distressing legal battle fought through the courts. Relate Certificates of Attendance will be issued to participants on completion of the course.

**How will Parents Apart benefit my practice?** Legal professionals who specialise in family matters can offer this course as an enhancement to the service they provide in cases of divorce and legal separation. It is a provision to underpin your practice's reputation as caring, efficient and professionally experienced in the wider realm of family matters.

**What are the key objectives of the course?** The Parents Apart Course aims to:

- Make parents aware of the effect of separation on the child.
- Make it clear that continued conflict over contact is not ‘in the best interests of the child’.
- Give options and ideas about how to change things for the better by improving communication skills and promoting workable solutions.

**Is the course suitable for parents with special needs?** If clients have special needs e.g. literacy issues, we will try to meet these. We can also work with parents individually if their needs dictate this.

We are unable to offer this course to clients with extreme mental health problems or issues with drugs, alcohol or violence as it is unlikely to have a positive effect.

**Does it work?** Since April 2009, when Relate Solent and Winchester began delivering these courses, we have received extremely positive feedback from clients regarding the benefits of this course. They have reported a significant improvement in family communication and a decrease in stress and conflict. From the Relate perspective, what was exciting is that parents appeared to shift towards their child’s needs rather than their own needs in relation to contact.

**Is the course a type of counselling or mediation?** No.

**When does the Parents Apart course take place?** Relate Solent and Winchester offers several courses per month.

**Where does the Parents Apart course take place?** Relate Solent and Winchester delivers courses at locations in Eastleigh, Southampton and the Isle of Wight.

**What does the Parents Apart course cost?** The cost of the course is £150 per person.

**For more information please contact:**

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